

Velleman, Mr & Mrs  
Leonard

## Well Deserved Holiday For Dedicated Couple

It was a well deserved holiday yesterday for what is possibly Hastings county's most dedicated couple.

For Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Velleman, executive director and nursing superintendent of the Ontario Homes for Mentally Retarded Infants, Incorporated at Plainfield, it was a day away from what they say is the most important interest in their lives.

They took the one day holiday to be "at home" to friends and acquaintances on their 50th wedding anniversary.

But even during the course of the anniversary celebration, it was evident that their infants' home at Plainfield was still very much on their minds.

"The Home is our entire life, it is our church and our recreation," said Mr. Velleman, who with his wife has given tender care and hope to mentally retarded infants for nearly 20 years.

What is today a hospital home for more than 70 children suffering various degrees of mental retardation, started back in 1951 when Mrs. Velleman opened what she called a babies' convalescent home at McKim's Corners near Holloway.

It operated for slightly more than a year when financial difficulties forced it to close.

But the Vellemans were undaunted and starting afresh

saw their hopes realized when the present home for mentally retarded infants was founded in 1954 and incorporated as a non-profit organization.

Today the OHMRI has more than 2,000 members, it has a staff of approximately 65 and a patient list of 73 children. Operational costs for 1967 totalled more than \$300,000, of which \$228,664 went for salaries.

The high staff to patient ratio — almost one to one — is indicative of the high degree of personal care given the small patients.

"People are beginning to realize that the mentally retarded are human beings," states Mr. Velleman.

"We try to do something for them — we love them," he said.

In appreciation of Mr. and Mrs. Velleman's dedication, the OHMRI staff members on Wednesday gave them a surprise party. The staff members' anniversary gift to the Home's executive director and nursing superintendent was a puse of \$300.

"I was so touched I couldn't say a word," Mr. Velleman said.

Natives of the Hilversum area of Holland where the couple received their education and were married half a century ago, the Vellemans came to Canada in 1924.

They lived in Montreal for 19 years and came to Belleville in 1942.

For many years Mr. Velleman acted as consultant in the labor movement serving on conciliation boards in support of labor's campaign to better the lot of the working man.

But since the founding of the OHMRI both Mr. and Mrs. Velleman have made the care of mentally retarded infants their life work.

A registered nurse, Mrs. Velleman will retire in 1970, but at 77 Mr. Velleman still has no thought of calling it quits.

"I'll stay until I drop," he says.

But back to the anniversary celebration. The 50 year wedding couple received the usual congratulatory messages from friends and local dignitaries, and also from parliamentary representatives.

"We even received a message from Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau."

The couple have two children, a son Alex who is a radio station manager at Oakville, and a daughter, Mrs. Grace Ince of Belleville.

There's an old saying "like father, like son," but with the Velleman family it is "like mother, like daughter."

Mrs. Ince has her mother's love of children and operates her own infants' home on Moira Street.

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