

Corktown's long-time resident, Bill McIlroy turns 90 years young!

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Meet Bill McIlroy, so far one of the longest residing individuals in Corktown that I had the opportunity of meeting this past May, just before his 90th birthday.

Born in Toronto, Bill continues to live in the same home he grew up in on Sumach Street since 1936. Although Bill affirms it was 1932 as his parents initially rented the house, his neighbourhood residency greatly supersedes that of today's average homeowner.

The eldest of five children and the only son born to William D. McIlroy and Agnes Gordon, who emigrated from Ireland, he attended Sackville School and later nearby Park Public School. As memories unfolded, his repository of firsthand episodes includes a time in the late 1950's, when the Richmond and Adelaide Streets highway overpasses were constructed just south of his home; disjoining historic Sumach Street forever.

Back then the southside of King Street, east of Sackville Street, was populated with eclectic cottages. Bill agreed that people didn't have much money then, but local grocers would accommodate this deficiency by allowing customers to pay for groceries on credit until their next paycheck was

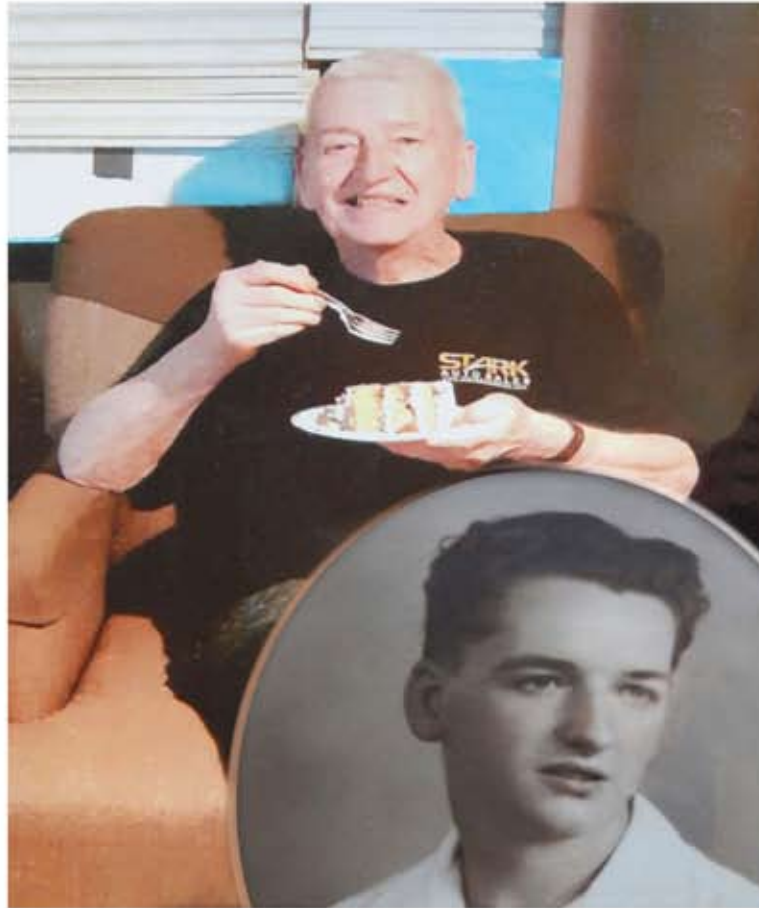


Photo: Courtesy of B. McIlroy and J. Moniz

received.

Another common occurrence was that children of large families were expected to contribute financially to household expenses as soon as they were old enough to work. Thus, while the patriarch of the family, William D., was employed at Eaton's, young Bill found work at nearby Canada Decalcomania Co Ltd, located at 507-511 King Street East, just a short walking distance from where he lived. Established in

work for Bill whose favorite pastime was 'bowling'. While pointing to a prize trophy won during a competition (for averaging 840), he mainly played on company leagues and never ventured to the "family-oriented" bowling alleys above the former Home Furniture Store, at Queen and Parliament (last occupied by Marty Millionaire). When not active in league bowling, and with little entertainment at home other than the radio, Bill frequented movie theatres. "Back then you only paid about 10 cents to see a

movie." He continued to draw a mental path of all the movie houses he went to, places like the Empire Theatre, now the Good Shepherd location, and others including the Eclipse, the Bluebell, the Parliament and even La Plaza on Queen Street East over the Don River.

I must admit that Bill McIlroy, is a life-loving guy who, despite the odd illness, awakes each morning to experience a brand-new day. Keep smiling is certainly his formula for a long life. Happy Birthday, Bill! - And may you celebrate many more.

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1911, Canada Decalcomania began operating from its King Street East location in 1922. Canadian-owned, it specialized in window signs, name plates, and decal transfers of all sizes and ornamentation. Bill first worked in the silk-screening division and later the shipping department where, in time, he was promoted to Head Shipper. In 1968, the company moved its Toronto operations to Scarborough and Bill followed.

But life was not all about