

209 What a Meatball!

Bill Murray goes camp

By Chris Cobb
Journal Reporter

TORONTO — "Hello Chris!" exclaims the uncombed apparition in bare feet, running shorts and white tee shirt. "How's Ottawa?"

And then, to everyone else in the room:

"Chris and I go way back, way back. How long's it been Chris? Ages for sure."

Actually, it had been about 40 minutes. Bill Murray and I had met for the first time in the corridor. I'd bumped into him — literally and quite accidentally — as he was walking from one luxury hotel suite to another 30 some floors above ground level.

After exchanging apologies he introduced himself, asked me my name, city of origin, said it was nice to meet me and then disappeared.

His small press conference was scheduled to start five minutes after that initial meeting. Murray, no stickler for punctuality, arrived 35 minutes late with a plate of steak and french fries in one hand and a scotch in the other.

He needed to be introduced to everyone except, of course, for his old buddy from Ottawa.

Bohemian Bill, zany star of NBC's *Saturday Night Live*, is in his element. He's got a small audience lusting after his real-life craziness and a film company rubbing it's corporate hands together everytime he gets column inches that mention his new movie *Meatballs*. The movie, made in the Windsor Haliburton, Ontario, is about summer camp and Bill's the star.

Settling down in a huge couch, faced by a dozen or so reporters and film company types, the unofficial Bill Murray show starts. He swallows a piece of steak and scratches the inside of his right leg with his left big toe.

"Well," he says, "I suppose you want to know what I think of Joe Clark. Well, if you ask me, he's pretty goofy."

His attention turns to the world premiere of *Meatballs* which had been held the night before. With Bill being the star and all that, the publicity people thought it a good idea to rent a horse and buggy to take the star to the theatre.

"That," muses 28-year-old Murray good naturedly, "was probably the most stupid thing I have ever been a part of."

Someone asks about Bill's own summer camp experiences in Illinois.

"I never went to summer camp," he replies. "When I was young, summer camp was a chain in the backyard."

How about Haliburton?

"Well, there's not much to do there.



Bill Murray gets his first screen kiss from co-star Kate Lynch

When I get old and confined to a wheelchair maybe I'll go back to stay."

Murray, former National Lampoon writer and current high point of *Saturday Night Live*, has quite taken to life in the movies but won't quit his Saturday "day job."

"I'll be back at work at NBC in October. Besides I've got a contract

and when you've got a contract with those people you don't mess them around. Otherwise you're into the river with concrete boots." He's joking, of course.

As one of the camp leaders in *Meatballs*, Murray was allowed to rewrite the script and become involved in an unofficial directing capacity.

"Basically, I'm playing myself in

the movie," he admits. "It gave me an opportunity to become a solo performer rather than me bouncing off other characters, like in the television show. That was the challenge for me."

Murray started out with Chicago's *Second City* comedy troupe but rejects suggestions that he is a comedian.

"I'm not a comedian, I'm an actor. In *Second City*, we were trained to act — we learned everything because it had to be good or else watch out. You don't mess with Chicago crowds either."

Murray's brother Brian also worked with *Second City*. In fact, Bill inherited his brother's old parts when Brian went to New York to join the *National Lampoon Radio Show*.

Bill followed Brian to New York and in 1975, they ended up in an off-Broadway production of *The National Lampoon Show* which was produced by Ivan Reitman and starred John Belushi and Gilda Radner.

Reitman, later to be responsible for producing *Animal House* is director of *Meatballs*.

What comes next in Bill's career, someone asks.

"I've decided to live in expensive hotel suites, all expenses paid by movie companies and give interviews for the rest of my life. It's a great life."



Bill and some of the other Meatballs