

Maurice Rollins: A tireless worker

By Nam Phi Dang

Maurice Rollins, 86, may seem like your typical senior Belleville resident. But, dig deep into the city's history and you're bound to come across his name.

Still calling himself as labourer, Rollins and his multi-million-dollar accomplishments have taken him to places all over the world, building homes, hotels and schools. Rollins is also known for being the founder of one of the most popular chain of motels, The Journeys End Hotel.

While there is no doubt that Rollins is an accomplished businessman, his roots showed a very different pathway.

"I was quite good in school. If it weren't for my depression, I would've gone into either engineering or some kind of chemical work. I decided to take the easy way out because of my depression and went to study pharmacy," said Rollins.

Shortly after Rollins two years in a pharmaceutical apprenticeship, he felt uncomfortable about the career path he was planning to take.

"In my days you couldn't take a four year pharmacy course because they were not available so instead, I did what was available which was a two year apprenticeship plus two years of university. As soon as a I started school, I quit because I couldn't take it," Rollins said.

Thus, he began a pathway that would eventually help Rollins become the successful individual he is today.

"After quitting school I had nothing to do so I ended up taking a job as a labour worker. First job I had was wheeling cement. That job would kill me. When I came home from work, my back would hurt and I could barely move. It just was terrible," Rollins said.

His hard work as a labourer paid off when the opportunity to take his basic skills onto a different level occurred.

"A teacher who was a professional engineer at Belleville Collegiate Institute and Vocational School who taught me drafting happened to be at a place I was too two years after I left school. He asked me how I was doing and I told him I was just finishing my labour work wheeling cement. Since I knew a little bit on how to use a tripod and a level, he said he was looking for someone to look after the sewers and see if they were in the right locations and levels. I ended up working with him for a few months before working and looking after sewers in Trenton," said Rollins.

Rollins began taking on more professional work, taking his basic skills without even a degree in engineering to different locations and firms.

"The engineer for Trenton left and got a better job up in Brockville which left them with no engineer. Trenton then ad-



Photo by Nam Phi Dang

Eighty-six-year-old Maurice H. Rollins calls himself a "labour worker" despite running and owning multi-million dollar businesses.

vertised for a job as an engineer. Now I was no engineer as I was an only a sewer surveyor. I had no degree of sort but regardless, a councilor at Trenton told me to try sign up because I had done some work there. Of the three engineers who signed up, I got the job!" said Rollins.

Rollins started a construction company in 1955 named Rollins Construction, then renamed it to Maurice H. Rollins Construction Ltd.

On top of his construction firm, Maurice experimented in the field of consumerism. His ideas expanded from running Auntie Anne's soft pretzels within Canada to rechargeable AA batteries to even water from the Glacier's of Iceland. Rollins was "always looking for something to expand in." One of his biggest accomplish-

ments was being one of the founders of Journey's End Hotel, which had over 150 locations within North America.

Though there is no doubt Rollins has accomplished much in his lifetime, the depression he has suffered since being school has restricted him from taking on bigger projects.

"I could never build anything big. I could never build a subdivision in Toronto because I was afraid. I was afraid of my depression. I was able to build in 39 municipalities but never anything big. That is the one thing I wish I could do. I would not know what to do if I was responsible for something big while being depressed," said Rollins.

Rollins heavy-loaded work habit has always made himself realize the neglect he

had on his family.

"The thing I probably regret the most is because I worked 16 to 19 hours a day. I sort of abandoned my family. I had five kids with my first wife who I married in 1951. All my time spent was on my work and not on my kids. That would be something I would do differently if I could do it all over again," Rollins said.

For the past 25 years, Rollins has been on a drive to help community efforts by funding charities. He is well known for his effort to keep BCI open by pitching a million dollars of his own money and saving what was an old high school into a new community centre. Not only did the plan to keep BCI open fail, but also Rollins lost all of the money he gave for the

effort. Lately Rollins main goal has been to fundn mental health.

His biography *The Remarkable Journey of Maurice Rollins* by Orland French was not only fully funded by Rollins himself but also revenue from sales goes straight to the Canadian Mental Health Association.

"In my will, a third goes to my wife, a third goes to my children and a third goes to charity. In the meantime I will give to charities anyway and not wait," said Rollins.

Even at his age, Rollins plans on continuing to work until the very end.

"To be quite truthful, I'm looking for work. Right now I am looking for work. I haven't got enough to do right now. I don't like it. I'm looking for something to do," said Rollins.



Photo by Marta Iwanek

From left, Summer Reed, 6, Sophia Downer, 3, and Alexis Rose, 5, react at the puppet show and storytelling time titled "Lions and tigers and bears...Oh My!" held at the Belleville Public Library during March break.

Wizard of Oz takes over the library

By Marta Iwanek

Lions and tigers and bears took over the Belleville Public Library on Thursday morning.

Children ages 4-7 watched a puppet show and played along as staff in the library's Children's and Youth Services department read books related to the theme.

"I liked when they said lions and tigers and bears because I saw the real movie Wizard of Oz," said Taylor Walt, 7, referring to the line in the story when the characters walk into the forest and start chanting the line.

This March break the Belleville Public Library created programming based on the Wizard of Oz. Activities were happening all week for school-aged children and ranged from a magic show, to making masks to the puppet show on Thursday titled, "Lions and Tigers and Bears...oh my!"

Taylor Walt's mother, Sheila Walt, brought her daughters to the show after seeing the event on Facebook.

She was looking for something for them to do on March break.

More than 30 kids and parents filled the room that morning, where they growled like tigers, stomped like

elephants, slithered like snakes and jumped like frogs. The magic show earlier that week drew 155 kids and parents, estimated Janna Colton, library assistant in Reader's Advi-

sory/ Children's and Youth Services who helped organize the puppet show.

Throughout the school year, programming is usually geared at children five and under, except on March break, PA days and in the summer, where it's focused on school-age children.

"So we try to target all ages to bring them in because when you do programming you bring kids in and they get library cards and they want to take books out," said Colton.

Colton who has been at the library since 1978, said when reading to the younger kids, "It's neat to catch the kids eyes when they get it, when they understand what you're doing and what you want them to do."

The Wizard of Oz theme exposes the children to a classic piece of literature they may not have known about, said Colton. The staff will wrap up the week with a skit on Friday where they will act out the scene where Dorothy meets the scarecrow, tin man and lion.



Photo by Marta Iwanek

Ava Walt, 4, and Taylor Walt, 7, laugh during the puppet show and storytelling time titled "Lions and tigers and bears...Oh My!"

North Korean warnings create growing tension

By Tom Hicken

As tension rises between North and South Korea, those with the most to lose show the least worry.

After a new wave of UN sanctions Monday, Pyongyang announced that it had torn up the 1953 armistice agreement, a non-aggressive pact made between the two Koreas.

The heightened tension between North Korea and its enemies have spurred news agencies into a flurry, squeezing out an array of dire headlines warnings, alarming most.

However, the Korean community in Belleville show little concern for the international situation.

"The media makes it a big deal, but I don't see anything happening anytime soon. It's been going on forever, but it's false threats that lead to no action," says Daniel Park, a Belleville resident whose family owns and runs two city sushi restaurants.

Park believes his friends and extended family in South Korea have nothing to worry about despite the more frequent threats coming from the North.

"At first they came every couple of years, now their are threats every couple of months. Back home it's just become a part of their life now - they're 99% sure that it won't amount to anything so they don't care and just go about their lives," says Park.

North Korea has fired off many memorable threats at Seoul and Washington over the years. Looking at the most recent incidents and patterns from the past decade shows a cat and mouse game between North Korea and the UN Security Council.

In 2007, after a multitude of short and long-range test missiles were launched into waters over Japan and condemned by the international community, the council imposed sanctions and banned North Korea from activities related to its nuclear weapons program.

The North complied with the halt on missile and nuclear programs in order to regain the much needed aide it had lost, only to resume their nuclear activities one year later.

Last week's dissolving of the armistice, followed by a promise of a pre-emptive nuclear strike on the US stemmed from the most recent round of sanctions handed out by the UN, punishing the North for its continued nuclear tests.

"Everybody knows there's a huge gap in what they can do and what they claim they can do," says 59-year old Joe Kim, deacon of the Korean Presbyterian Church.

Kim, who sometimes leads the youth bible study group at the church, believes it's all a bluff.

"They realize once they ignite a real crisis, they have the potential to lose everything. Everything will collapse, so unless they go all or nothing, they won't do it - it's all politics," says Kim.

Bluff or not, there have been some real risks as a handful of situations have escalated into full blown exchanges in the past, including a 2010 naval clash that killed 46 sailors and four more civilians later that year when the North attacked a front-line South Korean island.

Fully aware of his country's history, Park echoes what most of the Korean community here believe.

"No one's really concerned. It seems like Kim Jong Un is just flexing his muscles."