

SENIORS' SPORTS CLUB

IN JANUARY, 1982, MY WIFE (BETTY) AND I WERE ON A SENIORS' 'WINTER BREAK' AT BOLTON CAMP, SPONSORED BY FAMILY SERVICES OF TORONTO. THE WEATHER WAS IDEAL AND WE ENJOYED THE SKIING, SNOWSHOEING AND HIKING VERY MUCH. ERNO BANKI, A RETIRED ART DEALER, WAS ONE OF A GROUP ON A SIMILAR HOLIDAY IN FEBRUARY. HE WAS ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT CARRYING ON THESE OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES THROUGHOUT THE YEAR. KATHY DEMBROWSKI OF FAMILY SERVICES SUGGESTED HE CONTACT US. A GROUP OF ABOUT TEN INTERESTED SENIORS MET AT FAMILY SERVICES' OFFICE ON WELLESLEY ST. E. IN TORONTO, TO FORM A COMMITTEE. WE KNEW NOTHING ABOUT HIKING SO ERNO INVITED VERDA MCDONALD, AN EXPERIENCED BRUCE TRAILS HIKE LEADER FOR HER INPUT. WE NAMED OURSELVES 'SENIORS' SPORTS CLUB' FOR ACTIVE SENIORS, 55 YEARS OF AGE AND OLDER. OUR MOTTO : FOR FITNESS, HEALTH AND FELLOWSHIP.

ERNO WAS NAMED PRESIDENT, OF COURSE; I BECAME TREASURER, BETTY WAS MEMBERSHIP CONVENOR AND JEANNE DANDURAND WAS OUR SECRETARY.

OUR FIRST HIKE WAS IN APRIL - A CAR POOL - TO KORTRIGHT CENTRE. ONLY FOUR OF US SHOWED UP... ERNO, BETTY, MYSELF AND HARRY BOLINGBROKE WHO WAS 84 AT THE TIME. WE ARRANGED FOR AN INTERVIEW WITH STASIA EVASIUK WHOSE 'AGE OF REASON' APPEARED WEEKLY IN THE TORONTO STAR. SHE SENT A PHOTOGRAPHER WITH THREE OF US TO WILLETT'S CREEK. AFTER THE INTERVIEW, PHOTO AND A SHORT SCHEDULE OF UP-COMING HIKES APPEARED IN HER COLUMN, HIKERS ON OUR NEXT HIKE NUMBERED 20. LLOYD CLEMENT WAS NAMED OUR HIKE COORDINATOR.

THE ROOM AT WELLESLEY ST. E. WAS TOO SMALL FOR OUR MONTHLY MEETINGS SO METRO PARKS AND RECREATION STEERED US TO PAPE COMMUNITY CENTRE AT PAPE AND GERRARD ST. E. IN DOWNTOWN TORONTO. WHEN WE SAW THE AVAILABLE FACILITIES THERE - GYMNASIUM, ASSEMBLY ROOM, SWIMMING POOL AND KITCHEN ETC. WE CHANGED TO OUR MONTHLY MEETING DATE TO EVERY TUESDAY.

ABOUT THAT TIME THE GOVERNMENT WAS SPONSORING THE 'NEW HORIZONS' PROJECT TO PROVIDE SENIORS GROUPS WITH GRANTS. WE APPLIED AND REPRESENTATIVE, CATHERINE DOWDALL MET WITH US. GROUPS COULD RECEIVE TWO GRANTS FOR EIGHTEEN MONTHS AT A TIME. WE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT WE NEEDED BUT AFTER DISCUSSING OUR PLANS AND REQUIREMENTS SHE GRANTED US \$9,000.00 WHICH WE RECEIVED ON MARCH 8, 1983. WE HAD TO REPORT OUR PURCHASES TO THEM AND WHAT MONEY WAS BEING USED FOR WHAT. WE HAD TO OPEN A SEPARATE BANK ACCOUNT FOR THIS MONEY AND REPORT TO THEM REGULARLY.

ON TUESDAYS WE EXPANDED WITH TAI-CHI EXERCISE, LINE-DANCING, BILLIARDS, SWIMMING, A SOCIAL HOUR AT LUNCHTIME AND LATER SOME EUCHRE AND SQUARE-DANCING IN THE AFTERNOON FOR THOSE INTERESTED. WE PLANNED FREQUENT DAY TRIPS TO NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE, KITCHENER MARKET AND BALA CRANBERRY BOG ETC. OUR HIKING CONTINUED ON WEDNESDAYS EVERY WEEK.

(IT INCLUDED SKIING FOR SEVERAL YEARS), WE TOOK FREQUENT BUS-HIKES TO BRONTE TRILLIUM TRAIL, NIAGARA GORGE, SIBBALD'S POINT ETC.

OUR MEMBERSHIP GREW TO 131 IN 1983. OUR ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEE WAS \$5.00 (SINGLE) AND \$8.00 (COUPLE):

ED. DUCK WAS IN HIS 70s WHEN HE JOINED US. HE WAS OUR FIRST LINE-DANCE INSTRUCTOR AND CARRIED ON FOR YEARS. FOR A FEW YEARS OUR TAI-CHI INSTRUCTION WAS PROVIDED BY THE TORONTO BOARD OF EDUCATION BUT WHEN THAT WAS DISCONTINUED WE ABSORBED THE COST OF \$30.00 EACH WEEK BUT LATER CHARGED THE MEMBERS WHO PARTICIPATED. TEA/COFFEE (REFILLS INCLUDED) AND COOKIES AT LUNCHTIME COST 25 CENTS.

OUR SECOND GRANT FROM NEW HORIZONS WAS RECEIVED IN 1985. WE DIDN'T ASK FOR VERY MUCH BUT MS. DOWDALL 'TALKED US INTO' RECEIVING ANOTHER \$8,000.00 WHICH MADE A TOTAL OF \$17,000.00. SHE SAID WE NEEDED A 'CUSHION' SO THAT WE COULD BECOME SELF-SUPPORTING. AND SHE ASSURED US THAT THE \$17,000.00 WE RECEIVED WAS MUCH LESS THAN IT WOULD COST THEM FOR A COUNSELLOR OR SUPERVISOR TO CONTRIBUTE WHAT WE WERE PROVIDING FOR SO MANY SENIORS - AND DOING IT SO WELL. OUR MEMBERSHIP HAD GROWN TO 175. OUR ARRANGEMENT WITH NEW HORIZONS TERMINATED ON APRIL 30, 1986.

THE GROWTH IN OUR MEMBERSHIP HAS BEEN DUE LARGELY TO 'WORD OF MOUTH' AND SOME PUBLICITY IN THE BRUCE TRAIL MAGAZINE.? WE WERE A CLUB MEMBER. WE MOURNED THE PASSING OF ERNO BANKI ON OCTOBER 16, 1988.

IN THE EARLY 1990s WE DECIDED MEMBERS WHO REACHED THE AGE OF 80 WOULD PAY MEMBERSHIP FEES NO LONGER AND AT AGE 85 WOULD BE GIVEN FREE TICKETS TO OUR ANNIVERSARY AND CHRISTMAS LUNCHEONS. THROUGH THE YEARS WE SUPPORTED THE CENTRES BASEBALL TEAMS, SWIM MEETS AND RAISED MONEY FOR THEM WITH BAKE SALES ETC. OUR ANNUAL BBQ-PICNCS AND CORN ROASTS WERE FREE. THESE WERE DISCONTINUED IN 2003 AND 2006. IN THE 1990s MEMBERS WHO PARTICIPATED ON TUESDAYS WERE 75-85 IN NUMBER AND OUR HIKING GROUP CONTINUED TO GROW...65-80 ON A REGULAR GOOD DAY. WE HAD AT LEAST 100 ONE SUNNY WEDNESDAY IN HIGH PARK. WHILE THERESA DEL GRAND WAS OUR PRESIDENT AND LINE-DANCE INSTRUCTOR A GROUP OF US PERFORMED AT GERRARD SQUARE AND AT KEW BEACH AT MARILYN CHURLEY'S POLITICAL LUNCHEON.

OUR MEMBERSHIP HAS CHANGED OVER THE YEARS OF COURSE. SOME VERY ACTIVE MEMBERS HAVE BECOME TOO OLD TO PARTICIPATE IN OUR HIKES ANY MORE. A FEW OF OUR ORIGINAL MEMBERS ARE STILL WITH US. VERDA MCDONALD IS CONTINUES TO BE AN ACTIVE HIKE-LEADER.

IN 1997 THE PAPE CENTRE WAS RE-NAMED 'MATTY ECKLER COMMUNITY CENTRE' IN HONOUR OF AN OUTSTANDING CITIZEN AND AVID PROMOTOR OF ALL ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNGSTERS OF ALL AGES IN THE AREA.

BUT BY 2006 THOSE WHO CAME ON TUESDAYS NO LONGER HIKE ON WEDNESDAYS SO THAT WE BECAME TWO SEPARATE BUT ACTIVE ENTITIES.

IN JULY, 2006, BETTY AND I GAVE NOTICE THAT WE WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO CONTINUE AS MEMBERSHIP CONVENORS AND TREASURER AS OF MARCH 31, 2007, AFTER 25 WONDERFUL YEARS, DUE TO HEALTH REASONS AND HAVING MOVED TO A SENIORS' RETIREMENT RESIDENCE. IN 2006 OUR MEMBERSHIP NUMBERED 481.

AS OF APRIL 1, 2007, WE BECAME TWO SEPARATE GROUPS :

'SENIORS' SPORTS CLUB' ON TUESDAYS

'SENIORS' HIKING CLUB' ON WEDNESDAYS

EACH WITH ITS OWN GOVERNING BODY AND LIST OF MEMBERS.

David Smith

DAVID SMITH

MAY, 2007.