



## A driver's story

By Noble Dave Gillies

"Want to come? Just a short uneventful trip to Erie" you said. A horn honks in the driveway at 5:45am and I stumble out of the house bleary-eyed with coffee in hand.

My pilot, wide awake at the wheel says we are low on gas and no service stations are open yet; oh well we're off anyway.

It's so early mother and child aren't up when we arrive, we do get a chance to shovel off the wheel chair ramp in the dark.

All loaded up and we're off and running for the border, cleared with ease and on the boulevard along with the early morning commuters. All is well.

The conversation is starting to lull when suddenly the van rockets from one lane to the other without notice. What the heck was that? Our pilot applies full left rudder to counteract the gale force winds blowing across the highway and everyone's on full alert now.

Co-piloting is supposed to be a no brainer but the wind is buffeting and banging the sides of the van. All I can do is fidget in the seat.

Some whimpering from the back seat can be heard over the wind as the service dog grovels under the seat shaking uncontrollably. Mom's voice is also heard with some back seat driving advice which almost drowns out mine, but not quite. "Slow down!"

As we wander down the highway the usual light conversation has come to an abrupt halt. The van is jumping from lane to lane all with no apparent movement of the wheel by our white knuckled driver. We silently wonder are we going to make it; should we turn around being half way there; why are all the truckers running slow with the four way flashers on?

Rounding a corner all we can see are large black transport trailer doors. The wheels are on top! It's upside down in the ditch over on the other side of the steel barrier, cab and all! The barrier hasn't a scratch on it but the truck sure has. It must have been literally picked up and flipped over that two or three foot high barricade. As we crept by we were happy to see the driver was OK, out and talking on the cell phone.

Down the road what's that? Lots of flashing lights ahead, we slow down from 50km to see another wreck.

What a mess; five transports jumbled together, three in the ditch overturned; one had crushed a pickup, and one lay across our two lanes of the thruway. After we carefully threaded through the mess and around the emergency vehicles another double trailer transport lies with its rear trailer overturned.

A fellow courier truck sits on the shoulder with a long gash in its second trailer. Part of his load, possibly Christmas mail had spilled out. Someone's going to miss out on Christmas this year.

Through all that mess and down the road we cross the state line, only a short way to go now. A timid little female voice in the van's rear is heard. Someone urgently needs to dispose of the morning coffee intake.

The high winds must have knocked out the power cause the nice welcome centre at the state line was closed. With no facilities open there or at the next exit, someone's legs and fingers were crossed until we saw lights on at an exit in the distance. Here we were able to stop at the first gas station much to someone's relief.

With winds still howling we reached the hospital and checked in; child, mother, dog and us, all safe and sound.

Later on the way home under at times bright and sunny skies the radio crackled with news of a railway accident. Earlier in northeast, a suburb of Erie the train had 6 railway cars blown over while it was moving down the track!

All that havoc in one morning and no one was seriously hurt.

Was it possible that our van had a big enough load on? Two overweight Shiner's to keep it down safely on the road.

Maybe it's time for a diet...?

"Hey, by the way when's the next trip scheduled?"

## ***Shriner of the Year awarded after snow almost stops the event***

MUSKOKA SHRINE CLUB

**M**uskoka remained true to tradition this winter, yes, 124 cms of snow fell within five days but our Shriners were not defeated. Our annual Christmas party occurred the day after the first 104 cms of snowfall yet 104 Shriners and Ladies did attend. It was a great fun event with one of the highlights being the award for the "Shriner of the Year". The chosen Shriner, from Gravenhurst, was awestruck, saying only, "I am truly honoured but also tongue tied. Thank you."

A recap of Christmas sales showed 3,176 cakes, 1,440 shortbreads, and 350 puddings sold for 2010, a real bonanza by good, active Shriners' work.

Is Muskoka unusual? Well we do, as one Club, serve a vast area of 4,761 sq kms, and we do have a unique Muskoka tartan jacket, a vibrant mix of green for flora, blue for water, white for snow, red for fall, and worn with pride. But, we too, suffer from attrition with 127 members dropping to 98 over 15 years, we are undaunted in our quest for new members.