

ISLAND'S LAST BUSINESSMAN

DETERMINED TO STAY TO THE

END



THE fog is so thick Toronto Island ferries have not moved for two days. The melancholy foghorn of the harbour lighthouse is a reminder to the 1,200 islanders that they are completely cut off from the mainland.

But one vessel moves. Out of the fog into Ward's Island dock chugs the scow-like "Chuckie Joe" with a cargo of essentials for the islanders — cases of beer.

From the door of the red hut amidships, which serves as a cabin, pokes the stubble-cheeked face of Ken Sinclair — one of the island's last businessmen.

The Day the Beer Boat Got Through is one of the legends of the Islands, a chain of islets which landlock Toronto harbour. It happened Grey Cup week, 1962.

But just as often Sinclair, 48, gruff, and a chronic stomach-ulcer sufferer, has piloted the funeral black "Chuckie Joe" through bad weather to bring the real essentials to the community which lives half a mile offshore from Toronto.

Ken Sinclair started his own business on Toronto's Island just after the war. He is typical of the sort of truly independents who live there. He is the last businessman. His business is dwindling. Soon the planners will take his house. After it's all gone? "I'll still be here," he says.

His Island Freight Company is haulage contractor, beer deliverer, house remover, and sole source of oil delivery during the winter.

And Sinclair, a tool designer who quit the drawing board in favour of the Islands' open air in 1946, is now philosophically waiting for the time when there will be no people left on the islands to serve.

For Metro Toronto is gradually razing the homes of the people who live there to turn the Metro-owned island into a park.

In 1952 the first 638 leases were terminated. Since then the houses are being acquired piece-meal fashion and the year-round population has been cut from 2,500 to about 1,200.

By the autumn of 1968 — if Parks' Commissioner Thomas Thompson's plans are carried through—there will be no more houses on Toronto island. Instead the unique, charming little community will consist of neat petunia beds, manicured grass, coin-operated tennis courts, a funfair, miniature golf course, miniature trains and acres of hot concrete pavement — but no people after the last ferry leaves.

And the last three remaining businesses — a boat builder, a grocery, and Island Freight — will have gone the way of all the once-flourishing businesses that thrived on the 972,000 tourists who poured onto the islands in the summer and the constant profit from 2,500 year-round residents.

The "main drag", as Manitou Road on Centre Island was called, is now a formal garden with concrete paths and square pools. Once it was a major tourist attraction and was lined with active busi-

by

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This is the tug, "Chuckie Joe", owned by the last businessman on Toronto's Island. Read about its skipper, Ken Sinclair, almost the last of Toronto's Island independents on page 15.

nesses — a dry cleaners, a summer theatre, two dairy bars, a brewers retail store, two grocery stores, bowling alleys, two hotels, and several restaurants.

These businesses were paid compensation only for the buildings — not for the business.

"By the time Metro was ready to take them they had no customers," Mr. Sinclair explains. "No customers, no business and no business compensation."

In a sense the Island Freight Company will live on after the Islands have died for the partners (Sinclair joined forces with his greatest competitors, Watts Bros. and Joyce in 1952) have been gradually transferring their interests to the mainland as more and more residents are forced to leave their island homes.

Apart from the \$15,000 worth of equipment used to service the Islands (including two trucks) the company purchased three trucks and they have started delivering domestic fuel oil in the city.

The company office has already been moved to the mainland. It was based on Centre Island until park planners moved in.

But if the Island Freight Company has a good future it's a future without its founder Ken Sinclair.

For Mr. Sinclair, like many of the islanders who are frantically battling to save their homes, cannot imagine living or working anywhere but the islands.

He intends to build a houseboat in his back yard. A project that should keep him busy during the four year wait for D-Day, 1968.

He will anchor his houseboat in some quiet lagoon and live there after the wreckers have come and gone from his street.

And then one of the most independent of businessmen Ken Sinclair will make his living working at the two Island yacht clubs.

Asked how he felt about the loss of his business and his home, Mr. Sinclair shrugged, scowled, continued to pound a nail into the side of "Chuckie Joe" and remarked: "I'll still be here."

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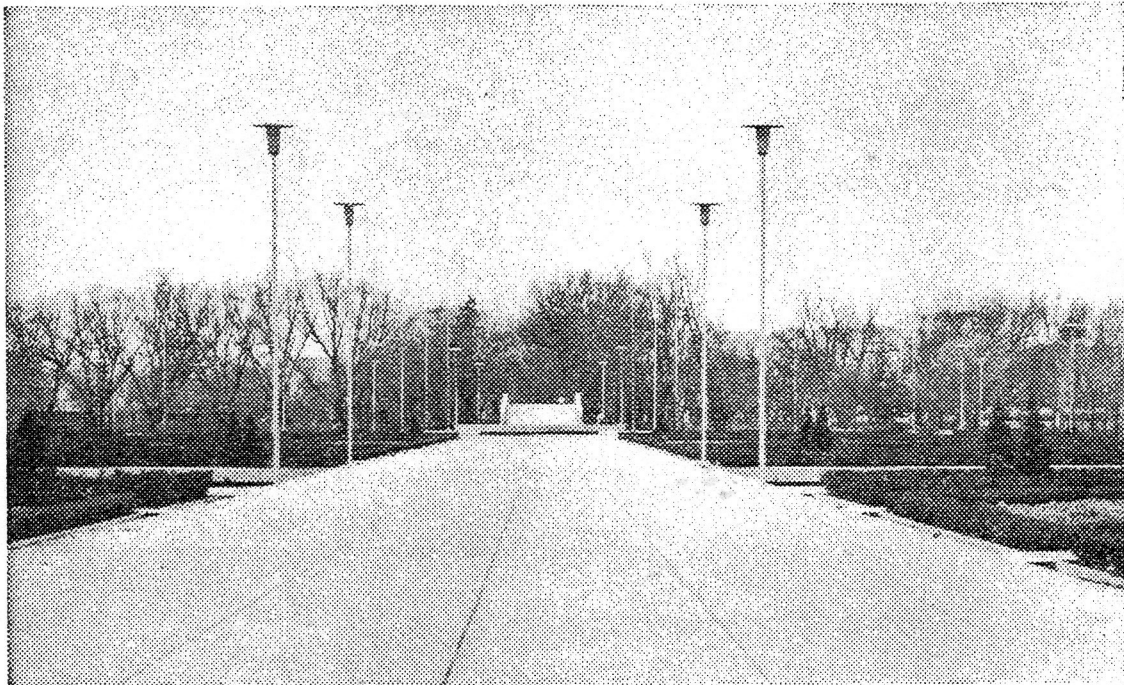
They took this and . . .



Globe and Mail

After the war the island was a natural country paradise just a short ferry ride from downtown Toronto. This was a typical scene on the island's main street, Manitou Road, a street lined with business and life.

made it into this



Today the same street looks like this—with acres of smooth, hot concrete, formal gardens, neat, tidy, hygienic, sterile and inhuman. There are still 1200 people left on the island. The planners intend to drive them all out and apply the same recipe to the rest of the streets that they applied to Manitou Road.