

The Flying Fentons



We met the Fentons, Dick and Jean, at their mobile home on the edge of the airfield. This has been their home since 1969 when Dick decided to hand over the farming to

Guardians of Port Elgin Airport

1976

This is the first part of a two-part series on Dick and Jean Fenton who manage the Port Elgin Airport off Highway 21 at the south end of town. This week we meet the Flying Fentons to hear the exciting stories of life in the air and next week we will cover the whole aspect of the airport -- how it is run and how it affects everyone in the area.

was used regularly until 1969 when Dick and Jean moved to the airport to take over managerial duties.

Jean -- queen of the air

Flying did not come easy to Jean Fenton as she told us in no uncertain terms. 'I was scared out of my wits the first time I went flying. I thought I was never going to get down again to put my feet on the ground.' After another few shaky flights Jean settled into her new role as an air person. She eventually won her wings and is now a proficient pilot as good if not better than some men. Her log time in the air runs into thousands of miles and this has given her the experience necessary to become a good pilot.

The highspot of Jean's career as a pilot came in 1975 when the Flying Farmers of Ontario chose her to be their Queen of the Year. This followed on another award which both her and Dick received the year before. This was when they were named as Operators of

their three sons, Don, Ron, and Bruce who all live in neighbouring farms on RR 1, Port Elgin. They have one daughter, (Marilyn) Mrs. Alan Gregg of Paisley. There are 11 grandchildren.

Dick told us that when he and Jean were first married, they lived at the north end of town in the old Fenton house which stands on the Biener property. In the spring of 1948 they moved to east of the town on the Burgoyne road where their three sons are now farming.

Jean is from another local family with the unusual name of Reoch. She told us it was of Scottish origin and that a second generation of the Reochs settled in Saugeen Township. Her great-grandfather was a land surveyor.

Jean revealed that they were 35 years married and that she remembers that day clearly as if it were only a short time ago. The wedding took place in Port Elgin's United Church Manse and the officiating clergyman was the Rev. Archie Gilles.

Dick's first trip

Dick first became interested in flying as far back as 1924 but it was not until 1928 that his ambition was realized. A pilot called Fred Gilles came up from Toronto in 1928 and I was among the first to be airborne in the area. Sad to relate, Fred passed away on the 27th of last month. We received a letter from his wife, Erma to this effect.

Dick's earliest recollections of flying go even further back to the year 1924 when a pilot by the name of Colley landed at the Fenton farm. He organized rides around the village (as it was then) for \$10.00 a circuit. Over the years different pilots visited Port Elgin and Dick was one of the first people to learn to fly in the area.

When the Fentons moved house in 1948, Dick, with the help of Bob Wilson, President of Ontario Flying Farmers for 1976, cleared the fields around his new farm and built an airstrip 3,000 feet long. The strip



the Year for their contribution to the success and smooth running of the Port Elgin Flying Club and field.

Not all Jean's time is spent in the air. Sewing is a consuming interest with her and she makes her own clothes and also sews for her family. She is a keen member of the Woman's Institute and is a Past President of the Bruce Centre District. The United Church takes up some of her valuable time and she also belongs to the 99 Organization which is comprised solely of women fliers.

Holidays in the blue

Whenever the Fentons go on (continued on page 10)

TURNERS

Mrs. W. Schildroth
832-5100

Mrs. Jack Underwood and Jane were part of a group of 126 students, teachers and chaperones from Port Elgin-Saugeen Central School who visited Ottawa from June 2 - 5th. They visited Fort Henry on the way down and Upper Canada Village on the way home, as well as many points of interest in the capital city. They were also spectators at the demonstration by the Quebec Dairy Farmers on Thursday.

Mr. and Mrs. Jack Underwood, Jane and Betty, accompanied by Mrs. Grant Clazie travelled to London on Monday, June 7th to attend the spring convocation of the Faculty of Social Science at Western University, where Isabel received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science.



Congratulations, Heather and Kevin Schildroth, as you celebrate your first wedding anniversary. Heather and Kevin were married August 11, 1990, at Port Elgin United Church with Rev. Williams officiating. Heather is the daughter of Fran and Herb Kuchler, of Ottawa, and Kevin is the son of Harry and Anne Schildroth, of RR #1, Port Elgin.