



Neil Young, far right, and some of his staff in front of Young's Pharmacy & Homecare.

PHOTO BY LAURENT THIBAUT

By Gloria Hildebrandt
Older photos courtesy Neil Young

Georgetown pharmacist Neil Young had a significant birthday this summer. To mark the occasion, his staff members decorated the drugstore with signs and balloons and he was flooded with cards from customers. He's touched by one handwritten note that raves about his pharmacy, calling it "a place totally unique in Ontario."

It is actually more than a drugstore and pharmacy. The gift shop area at the front displays unusual, beautiful items for home and garden, including serving dishes, scented candles, creams, lotions, soaps, signs, statuary, door mats and door knockers. There is also a cosmetics department, a post office, the dispensary, a homecare department and many consultation offices. There is even the office of a registered massage therapist.

Young's Pharmacy & Homecare occupies 9500 sq. ft. of what used to be Silver's clothing store, where shoes were sold in the basement and clothing was sold upstairs. The original two front store entrances and four huge display windows remain. Community groups are encouraged to take turns promoting their efforts in one of the windows.

Neil is celebrating another anniversary this year, the 50th year that the pharmacy has been owned by his family. It was in



Neil's father Stu worked at Robb's Drug Store in the '30s.

1958 that Neil's father Stu bought Robb's Drug Store and changed the name to Young's Pharmacy. It was incorporated a year later.

Stu began working for Robb's as a boy in 1938. Three years later, Stu enlisted and joined the R.C.A.F. At war's end he brought his British bride to Toronto where he studied pharmacy at the University of Toronto. After gradu-

ating in 1947 Stu returned to Georgetown to work at Robb's as a pharmacist before buying the business 10 years later.

Poisons For Sale

Yet the roots of Young's Pharmacy go back further still. Robb's Drug Store was located at what was then 4 Main St. North, next to the old bank building. Records show

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a J. Lasby operating a pharmacy there in 1919, but an old poison control book was discovered that shows records of poisons sold as far back as 1907.

Neil treasures this book, pointing out that a lot of strychnine was sold for the purpose of killing rats, mice, even cats, dogs and one old horse. "Strychnine is terrible," says Neil. "You go into convulsions and then die."

Neil also indicates the purchase of laudanum. "It seemed to be taken by many and for many various reasons including fever,

cough, colds and sick horses," he has written in a manuscript history of his store. "No small wonder it was popular, it did not require a doctor's order and it was made from opium!"

Neil began working in his father's pharmacy when he was in public school. In university he thought he might become an engineer but he soon changed his mind. "My father showed me that pharmacy was a good business to be in," he says. After graduating from pharmacy in 1970 Neil joined his father and business

partner at the time, Ken Milne, becoming a third partner.

In 1975 Young's opened the Medical Centre Pharmacy that they still operate near the Georgetown hospital. In 1987 Young's opened a third location, Milne Homecare and Prescription Centre on downtown's Mill St., providing Georgetown with its first line of such products as ostomy, colostomy, mobility and respiratory goods as well as aids for people with disabilities.

In 1992 the Milne Centre joined Young's Pharmacy in mov-

ing into the new larger location at 47 Main St. South. With a name change to Young's Pharmacy & Homecare, "it flourished right away because of the traffic," says Neil.

Neil has made significant structural improvements to the exterior and interior of the building, allowing for disabled access and providing many consultation and seminar rooms.

Looking After Our Customers

Everything that Neil does in his business involves service to customers. Although the postal outlet actually loses money, Neil maintains it because it draws traffic into the pharmacy. When the Canadian dollar reached the value of the U.S., the store began charging U.S. prices for cards and magazines because it didn't seem fair to charge higher Canadian prices. Yet Young's had to pay their suppliers based on the higher costs. Working for the customer is foremost in the minds of all staff members.

"I surrounded myself with like-minded people," Neil says. "I practise bottom-up management, where the managers must satisfy the needs of their employees so they can serve our customers. Nobody's above any job here. I'll clean up and take out the garbage if it needs it. It's all about looking after our customers."

Care for customers goes beyond the ordinary to considering customers' need for discretion. "We don't want to call out 'Mrs. Smith, your husband's Viagra is ready!'" explains Neil. Instead, customers are given electronic pagers to carry as they browse

The 1907 Poisons book records the sale of strychnine to kill mice, a cat & even on line 7, an old horse. The next line notes the use of laudanum for a cold.



Old pharmaceutical books and an unopened pack of cigarettes are some historical treasures of Young's Pharmacy.

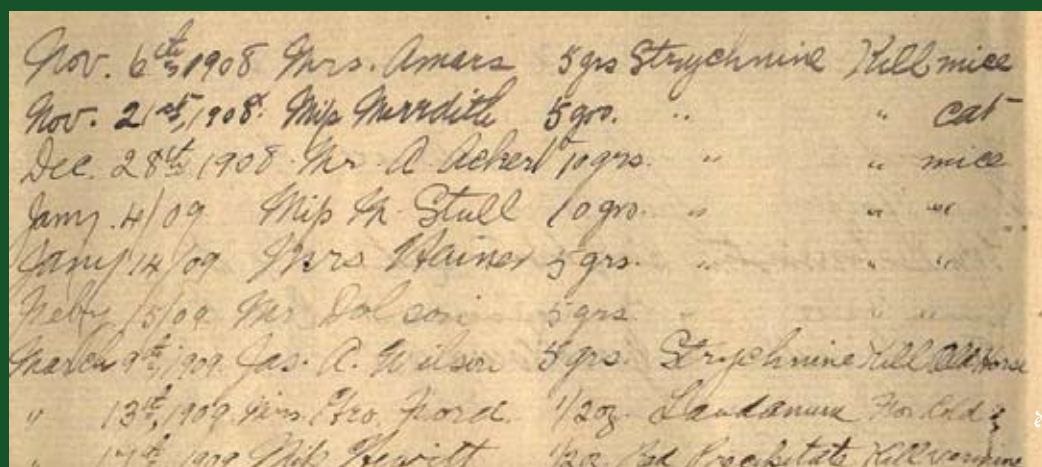


PHOTO BY MIKE DAVIS

Young's Pharmacy at 50: A Place Unique in Ontario



Stu Young, left, outside Robb's.



Stu bought Robb's in 1958.

the store while their order is being filled. When the customer returns to the dispensary, a pharmacist has a semi- or fully private consultation area to use while reviewing the drug and its use with the customer.

Young's also provides free MEDS check service, which is a government program that lets pharmacists spend 20 minutes with customers who regularly take three or more drugs, to ensure that medicines are understood and being taken properly.

"We have multiple pharmacists able to take the time to do this," says Neil, "and the prescriptions can be from any pharmacy, not just ours."

Young's also does outreach

with medical education. A registered nurse on staff conducts seminars for the public on such key health topics as diabetes, cholesterol and blood pressure. Often held in-store in a seminar room, they are also being offered through other locations. Neil calls this initiative "Know Risk Health Services." Young's can also provide home visits and consultations. They even deliver. Their distinctively marked vehicles are called Medicine Droppers.

Just 50 years later, Young's Pharmacy is fully embracing new technologies and practices to continue its long heritage of looking after its customers in ways that make it a place unique in Ontario. ■



Young's Pharmacy was located next to the old bank building until 1992.