

**1973-2023 Wostawea Time Capsule Story**  
**“Quick Thinking On the Part of Ernie MacGillivray”**  
**Story shared by David Palmer**

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One fine, bright late winter morning about twenty-one years ago, after a skiff of snow had fallen the night before, we left Fredericton early for the Charlo loppet.

By we, I mean myself, my wife Doris, our son Sebastian, Ernie MacGillivray and his two oldest boys Stewart and Duncan. Ernie was driving the family van as we headed north on Killarney Road. At the end of the long straight stretch just before the windy section going down to old Route 8, a pink Cadillac passed us going north and weaved as he got back in the right-hand lane.

“He’s drunk”, I said to Ernie. We followed the caddy up the winding Nashwaak highway and held our breath in horror as the driver repeatedly pulled out to pass the car in front, swerving dramatically and tucking back in his lane at the last minute to avoid a head-on collision.

At Lower Portage, the guy pulled over onto the snow-packed shoulder on a slight uphill incline, and Ernie pulled in about 50 metres behind. By this time, we had contacted the Fredericton police dispatcher and they had briefed the RCMP officer working the district that Sunday morning, but it was going to be a while before he could get to us.

“What are you going to do?”, I asked Ernie as he opened the van door and strode swiftly towards the caddy. “I’m going to take that guy’s keys away from him”, he said. “I’m right behind you”, I said, hurrying to catch up. The driver tried to take off when he saw us coming in the side-view mirror but spun his tires hopelessly in the fresh snow. Ernie opened the door and reached across in front of the guy meeting no resistance and took his keys! That was when we noticed the second guy passed out on the passenger seat. As for the driver, he got out of the vehicle and started walking north in the same direction he had been travelling while wobbling from side to side.

We contacted the dispatcher again and gave them a status update. After speaking with the RCMP, the dispatcher asked if we could have somebody remain with the vehicle and sleeping passenger while somebody else follow the guy on foot, keeping him in sight. Ernie agreed to stay with the sleeper, and I followed the walker with Doris and the kids in the van, keeping a discreet distance.

After about twenty minutes, our guy crossed the highway, reversed direction, and stuck out his thumb for a lift back to Fredericton. The first southbound vehicle stopped to pick him up and Doris said, “He’s getting away – you have to do something”, so I pulled up to the driver of the vehicle and signalled for him to put his window down. “Do you know this guy”, I asked. “No”, he replied. “Well,”, I said, “the police are looking for him and if I were you, I

wouldn't give him a ride", whereupon the driver turned to his passenger and politely asked him to get out. Surprisingly the guy passively obliged and set off walking back to Fredericton.

A few minutes later the police arrived, and after supplying them with statements, we continued our way to Charlo. I don't remember much about the loppet other than lots of challenging hills and bright sunny conditions.