

**Leonard Velleman**

*Washington County - Dec 9*

# Humanitarian Dies

*July Aug 1/72*

Administrator of the Ontario Homes for Mentally Retarded Infants Incorporated at Plainfield, and well known throughout the area for his humanitarian role, Leonard Velleman, of RR1, Corbyville, died Monday evening in Belleville General Hospital.

Mr. Velleman had been ill for the past three weeks. He was 81.

Born in Holland, Mr. Velleman and his wife, the former Leonora Boot, emigrated to Canada in 1924 and for many years had worked as a labor representative on conciliation.

Just over 20 years ago — in 1951, Mrs. Velleman, a registered nurse, opened a home for mentally retarded infants at Halloway.

The venture was not a financial success and at Mr. Velleman's urging it was decided to enlarge operations at a new site at Plainfield.

Accordingly, an old hotel was purchased and the assistance of friends and interested volunteers was asked to help renovate the building.

The Vellemans moved their operation to the new site in December, 1952, where Mr. Velleman, then on the verge of retiring, decided to devote his entire energies to his wife's humanitarian work.

For the first five years the Velleman enterprise worked on a shoestring. Then, in 1956 the home became incorporated, organized its own board of governors and broadened its base for potential financing.

In 1959 the infants' home came under the auspices of the Ontario Hospital Service Commission and in 1963 it opened new quarters on the site.

Over the past 15 years, OHMRI has grown from a facility capable of caring for only 15 infants to a modern 73-bed non-active treatment hospital supported by grants from the Province of Ontario, by donations from individual members of the board of governors and by interested individuals and companies.

In March, 1970, Mrs. Velleman retired as superintendent of the Plainfield infants' home but Mr. Velleman continued as the hospital's administrator.

Aside from his wife, Mr. Velleman is survived by a daughter, Mrs. Grace Ince, who operates her own infants home Happy Halfway House in Belleville, and two sons, Leo Velleman of Toronto and Alex Velleman of Oakville.

Funeral arrangements for Mr. Velleman had not been completed this morning.