

In the context of the era that this was written. (1950s)

When spring touches the Annapolis Valley with its pale green fingers, and timid apple blossoms peek through boughs, a crippled child may wonder at the sight. "Who makes this opportunity possible?" you ask. Your answer lies blind and paralyzed in Halifax's Camp Hill Military Hospital. Your answer is Walter Callow.

A man who cannot see, cannot touch, can never walk again, and is after 20 years illness still radiantly living and happy. Walter Callow spends every waking moment dreaming up ways to brighten the lives of crippled veterans and civilians. For 20 years he has lived thus, for the sake of others, and his proudest achievement to date is the Walter Callow Wheelchair Coach.

They call Walter Callow "the human log," because his body is twisted, gnarled and immovable. Without motion or sight, how could a man invent a coach for crippled folk to ride in? Yet the coach is only one of his seeming miracles.

Although he is known as the "genius of Halifax" it takes more than brains to change daring dreams to reality. The dreams of Walter Callow take an iron will, great organizing and executive ability, a godlike patience, and a heart full of love for suffering humanity. "The human log" possesses all of these qualities.

Born in the Nova Scotian town of Parrsboro, Walter Callow (pronounced Ca-loo, with the accent on the last syllable) spent his youth there, learning to be a mechanic. He grew up in the cosmopolitan atmosphere of a "mixed" marriage, for his mother was a Canadian and his father American, a veteran of the Civil War. Both staunch individualists, the father each year celebrated July 4th as strenuously as possible, following the family observance of July 1st. Walter appears to have inherited his Mother's loyalty and love of country, and his father's sturdy independence. Both bequeathed him with a keen sense of humour, a priceless gift for the life he was to lead.

By 1916 Walter was a partner in a small business. Then he sold out his share and entered the Royal Flying Corps. It was during his training as a pilot in Mohawk Camp, Ontario in 1917 that some of Walter's difficulties began. With the carefree daring of youth from time immemorial, he accompanied a test pilot on a test flight. They crashed, and he was hospitalized for a severe back injury until 1918, when they allowed him to return home.

Thirteen years of stout-hearted resistance followed. He was making frequent trips to the hospital for treatment, and stubbornly carrying on a lumber business in Advocate, Nova Scotia. Then in 1931 Walter's wife died. Although hospital stays consumed more

and more of his time, he still pursued his business activities. He recalls his experiences in an article he wrote in 1945:

"The will to do, or the incentive is perhaps the most important requirement for a disabled person. In my case the will to do stemmed from the fact that my mother and wife both died within a year of the time I became bedridden and I had to support and educate a 10-year-old daughter. This I was able to do by various means- buying and selling real estate contracting, the lumber business, the stock market and so on..."

What of the daughter whom he felt so responsible for? Since Walter's bleakest days she has graduated with her nurse's degree and now is the wife of Dr. J.K. Morrison of St. Peters NS In 1937 Walter entered Camp Hill Hospital for the last time. In 1939 he became totally blind. Now let us see how this motionless, hopeless-seeming man carries on his self-imposed task of benefiting fellow sufferers.

Walter Callow has a suite of offices at the big Camp Hill Military Hospital in Halifax. His own room is a hive of industry, where his secretary answers telephone calls all day long. If Walter himself must speak, a special device is slipped over his head with a tiny earphone and a mouth piece. He cannot hold anything in his bent hands and arms. Indeed, he cannot so much as turn his head. Constantly in pain, he lies on his back, his head a little lower than his body.

In this position, unchanging through the hours, days and years, Walter Callow commandeers a board of directors, a public relations expert, two secretaries, and a host of volunteers. He appointed them all and they all report to his bedside. As Walter himself explains to visitors "In this little hospital room we operate a bus line, a moving picture, we give away prizes, carry on raffles, and auctions. In this hospital room we make the spirit of Christ live." Every year thousands of dollars pour into this office bedroom, dedicated to his works of love.

John Fisher, roving reporter for the CBC, who visits Walter Callow regularly, made this report on "The Human Log with a heart."

"Walter looks like a big log covered in white," John fisher reports. "Yet his voice has the warm undertones of a physician or minister." Before his first visit Fisher had been asked by Walter Callow to bring with him three copies of every telephone book between Regina and Halifax. the request seemed impossible to fulfill, so Fisher suggested that Walter write the telephone companies for them.

You may imagine Fisher's surprise then, when his first conversation with Walter opened in this cheery vein. "Is that you John?" Walter asked. "Sorry I can't see you John, and I can't even shake hands with you. But say, John, did you see the telephone directories

pilled up over there? We got them all right!" Such gaiety you might expect from a man of great physical strength upon whom had been bestowed every gift that this world has in store for its most favoured sons.

Walter Callow is the first to point out how indispensable to him his helpers are. Without the two young girls who take his dictation and type his letters, his would be a voice in the wilderness. But with them and other helpers, and the aid of the telephone directories, his role of competent business man is assured. The yellow pages give him a clue to advertisers all over North America, and his appealing letters to them do the rest. Financial help for his charitable enterprises knows no boundary of distance or nationality.

Although Walter's number one project since 1945 has been his wheelchair coach, World War II veterans still like to remember him as their cigarette Santa Claus. At no other time has his organizing and executive ability been more clearly evident, than during the war years. Canadians serving overseas received over three million cigarettes in his name!

Cigarettes were ammunition for a soldier's morale, particularly while in "sick bay." Walter knew this truism so well he was determined to send every cigarette overseas he possibly could. First he raffled his radio that netted him \$1200 for the infant fund. Next he gave up smoking himself. That means the fellows who held the cigarettes for him started to serve him in other ways. With the extra money from this, his one luxury he bought and raffled Victory bonds. From one, valued at \$50, he obtained \$1400. Friends and servicemen in Canada and the United States supported his earliest efforts.

Walter was something of a poet. Inspired by the boys' growing need for cigarettes, he penned many a stirring quatrain. That means he dictated the words to a stenographer. Try it sometime. His poems sang of freedom and the love of man, and he had them printed in little illustration folder. They sold heavily, adding \$8000 to the Callow Cigarette Fund. Soon clubs and individuals came to the Fund's assistance. Concerts were given and contributions grew in every way.

You might call Walter Callow a bank president if you were careful to specify "Canadian Cigarette Bank." Yes, his was the brain behind that colossal enterprise. When a donor sent money to a cigarette company, the order was mailed overseas, where the cigarettes were safely and quickly drawn from a "bank" and dispatched to their recipient. The time saved was nearly three months, over the old method.

His war services over, Walter turned his active mind to the crippled veteran. Accordingly he started thinking of ways and means to help all invalids called "shut-ins." He hit on the idea of a wheelchair coach. He designed it, and the first one was built

under his exacting directions in Pubnico, Nova Scotia that same year. This first coach cost \$15000, but the second was less; \$13000. Probably mass production techniques would bring the price down still farther. There is nothing our stationary hero would sooner hear, than that his coaches will be mass-produced.

Future busses will be custom-built models designed to carry 12 wheelchairs each. The wheelchairs used in the coaches are especially designed by Walter and are adaptable to the patient's needs. (They will stretch right out if necessary.) The back of the coaches becomes a hydraulic ramp, which is lowered to allow the wheelchairs to come aboard easily. They are then locked down into position so that there is no possibility of accident.

Walter now has two wheelchair coaches operating in the Maritimes every day of the year. He has insisted that they are for the benefit of civilian shut-ins as well as veterans. In his office he has a list of hundreds of shut-ins whom his coaches are to chauffeur around. They operate on a schedule directed by Walter, who can account for every gallon of gas, and who knows every knob on the dashboard although he has never been able to see them or feel them.

General Motors and Ford have both assured Walter Callow they could handle orders for his wheelchair coaches. That is why he is trying to get his idea before the Canadian and American governments. He would like help from them to brighten the life of every invalid on the continent.

The latest coaches being built in Quebec are fitted with eight basket stretchers, similar to those used by the Air Force, making it possible to carry 20 stretcher coaches in each coach in case of an emergency. This is possible as the twelve wheelchairs in each coach are so designed that each may be flattened out in stretcher position so that they are stretchers in themselves. The basket stretchers when not in use will be carried at all times in the luggage compartment under the coach so that the coaches are ready for an emergency at all times. The coaches complete with trained staff will be turned over to the Civil Defence Authorities immediately and for the duration of any emergency.

A typical week the Walter Callow bus might go to Fredericton, New Brunswick or Amherst, Nova Scotia. Up and down residential streets it rolls, picking up the shut-ins, some of whom may not have been seen outdoors for twenty years. They blink like moles in the sunlight scarcely believing they can be actually off to a picnic or to a football game. Walter knows the diversity of human interests and he takes these into account when he plans the trips. His guests go to movies, football games, parades, or symphony concerts. His bus plants the invalids in the heart of the apple blossom

festival, or on hand for a ship launching. It's a free ride for rich and poor, no matter how far the destination.

Who are the passengers in the wheelchair coach? Children from the Polio Clinic, and the Children's Hospitals; Veterans from Camp Hill Hospital and the Navy Hospitals; "the old folk" from County Homes, Catholic and Protestant homes, Masonic Homes and Odd Fellows' Homes. After their rides, they quite often find that they are guests for a dinner, or a picnic supper. Their hosts on these occasions may be the Odd Fellows, Rebekah Chapters, Pythian Sister, the Order of The Eastern Star, the legion or of private citizens.

With his usual efficiency, Walter had a name for his organization to finance the coaches as early as 1945. Now the "Callow Veterans' and Invalids' Welfare League" maintains a downtown office in Halifax, boasts a board of directors, and daily incoming mail that speaks volumes for its fame and activities.

Support for his wheelchair coaches came from all over Canada. Organizations like the Nova Scotia Teachers' Union, the Canadian Girl Guides and the British Columbia Department of Education have promised assistance.

Once a year on the second week in September in Halifax, he holds "Callow Week" when the public is asked for aid for his enterprises.

The poet in Walter comes out in the springtime, as it does in more fortunate individuals. He salutes the season with an injunction to the drivers to "drive slowly along old country roads." Solitary trees and gleaming brooks, and Annapolis's famous apple orchards wait to charm his crippled guests. As the human spirit soars in spring's fresh newness, Walter's invalids too, feel renewed hope because of him.

Since the advent of the coach, he has persuaded Halifax's leading ice forum to build an outside entrance ramp and a special insulated box for his wheelchair friends. Right over the goalpost and beside the press box this air-conditioned, heated, all glass booth was built. During a big game, Walter's busses do a roaring trade picking up the invalid sports fans.

While the original coach was under construction, Walter, realizing the necessity for a specially constructed pavilion for the patients set out to have one built at the Halifax Forum before the coach should be completed. The Standard Construction Company built it to Walter's specifications. The insulated, heated air-conditioned and glassed-in pavilion was officially opened by Hon. Angus L Macdonald, Premier of Nova Scotia and City Officials at a hockey game sponsored by the Halifax Kinsmen's Club and Walter's

Organization. The receipts which netted \$2200 and were applied to the approximate \$6000 cost of construction.

Another idea Walter had, to utilize his wheelchair coach, centres around the Nova Scotia College of Art. There were two classes, one for adults and one for children, held on different days of the week. The adults were learning practical crafts like leather work and silver work. The children do the simpler things like making cards and paper dolls. Teachers report the morale and enthusiasm in both groups was wonderful. The adults, they are beginning to make things for sale, and still keep up with their instruction courses. For some of them, it is the first money they have ever earned, being invalids.

Walter has still other accomplishments that even a normal man might envy. There was his share in exhibiting to Haligonians a surrendered German submarine..... and in more practical vein his invention of a combination knife-and-fork for one armed people. Users report it is simplicity itself! Scimitar shaped, you roll it back and forth to cut, and turn it over to use as a fork, for the tines are on the dull top part of the blade.

Besides his practical usefulness, Walter has set himself an ideological mission. Because seriously disabled men are bound to be depressed, and to feel themselves useless burdens, Walter Callow is steadfastly setting an example that should give heart to anyone. Thousands of servicemen knew of him and his work, so it was natural of the disabled ones to seek his inspiration in person. Thousands have received renewed hope at his bedside. His creed strengthens them-- "If a person has a healthy mind, hearing and voice, and the will to do, he can still live a useful life."

In 1945 Walter wrote an article for the Canadian Press addressed to the disabled, and to their families. the love and wisdom in it should not lose their appeal with time. "Disabled men, above all, should be made to realize they are needed," he wrote. " whatever the disability- blindness, amputation, spinal injuries-they can still be useful citizens. Disabled friends of mine have found careers in law, medicine, teaching, music, farming, draughting, forestry, and painting among other things.

"Many of these men who were young and irresponsible before going overseas have become accustomed to assuming heavy responsibilities, and have gained practical experience in many fields. If they are given full support, they can become invaluable to their country."

For the loved ones of those who paid the final price, Walter had comfort too. His poem, "They Live On" he dedicated to the late President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and all others who died for freedom.

If we should not come back some day to you
O'er tossing seas, our friendship to renew;
If far from home our bodies should remain,
Take comfort-- souls of ours return again.

If we should not return, but give our life
To free the world of cruel wars and strife,
We would not have you think that we are gone.
For though the body dies the soul lives on.

If we should not return, the price is low:
Life's short at best, and soon to death we go;
We give out all that victory may be won
And freedom saved- passed on from sire to son.

Mourn not for us if we should not return,
When days are dark the lamps of memory burn.
Frequent familiar paths at eventide,
For we, in spirit, will be at your side.

With each returning tide that fills the bay
We'll come to watch the children laugh and play.
Whatever the price, we shrink not at the cost
That freedom like theirs may not be lost.

Much of the sunshine in Walter's outlook stems from the wonder and gratitude his work creates. A Protestant himself, the Catholic Church has given him its blessing on more than one occasion. To St. Patrick's every other Sunday go about 20 invalids Catholics, driven there in a Callow Wheelchair Coach. "These people would not otherwise get to mass. Indeed one old gentleman had not seen the inside of his church for 30 years," the St. Patrick's bulletin commented. "Again let us express our appreciation of the wonderful work being done by Mr. Walter Callow and his organization. May god richly bless his work.

There was the full coach of invalids that John Fisher interviewed. they told him how it felt to at last have something to wait for, to be able to escape the walls that made their only world. And one man expressed the joy of the whole group, saying, "Mr. Fisher, I have been shut in my house for over 25 years and I believed that I would never again see the outdoors. Each night I thank god for this man Walter Callow, because he has

made me live again. Why Imaging! Last week I sat at the seashore and trickled the sand through my fingers, and we ate fresh-caught lobster. This winter I am going to see a hockey game!"

In 1958 the Mutual Broadcasting System gave Walter Callow "The Golden Rule Award," as the man on this continent who in their opinion conducted his life closest to the golden rule. He has been called the greatest man in Canada by humble folk and people in high place. One thing is for sure--no man has a heart more overflowing with the love of suffering humanity. Walter is a personality and a power, who has made famous his hospital, his city, and his province.

Blind, helpless in limb and body, Walter sums up his own case in these words, "I could be a lot worse, I want to thank God that at least I can talk and think. I want to repay him for I believe that after a man dies they will ask only one question: 'What did he do for others?' In bringing affection to the afflicted, I am serving Him."