

?Kilowatt Kids? still getting together monthly after retirement

By James Matthews

For the Citizen

The best friendships don't fade away, no matter how many years pass.

And few people know that better than the a group of retired Ontario Hydro (before it adopted the Hydro One moniker) outside workers known colloquially as the Kilowatt Kids. Collectively, the six friends have about 230 years experience hanging from power poles.

The lads assembled in the Boston Pizza dining room in Orangeville recently. They have been meeting once a month for about a year. They sip beers, have a lunch, share stories and bellylaughs at a different eatery each month. And there's much laughter, the kind of sure easy guffaws that takes years to grow, even among the best of friends.

?This is pretty damn important to us,? Wilf Seli said. ?If we don't do this, one of us is going to cash our chips.?

He started at the utility company in 1947 and retired in 1993. Seli spoke to the Citizen as the others ? Ross Taylor, Ches Cotton, Ralph Harkies, Bob Jones and Gord Miller ? ribbed each other in the background.

They all worked together at some point, in some pretty difficult circumstances. They speak of a time when it seems the rain was colder and wetter, the lightening was more menacing and the relentless winds shoved the heavy snow into impossible drifts.

In the bush at night in all kinds of weather, Seli said friends were so important. And it was during the times they all stuck together that blood-like bonds were forged.

?When conditions were on the verge of unbearable, we had to reach back for that little extra,? Seli said. ?It was a crash-course in character-building.

?But to know we had restored power to an elderly couple ?chilling' (in winter) around a single candle or to a young mother in desperation with a small child, it was a sincerely rewarding feeling.?