



Alliston's 175 yr-old Bur Oak, a.k.a. *The Sitting Duck*

Randy Greenman's Recollection



On September 3, 2005, this Bur Oak was dedicated as a heritage tree during an unveiling ceremony in Alliston attended by residents of Simcoe County . It was identified as an heritage tree through the County's Great Community Tree Hunt in 2004. One of the visitors was Randy Greenman, an Alliston resident, who had this story to tell about the tree:

"I was born in 1954 and lived two doors south of the location of the Bur Oak until 1975. My father has lived there since the mid-forties. Most of my recollections of the tree and the house at its location are involved with accidents or near accidents occurring as a result of Highway 89 taking a 90-degree jog to the north in front of the tree. I recall numerous collisions, either with the house, before the two fences were installed (in the early 1970s), or with the tree.

Late one evening my Father had driven past the "Sitting Duck" house and as he drove into the driveway, a car slammed into the tree. It was an off-duty OPP officer and as it turned out, he had a couple of dozen eggs in the back window. With the force of the collision the eggs flew forward and broke all over the inside of the car. I can remember thinking, along with others, that what we were seeing when we approached the vehicle was blood everywhere because of the glistening of the broken eggs. The officer was not badly hurt. Later the accident was attributed to fog. Fog did roll in later that night but my Father said that there was no fog at the time of the collision, so perhaps he fell asleep at the wheel.

I also remember a collision, before fences were installed, that took out the entire right half of the front wall of the house. My Dad told me that a man once ran into a sign at the front of the house, probably the stop sign, and as the pole broke it was propelled straight through one of the front windows and shot down the hallway into the kitchen.

A personal traffic accident occurred to me in the early winter of 1985. I was driving north and as I came up to the point in front of the Bur Oak, I realized that a full size van was about to pull out from the stop sign to my left, making a turn north. There were no traffic lights at that time, just a very large stop sign and a red flashing light. I had a couple of choices ~ either slam on my brakes and hope that the oncoming van did not push me into either the tree or the fence, or hit the gas and try to get out of the way. I don't remember which I did, but the van took out my driver's door and we both ended up on the sidewalk just to the north of the fence".

Note: Concerned citizens required the Ministry of Transportation to move the highway one metre away from the tree to ensure its survival. They were successful .