

# His good luck charm is a putty medal

McNairs  
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The only man I know who was ever actually awarded a putty medal is Kenneth Arthur Rowe, industrial commissioner for the town of Mississauga. The medal hangs in his office.

"I regard it as a most valued possession," he told me, "and it has helped me immeasurably in my career."

It doesn't look like much — the lid from a paint can filled with putty and inscribed with the words: "Presented to Kenneth Arthur Rowe for general proficiency in dryer technique."

You are probably wondering — just as I did — how come its owner regards it as so valuable and just how it could have helped him in his career. I'll explain, but be patient. To get a true appreciation of the putty medal's value you need to know something about the Mississaugan medalist's history.

I called on Ken Rowe, not with the intention of getting a story, but in order to consult with him regarding the first number of a Mississauga annual business review which our paper will be shortly publishing. One thing led to another and before I knew it I found myself listening to a panegyric on the virtues, the beauties and the all-round excellence of Mississauga, particularly as an industrial location.

"This comes of wearing a new suit," I thought. "He probably thinks I'm some big industrialist looking for a plant site."

But no, it wasn't that. Ken Rowe is what I would call an exuberant Mississaugan and he finds it hard to keep his enthusiasm in check — which is not a bad fault for an industrial commissioner.

And it was certainly an attitude tailored to fit this series I am doing on the new Mississaugans, so I forgot the statistical information I had come to enquire about and probed into the respondent's past, which I figured would be a lot more interesting. So don't go away because I'm coming to the putty medal.



Kenneth Arthur Rowe

Ken Rowe was born in Ottawa and left high school during the hungry thirties. He was lucky, he found a job with the Ottawa Paint Company — the only paint manufacturing concern then between Toronto and Montreal. He got along well and finally left them to join Brandram Henderson in Montreal.

"My nine years with that firm did a lot for me," he said. "The managing director, Norman Holland, was a dynamic man and a perfectionist. As a result of my association with him I became something of a perfectionist, too."

He stole a glance at the putty medal and shook his head — a little sadly, it seemed to me.

Kenneth Rowe stayed with Brandram Henderson in Montreal from 1940 until 1949. In that year he was offered and accepted a job with the paint division of the Ferro Corporation in Cleveland whose main interest was in producing porcelain enamel. He was appointed technical director of a division started to manufacture a much-touted substitute, but this department was sold to another company when the Ferro Corporation decided to stick with its original product.

In 1954 Ken Rowe returned to Canada to join Canadian Pittsburgh Industries as a special sales representative dealing with four customers only — Ford, General

# By ARTHUR LOWE

Motors, Massey-Ferguson and Avro.

"It was my job to handle their special paint problems," he said, "and it was during this time that I caught on to the coming importance of the Mississauga area. It was just bursting to grow."

In 1954 Canadian Pittsburgh opened a research laboratory and Ken Rowe was appointed chief chemist in charge of general industrial development. He remained in the job for 13 years until he received a Call — but it was not that sort of Call; it was from Mississauga.

Never doubting the validity of the Call he took on the job of Industrial Commissioner, succeeding William Courtney, another exuberant Mississaugan, who retired in January '67.

"You are indubitably the right man for the job," I said, remembering how close he had come to unloading a fac-

tory site on to an impoverished reporter, "but what started it all? What prompted you to desert industry in order to promote industry?"

"It began in 1954 when we moved into Applewood Acres," he said. "The housing development was completely new and those of us who bought houses were strangers to one another. As a matter of necessity we had to get together in order to secure representation on the township government. Naturally this gave us an insight into municipal problems and we were responsible for first getting Chic Murray elected to Council.

"Because of my interest in the township's future I was appointed to the planning board and served a couple of terms as Chairman . . ."

It all seemed so simple the way Ken Rowe put it, and when he began eulogizing Mississauga again I realized that it wasn't a sales' talk for my benefit — it was the irrepressible expression of his faith. He loves the place; he sees it burgeoning into the Ideal City.

"But not a Pittsburgh," he said. "Not a dirty, grimy place with facto-

ries crowding one another for a place in the sky. I look for it to become a city in which it will be a joy to work — and heaven to live.

"When it comes to gaining new industries I sometimes get carried away. . . ." He glanced up at the plaster medal.

"Once when I was a paint man I did get carried away and I put double the amount of chemical needed as a catalyst into a batch of paint we were making — and ruined the lot. That is when the staff presented me with the putty medal. It has proved invaluable for when I begin to act like a Big Shot I just have to look at it to remind myself that I'm not so smart. Knowing that has saved me from a lot of poor decisions . . ."

Kenneth Arthur Rowe is a family man, which he regards as another reason for living in Mississauga. A fine place for bringing up youngsters, he says — there's space, lots of space. He married his wife Virginia in Montreal and they have three children Ruth, 18, Richard, 16, and Elaine, "a delightful little troublemaker." 11.

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