**Bill Weir**

**I only started to attend meetings last October, but I must

compliment all the previous orators whose life stories seemed

much more complex and interesting than what I planned to say.

So, I had to press ‘rewind’ to start my life flashing before my

eyes. They say that a picture is worth a thousand words, so
**I** was born and raised in Woodstock, and have lived in, or near

the city since 1949.

My father came from Saskatchewan and was an airplane mechanic in the Air Force during the war – stationed in Ontario. Growing up, we didn’t have a lot, but were comfortable. We didn’t get a TV until I was 12, so we had to make our own entertainment. We never got an allowance. You were expected to help out around the house without being paid. To make spending money, we had to find some kind of work. As soon as I was big enough, I started cutting people’s lawns, raking leaves or other chores. I got a used bicycle and applied for a paper route with the LFP. I had a very long route with 55+ customers. That taught me how to be responsible enough to get up early in the morning rain or shine.

**When** I got to high school, my first real job was working at Featherstone’s Market, a small store on the corner of Wellington and Dundas St. I was the only employee for the couple that owned it. I think I made $ 1.40 an hour – part time, but learned priceless life lessons there. A couple of years later, I got a summer job with the Woodstock PUC, driving trucks, digging ditches, and learning to stand around in a group and look busy! They paid $ 2.00 an hour, and I was there 4 summers. Watching how they used their hydraulic equipment really helped me get a great job later on.

I enjoyed school; and my first 15 minutes of fame was in Grade 6, when a girl partner and I won the city-wide spelling bee contest. Also in the elementary grades our music teacher discovered that I could hold a tune, so I was encouraged to participate in the Rotary Music Festivals as a soloist and in several choirs right into high school. It was always my dream to get into a rock group. Finally in grade eleven, I started a real rock n’ roll band with my cousin Don, which also included our president, Phil. We used to play mostly high school gyms and teenage hangouts – like The Place, and used to practice on my parent’s large wooden front porch in the warm weather. The second version of The Bishops won a battle of the bands in Brantford against 12 other groups. Sadly, while we were debating whether we could turn pro, we found that the RCA prize was a scam. Later, my parents made me quit the band – when I failed chemistry at the end of grade 12 (because school always came first!).

Stepping back a few years I attended Central Senior Public School. In grade 7, my English teacher noticed some of my short stories, and encouraged me to try public speaking was something I discovered a liking for. I won the trophy in both 7 and 8, and as a result was chosen to be the valedictorian. I continued competing when I got to high school. Public speaking was to be a great help over my entire career.

**The** other very important high school event was meeting my future-wife Terri in grade 10 English class. We got married in June of 1970. Like most kids of 19, I didn’t know what I wanted to do after high school. I knew I could talk, so I thought teaching might be a good career. After one year at University of Waterloo, I ran out of money – so enrolled at London Teacher’s College. I thought that would get me started working sooner, and I could get my BA later - to teach secondary grades.

**A** buddy of mine told me the possible income in manufacturing was double my teaching salary, so I went over to the “dark side”, joining the staff of Truck Engineering (later King Equipment) as a Sales Coordinator working in both their Trailer and Utility equipment divisions. My summers with the Woodstock PUC soon paid off when I started working exclusively with their King truck-mounted digger derricks and aerial devices. Because I was good with paperwork and large corporate bureaucracy, I looked after major house accounts from government agencies to our company branches and dealers. I spent 16 -1/2 years at King and got to meet lots of great people and do some travelling for work as well. Including big equipment shows in Kansas City or Louisville. It was a nice break from sitting in an office.

**After** King closed, I continued in sales and sold cars for about 5 years – and then joined Timberland Equipment in town. Initially it was inside sales, but later included marketing & selling to dealers in the 4 Western Provinces and direct sales to a number of big construction companies in the US. That involved more travelling – to develop face to face customer relationships. After 6-1/2 years, the 9/11 tragedy happened and Timberland’s sales to the States took a nose dive. I was the newest sales person, so I was also a casualty. I was hired by Cornell Welding & Fabricating as a marketing and sales manager. I retired from there after 15 plus years. Part of my job was to make sure the customers were kept happy, produce a newsletter, a web site, digital communication and social media.

**On** a personal note, my wife Terri worked at the Bank of Commerce and later Royal Trust – before a 21 year stint as a salaried employee at CAMI Automotive. She is retired. She is very involved in genealogy. She also knits extremely well and enjoys scrapbooking and card making.

 Back in 1984, we started having August holidays at a Lodge on Sparrow Lake – just north of Orillia and continued for 26 years. Eight years ago, we purchased a family cottage on the lake. We now spend more time there making memories.

**We** enjoy travelling, and in 2010 had the experience of a lifetime on a Canadian War Memorial Tour (along with Phil and his wife Brenda) to France, Belgium and London, England.

Together Terri and I have 4 children, three girls and a boy. They all graduated from university. One daughter lives in Vancouver, and the others all live in London. We also have 5 grandkids – from 3 to 14 years of age, and we see them often.

I am super busy being retired, but have long time hobbies of photography, buying & selling on eBay, and drag racing HO scale slot cars. We started that hobby back in high school, but now it involves computer controlled electronic timing systems. Some ‘boys’ still like to play with toys!

Anyway, that’s my story – and I’m stickin’ to it!

Thanks for listening.