

Peel County B'g.

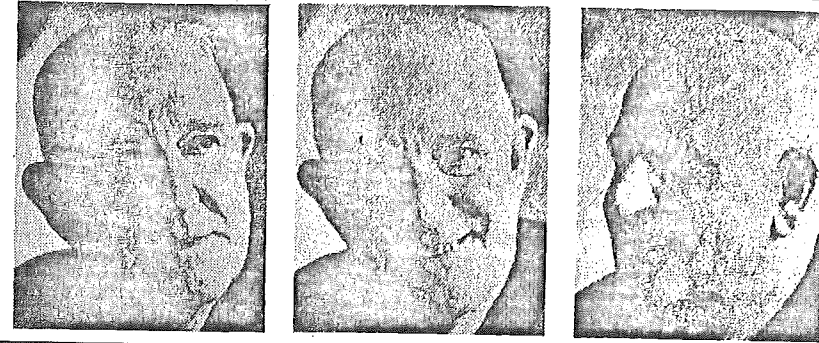
# a v.i.p. and me

(very interesting person)

By KATHLEEN A. HICKS

**"I don't say parents are all to blame, but it's hard on the kids of today to be straight. I feel sorry for them really."**

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By Kathleen A. Hicks

**GARNET MCGILL:**

Former Police Chief — Mississauga Police Dept.  
Retired

**ME:** You have been acclaimed as being responsible for the police department being what it is today (two-man force in 1944 to 190 after 28 years in 1971); the best in Canada. How does this make you feel?

**MR. MCGILL:** It makes me feel very humble and very proud; and yet it wasn't one person alone who made it that way. It was all of us working together and having one common goal. I always had the feeling that our policeman who was out in the patrol cruiser was our good-will ambassador, and his looks and his dignity and decorum and treatment of the public was our best advertisement or illustration of a good police department.

**ME:** Tell me about when you started on the Toronto Township Police Force in 1944.

**MR. MCGILL:** There was a county constabulary, then the Township of Toronto appointed Mr. Belford as the first police chief. Ben Drennan was hired as a constable, and then Mr. Kilpatrick; this was prior to my starting in 1944.

When I started, I was the third policeman on the force at that time, because Mr. Belford had died just before I started, and Mr. Kilpatrick later quit and joined the Peel County Children's Aid; he left to form the Peel County branch. It had been run jointly as Peel-Halton. So that left the two of us for about two years to run the department alone.

Later, Ted Cavan was hired and then Russ Lawrence came down from Malton after Malton police force was taken over by the township. There were four of us when Bruce Kivell and Gordon Stanfield were hired in April of '46; and that made us a six-man police force and I was appointed chief that year.

**ME:** A policeman must be honest in thought and deed in both his official and personal life. Was this sometimes a difficult thing to do?

**MR. MCGILL:** Yes — I suppose it was. Sometimes it was difficult because you have to set an example for the public. And I was born and raised here and I knew so many people. But it didn't impose that much pressure because the friends that I had never took advantage of our friendship by asking me for favors.

They felt that they didn't want to jeopardize my job or friendship, for which I was very thankful. And this was the basis I operated on and I was very pleased that no one tried to take advantage of it.

I was brought up very strictly; my mother was a very strict Methodist. She seemed to lay down the law to us and we had to do certain things and obey certain rules. I suppose this continued on into my later life.

**ME:** What was the most dangerous incident you ever came up against?

**MR. MCGILL:** One incident I remember quite well took place in November of 1945. I was attending a murder trial at Brampton and we received a call that some boys had been blown up with grenades on the practice range at the Army camp in Lakeview.

Ed Cavan and I went down to the camp and there was snow on the ground at the time. Ed had been overseas and he knew what grenades would do, and I didn't know, but I had a good idea.

We had to go in — no one else would. I led off, pushing my feet along the ground and he followed in my footsteps until we got to where the boys were.

In the meantime, the ambulance came and the attendants wouldn't go in either. The C.O. at the camp ordered two sergeants to go in with us, and one fellow said he had been in the army four years overseas and he wasn't going to come

back here and get blown up. Eventually, they agreed to come in behind us.

Cavan and I took in a stretcher and they came in with the second one, and stayed right in our original tracks. We managed to get up to the two boys — they were pretty badly mangled — and put them on the stretchers. By this time it was really dark and we had to work by flashlight.

I'll tell you, when we finally got out of there we were really scared. God was certainly with us all, because when they flared the field off, hundreds of grenades blew up. That was a bad one.

Another time, I nearly had my head taken off with a machete knife. There was a chap who was released from the psychiatric hospital and he had gotten drunk and gone home and put everyone out of the house and was holding everyone at bay with a 30-30 — .306 rifle.

He poked it out through the window, and there weren't enough posts or trees to hide behind. I managed to creep around the house and I crawled up on a coal bin and looked in the window. I saw him trying to pry out a shell that had got jammed in the rifle.

I jumped off the bin and landed on a scoop shovel and it hit me in the shin and cut me wide open. I picked up the shovel and tip-toed up the stairs and smashed open the door.

He had a little old-fashioned revolver there and he pointed that at me and I hit it out of his hand with the shovel. Then I went to reach for the revolver and as I bent down he swiped at me with the machete, and I heard swoosh over my head.

That scared the life out of me, and I hauled off and hit him with the shovel that time, but good, and knocked him right into the corner.

**ME:** What is the funniest thing that ever happened to you while you were on the force

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# 'Like a game of hare and hounds'

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**MR. MCGILL:** It's hard to pick out any one thing; we've had a lot of laughs over different things. But I guess the one we've had the most laughs over is when I was getting a haircut in 1946 and the Royal Bank was robbed.

I heard someone screaming and I ran out of the barber shop, and I knew the girls who were screaming were from the bank. I ran over to the bank and as I was passing between the store and the bank, I saw these two men standing behind the picket fence and they each had a gun in their hands.

I leapt over the fence and walked over to them and demanded their guns. They both handed them over and wheeled around and walked ahead of me into the bank and into the manager's office.

One chap sat down and put his feet up on the desk, and the other one sat down, casual as you please, as though they were in there to get a loan or something.

I was standing in the doorway with the guns in my hands, old beat-up guns you'd ever seen in your life. I would be afraid to shoot them for fear they would blow up.

It was only a little past 9 in the morning and some of the staff had come in and they were peering over my shoulder.

I said, "I guess somebody had better phone the police." But the funniest part of this whole story is that these two chaps broke a window in the bank on the Saturday night. They stayed over Sunday, and when they got hungry, they climbed out the window, took a taxi from across the street down to Port Credit and had Chinese food and came back and climbed back into the bank.

One of the local fellows, I kid him to this day; he and one of the cashiers were tied up down in the basement, and he later married her.

**ME:** What part of your policeman career remains with you today?

**MR. MCGILL:** The change in people and their thinking and attitudes towards all types of authority. This is what still amazes me. When I first started, it was like a game of hare and hounds; you caught your burglar or house breaker and he said, "You've got me," and that was it.

He used to laugh and say, "What am I good for this time?" But as the years went by — a decade or so — then came your younger, more hardened criminal, and they were more vicious. And you couldn't trust them.

It came along since that time, it seemed to me, that they became more vicious and did more destruction and were more ready to do violence to you and violence to anyone else without any conscience about their actions.

I don't say parents are all to blame, but it's hard on the kids of today to be straight. I feel sorry for them, really.

It's difficult for them if they haven't had some guide lines to follow. There has to be that. I think it's our rapid growth, this contributes to it, and I think it's our apartment living and I also think that it's the decade of permissiveness, even in our parliamentarians and

our law-makers — just permissiveness, absolutely and positively.

I hope the time comes with your sons and daughters and my sons and daughters that it will be a different ball game from now on.

**ME:** What was the whole experience like for you, and what did it contribute to your life?

**MR. MCGILL:** It was a wonderful experience. It is something I would never want to go through again, but I would never want to have missed. Somehow or other, I guess I was a little like my mother.

She used to take in every stray animal or orphan and try to help them, and I tried to help a lot of people as much as I could. I didn't break the law doing it. I gave advice on the law. I hoped that somehow or other that in some way we could point out that peace would truly keep us friends rather than be on opposite ends of the pole, you might say.

This is something I always tried to preach and tried to live by. I used to bring kids home for supper or overnight or give them money for bus fare to get home.

I guess it gave me a great deal of personal satisfaction to have someone who I was a part of sending down for two years and having them get out and come back after 18 months and say, "Mr. McGill, would you help me get a job?"

**ME:** You retired in January '72; was this a disappointing time for you?

**MR. MCGILL:** I was quite sick for two years and I didn't know what was wrong with me. I was physically and mentally exhausted, I guess. Then I found out I had rheumatoid arthritis, and it was gradually getting worse.

They gave me a leave of absence, but I was just not getting better. So I told them I would have to retire at the end of the year; that was the fall of '71. So it was a sad time for me.

Bruce Kivell was appointed the new chief, and I was glad about that; then he had to resign and now Doug Burrows has been given the task of heading up the regional police, and I am really thrilled for him.

I have been in and out of hospitals and have taken treatments; now I have a masseur and he has given me a new lease on life. I feel better now than I have in five years.

**ME:** Give me a little background on the days on your father's farm on Mississauga Rd. where the Erindale College now sits.

**MR. MCGILL:** It was a beautiful farm — I was born there. I had two brothers and three sisters. I started off at the old, two-room school, Springfield School, that my mother went to.

I used to work on the farm with my father. We had mixed farming in those days; we had cows, pigs, chickens, turkeys, an orchard and vegetable garden.

We used to take the apples into the market in Toronto, and we sold milk to Cooksville Dairy when it first started in the '20s.

You worked hard on the farm; it was a healthy life. When I look back at it now, there were some awfully good times. My father was a wonderful man; he never seemed to be too tired to spend some time with us.

After all the chores were done, he used to take us fishing down at the Credit River. In the winter we would go on sleigh rides and skate at the Erindale dam. It's those things that you remember.

**ME:** Do you feel you have enjoyed life to the fullest or have you still got things you hope to conquer?

**MR. MCGILL:** No, I don't think I have lived life to the fullest yet. Maybe I had a pie-in-the-sky idea prior to my retirement. I always looked forward to my retirement, because I felt I had so many things to do.

We educated our four children, and we bought and paid for this house, and from then on I wanted to shrug off a lot of responsibility and I wanted to escape I guess from the police department, and the complaints of people and trying to satisfy council and everybody;

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this was my pie in the sky. And I don't think you can ever do that.

You can't become an island. You have to mix with people, depend on people, socialize and all the rest of it.

You have certain obligations and responsibilities that you must do regardless of whether you are retired or not.

I think, now, I might be directed to something by someone up above who will figure out how I can help people in some way.