

Mountain mail delivery route spans three generations for Black family



One of the things Tim Black's family had to get used to when he gave up the R.R. 3 Mountain mail route was getting their mail delivered. The box went up about two weeks ago, the first one they've had job in 23 years.

When Harold P. Black started delivering mail in 1938, he probably wouldn't have guessed the job would stay in his family for three generations.

His wife, Mabel and son, Norman took over the R.R. 3 Mountain route for 26 years between them. Grandson Gordon Black had it for a year, until he turned it over to his brother, Tim Black, three years ago.

Canada Post paid Tim \$549 a month to go to the Mountain Post Office every weekday morning to sort letters, parcels and advertising and deliver them to almost 100 boxes on the 26 km. route. Out of that, he had to buy gas and cover the cost of keeping his battered Datsun F-10 going.

With all the starting and stopping on the route, that meant a new set of brake shoes every three months. "I made sure it stayed running," he says, "But it didn't run perfectly all the time, though."

But he was able to save enough to put himself through a 10-month maintenance technician course at Control Data Institute, a computer and electronics training school in Ottawa.

His schedule often kept him busy from morning to night. "It was getting, doing the mail hings to school or

But his mother, Marg Black, a nurse at Bayfield Manor and veteran of countless mail deliveries, says there was no other way. "You never get a holiday," delivering on a rural mail route, she says.

But the long hours paid off when Tim graduated in June, 1984. Through the institute, he found full-time work in production control with Computing Devices Co. in Bell's Corners.

It was too good an offer to turn down, so he looked for another family member to take the route, but the only candidates were his two nephews, aged five and six.

There was another thing to consider. His father, Bert, was taken ill in January, and by April the doctors diagnosed cancer.

The family, already close, pulled together. Gordon Black bought out the family dairy operation and moved onto the farm with his family. Tim lended a hand when he could.

His mother says the crisis showed the family they had, "too many irons in the fire," and they had to learn to take things one day at a time.

Tim says everything told him giving up the route was the right move. "There were so many days when thought you'd be so glad to see it all go," he says, but, "on the last day, I felt so guilty, like I'd let the family down."

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"Some people don't understand how many miles of road there are in this township," says Timmins. "I have three men working steady under me, but there's only so much money and so much time available. We can do all kinds of road work in a year, but there will be the people who will say why wasn't their road fixed or why didn't it get more sand in the winter."

Timmins, 53, a former farmer and machine dealer who lives in Inkerman might not like the criticism, but he can sympathize. In the eight years he's held the job, the township has become a mobile society. And voters are defining local governments by the roads they keep.

"People are demanding more now," says Timmins. "Roads play a pretty big part of local government now because a lot of people are working now outside the home, and going to work early, and they're looking for good roads to get to work on."

Although he can understand the frustration some people feel when their road is an icy sheet or when broken pavement is left unfixed, Timmins argues that the reality of economics places him in a no-win situation at times.

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Ron Timmins roads superintendent

MOUNTAIN — Ron Timmins is out on the road almost every day. He's not a salesman. He's the roads superintendent for Mountain Township.

Of all issues that face a rural municipality, the most important in the mind of the public — is roads — even if it's one usually forgotten until jarred back to memory by a pothole.

It's also one of the most expensive. Last year Mountain Township spent \$382,000 on its 182 kilometres of road. Even that wasn't enough to do all the work that was needed.

"We live in a country that has frost," Timmins says simply. That means roads that buckle and break. It also means living in a country that requires months of snow removal and salting and sanding.

Tribute to an old friend

The Editor:

Many senior residents of the North Mountain community will remember Wilfred Allen who died in Sarnia, Ont. on Jan. 25, 1985.

A retired director of education in Western Ontario, Wilf resided in Kerr's Ridge in the 1920s and '30s. His elementary and secondary school education was obtained at North Mountain Consolidated School.

A graduate of the Ottawa Teachers' College and Queen's University, his teaching experience was in Northern and Western Ontario. After many years as a high school principal he became director of education in Wallaceburg.

His early retirement in 1970 enabled him to travel, garden and give leadership in church and community activities in Sarnia.

His wife, Gladys, and two daughters, Linda and Patti, survive. A sister, Greta Clark, lives at Mountain, a brother Walter in Brockville, another

brother, Lyall, died two years ago in Kemptville.

The undersigned was one of Wilf's friends for more than 60 years. We were in the same school classes. We kept in touch after he left his home community in 1933.

Our athletic careers began on the Hallville softball team, a majority of whose members are now dead. Sport fans of Mountain Township will likely remember such players as pitcher Roy Hastings, catcher Deb Wylie, infielders Bill Ellis, Mel Christie, Casey Hyndman, Charlie Christie, outfielders Fin Evans, Les Brown, Wilf Allen, Ty Hyndman.

Coaches and umpires were Bing Martin, Rob Scarlett, Frank Boucher. Team bus driver was Andrew Sipes.

A fine friend, an excellent educator, a patient parent and a competent community worker has passed on. Charlie Christie