

# SAFETY CORNER

## Queen Victoria's Safety Director

By *Glenn Demby*

Queen Victoria was born on May 24, 1819. Canadians celebrate Victoria Day on the first Monday before May 25 of each year.

### Victoria's Secret

And here's something about Queen Victoria that not a lot of people know: She had her own personal safety director. Well, kind of. . . John Brown (who was played by Billy Connolly in the 1997 movie, *Mrs. Brown*, starring Dame Judi Dench as the Queen) was a servant to Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Albert. After Albert's untimely death in 1861, he became Victoria's "personal attendant."



**John Brown holding Queen Victoria's horse**

Among his many chores, Brown was entrusted with the Queen's personal safety. In 1863, the Queen suffered some minor injuries in a couple of carriage accidents. But it could have been much worse had Brown not been there to intervene. From that point on, Brown would ride everywhere the Queen did and look after her.

Queen Victoria and John Brown had a special relationship. Biographers suggest that Brown is the only person the Queen completely trusted. Although that's hard to prove, what is clear is that the Queen allowed Brown to take verbal liberties that no others would have dared. Onlookers would gasp when Brown barked orders to the Queen like sit down in the carriage and button up your shawl. But the Queen would meekly obey, knowing that Brown was just looking after her own safety and health.

In his later years, Brown became something of an embarrassment to the court. There were persistent rumors of a romance between Brown and Victoria (completely untrue) and courtiers wanted Brown out. But the Queen would have none of it. Of Brown Victoria would say: "I feel I have a good and devoted soul in the house, whose only interest is my welfare. God knows how much I want to be taken care of."

Brown would remain by Queen Victoria's side until his death in 1883.

-Submitted by Jerri Penrose