

Lifestyle

HERO OF ENTEBBE

To us it's a mess, to Sid i

By SANDRA NAIMAN
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Sid Hurwich loves his basement. For him it's a dungeon of glory, a laboratory, a repairery and a sanctuary.

It's also an amazing mess. But out of this mess he invented the device that was responsible for the success of the Entebbe raid, a device that wiped out radar and froze the detection, reception and transmission instruments of Entebbe allowing the Israeli planes to land.

For him, this mass of messiness is paradise. It's his therapy and he'll tell you repeatedly, "My work has kept me alive."

There are miles of wires. Dozens of vacuum cleaner hoses seem to crawl over the doors like headless snakes, boxes on boxes of parts and numbered bits and metal pieces are piled against the walls. Plastic shopping bags line the floor filled with unretrieved and occasionally unrepaired booty.

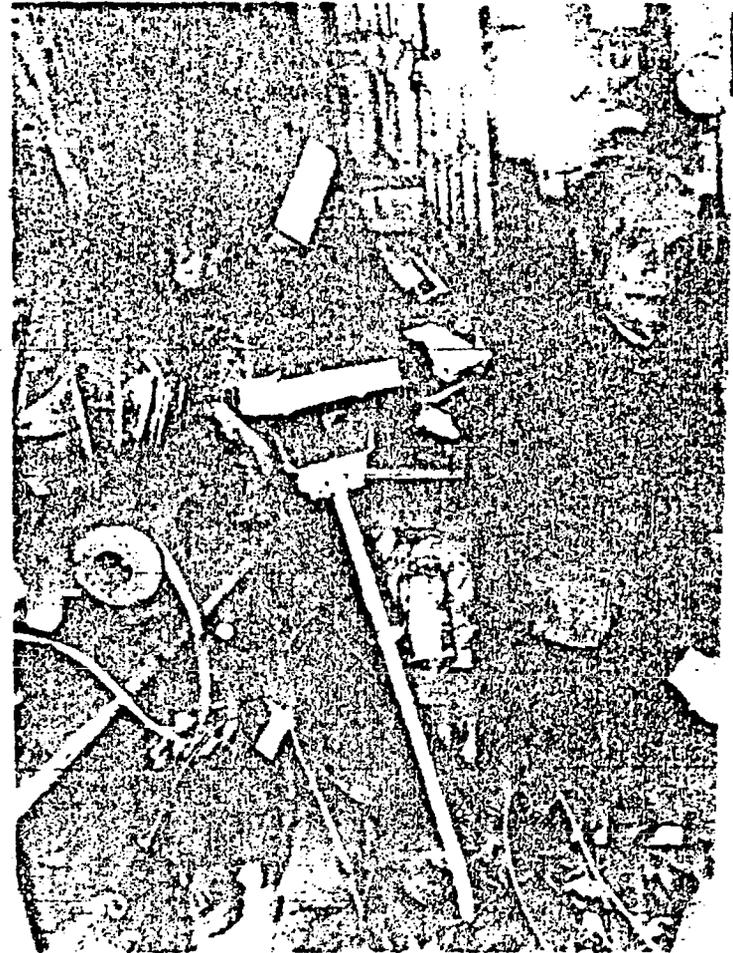
Anything broken, old, outdated, the "grief jobs" that can't or won't be repaired elsewhere, the appliances that require parts that are no longer manufactured are sitting around Sid's basement. And remarkably, he knows where everything is.

His is a curious museum of modern technology, slightly offbeat and decidedly out of order. And there is a steady flow of customers who creak down those stairs, carefully cradling their toasters that no longer toast and irons that no longer iron.

From the time he ran a hardware and appliance repair shop to the golden days of his Shock Electric Company on Broadbalt Street, he's been Canada's self-taught king of electronics.

"I was always a mechanical kid," he says. "Taking things apart and putting them together was my kind of fun. When I was 10 years old I used to work for a rag and scrap pedlar. Out of five old bikes I could make three for 50 cents a bike."

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At 12, Sid got into electricity. He could wire a house, converting it from gas light to electricity in a few days. "Mind you, in those days, a house had one plug and a single light bulb in the ceiling."
In the 30s, electrical appliances consisted of toasters, waffle irons, irons, coffee percolators and vacuum cleaners. If something broke, you went back to the place of purchase for repairs.
In 1935, Sid opened up a hardware and electric store on Bloor, between Christie and Clinton Streets. He and his young wife — they were married when they were 17 — lived behind the store.
"My wife worked in the store, and people could see the repair shop where I worked," he says. "I was the only man in the city doing repair work, and it grew. I took in help and eventually it became the largest part of my business. Toward the beginning of the war, the government prohibited metals, so I started making my own parts. Soon I had all the major manufacturers, General Electric, Silex, Sunbeam, sending me their repairs. Eaton's and Simpsons sent trucks of stuff over every day. CN and CP sent me truck loads of repairs. Even Hydro

SID HURWICH — glorying in the mass of wires and old appliances that have made him the king of electro

had notified all public utilities of my work."
"During the war, I got deferments because I was doing work for the army, in the civil defence department, and working with the police."
His business became too big for the Bloor Street shop, so in 1942 he sold his hardware business and moved into his electronics business down the street. People were so shocked that he sold out, he named his new company "Shock Electric." People never forgot it.
He was training mechanics and working on the war effort at the same time, and repairing appliances from every province in the dominion, including the Yukon. Five years later, he moved again, this time to a large four storey building he bought on Breadalbane Street. He eventually employed 60 workers and took the most challenging jobs home to play with and experiment with in his basement.
Two years after Shock Electric moved to Breadalbane.

he had his first heart attack, at 38 years of age. "I been sick a day in my life and I nearly went crazy to stay in bed for three months."
The following year he had another heart attack. "I think I'll make the old age pension?" he asked his doctors. "If you live six months, it's a miracle. Go home and enjoy," he was told.
"For three years, I did practically nothing. I was in my basement. I read. I invented a machine that made coils that I eventually sold," he says. "I was then doing repairs for charity. It got me back to men and back to work on the newer appliances."
Still, his heart wasn't strong, even after he left business. In 1961, he couldn't walk without extreme pain and he was advised to have open heart surgery. At that time, it wasn't being done here, so he went to Boston. But the surgery was unsuccessful.
"As a result, I've learned to take care of myself," he says, at 65, a dapper gent, with bright blue eyes and a good head of hair.
Millie, his full-time housekeeper, has become a fixture since his wife died three years ago. His son, who's also his cousin, visits him twice a week and often if he's at all under the weather. Two large tanks guard his bed and his night table is filled with bottles, including painkillers that he carries with him and can administer himself.
"Work's the best medicine in the world," he says. "Once, in hospital, a nurse came to give him a cardiogram, but the machine wasn't working."
"It had just been repaired and she was flustered. I was in an oxygen tent, but I took a look and asked her if she could get me a screwdriver, a pair of pliers and a wire. In 20 minutes I had it working and as a result I offered the job of managing the service and maintenance departments of the Mount Sinai Hospital. My wife was furious. Here I was, so sick I was being spoon-fed, and I was fixing hospital equipment through an oxygen tent."
His biggest coup has been called The Secret of the Hero of Entebbe and an electrical genius, for his invention, dubbed the Hurwich or Ray or Beam, that is based on a simple principle used in every household, every day, he says. "It paralysed the Entebbe airport surveillance equipment and enabled the Israelis to fly in undetected."
For the device, which Sid gave to Israel, though he invented it originally to stop thefts of night deposits here, he won the Israeli Medal of Honor and the right to continue his work with the Canadian government on devices that he will only describe as having the capacity to save hundreds of lives.
"The most important thing is to learn your limitations and capabilities. I'm proud that doctors use my invention as an example for other patients. It's so simple to be afraid to lay down and die."
Sid Hurwich simply won't.

If WH/T = Y, where is X?

Erma Bombeck

(This is the second in a three-part series on what happens to missing socks. Today's column deals with "The Cause.")

According to a woman from Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., the answer to disappearing socks is mathematically figured in subsets.
If you wash a pair of blue socks with a red stripe (BL/RD)2 and a pair of green angoras (GR/A)2 and a pair of white tennis socks (WH/T)2, all three pairs would be called X.
If Y had (GR/A)2 and (WH/T)2, then every element in Y is an element of X. Hence Y is a subset of X or X CY.
If there is a boldness in BL/RD2 somewhere between fill and spin dry, BL/RD2 splits.
That answer made more sense than most of the others sent in to determine what happens to socks in the washer.
Most of the writers zeroed in on sex. Like coat hangers and paper clips, socks were believed to have an active sex life — but only in water. Some believed they married, but they fooled around and often divorced in the dryer. No alimony was involved. Some stayed together through two or three washings, but suddenly turned into a swinging single. One writer believed that socks went through a sex change, coming out another color.
A large number embraced the Planned Obsolescence theory, that is a conspiracy between sock and washer manufacturers who incorporate sock disintegrators (right next to the button crusher) and

sock sensors which grind up a sock and spit it out as lint. The newer models even have a reconstructed sock cycle which returns a sock lost five years ago.
There was a Sock Fairy theory for those of you who believe in Peter Pan, the Cloning theory where for every pair of socks an extra one is cloned driving you crazy with three socks of one color, and the Best Friend theory where your friend is secretly after your husband and both are trying to drive you whacko. There is the Reincarnation theory where it is believed that a sock returns in another form. (One woman swore that after five years of losing socks, they all came back one day as a sweater.)
Some believed socks had an identity crisis and split. Others leaned toward cannibalism. One writer went for the Steve Martin theory where socks, instead of getting high on detergent, got small and disappeared.
A great number believed socks to be a migratory species, activated by simply adding water.
And finally, one writer blamed the United States government for programming washers to eat socks and keep the economy alive. One blamed the Russians for undermining American women's stability. I'd have been disappointed if someone hadn't said that.