

## COMMUNITY NEWS

## Corkery's bring the world to Colborne with computers

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STAFF WRITER

COLBORNE - In a former life, Len Corkery was a transport driver. He wheeled his rig all over North America chasing other people's products. Now, people are calling he and wife Ann in Colborne for their products: custom-built computers and network systems.

"I can remember taking my 45-foot trailer to pick up US\$14,000 in software in an American city. Their parking lot was so busy, it took me 45 minutes to get pulled up to their shipping door. When I got there, they handed me this tiny little box and I just looked at them. That was it; that was my shipment. I worried all the way back to Canada, hoping I had everything I was supposed to pick up. I thought a load worth that much should be filling the trailer!"

Len laughs at the recollection. "That's how much I knew about computers!"

In 1984, the brakes on his rig failed.

"I broke my neck," Len says simply.

Born and raised in Harwood, Len is proud to be able to say, "I've never lived anywhere but in Northumberland County."

Following the accident, Len and Ann took a good long look at their situation.

Confined to a wheelchair, with only partial use of his hands, "I decided I had to retrain, and get on with life again," Len recalls. "I went to Loyalist College and took a mechanical engineering technician course. I thought maybe I wanted drafting, engineering work, stuff like that. But it wasn't to be. It was too heavy a course, and I was completely frustrated.

"When my computer wouldn't work for me, they suggested I go into the lab to get it going the way I wanted it to. When I went into the lab, I knew right away: 'This is it! This is what I want to do.'"

And as Len learned, so, too, did Ann.

"I had to do it," she says without hesitation.

"She had to be the hands, then," says Len.

Both Len and Ann have been taking courses, upgrading, keeping abreast of the innovations and fast-track changes in the computing world.

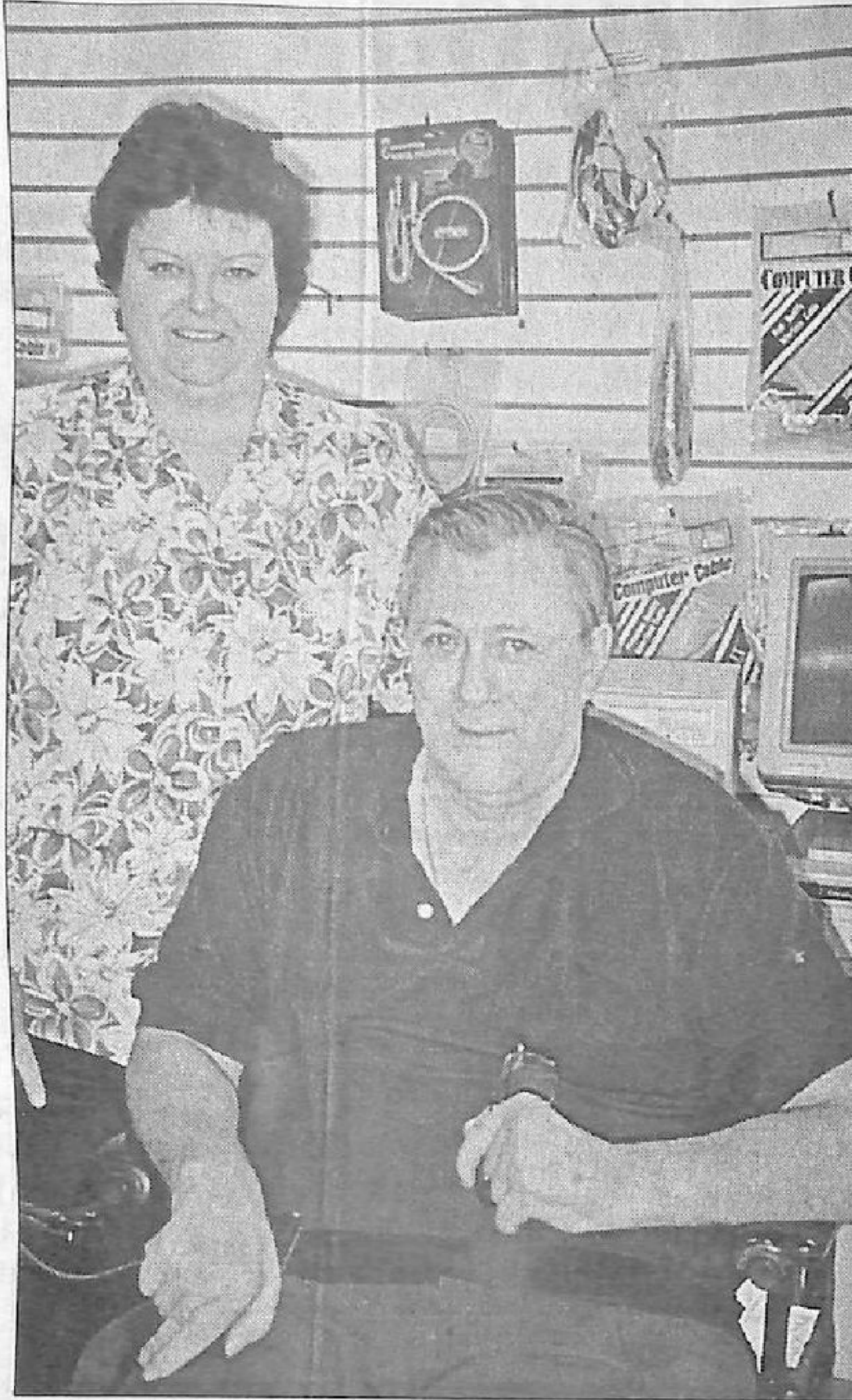
### Readers are winners!

Four people will be reading books by Jane Urquhart soon. They were the winners in the Local Architectural Conservancy Advisory Committee of Colborne raffle.

First-place winner was Alf Blything of Cobourg, followed by Mrs. E. Doig Hughes of Cramahe Township, Rachel Edison of RR#4 Colborne, and Cindy Hickman of Colborne's Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce.

The draw was made by Jean Kernaghan.

- Mandy Martin



The world come to Colborne, Ann and Len Corkery of Computer Solutions are proving. Their computer systems and expertise are increasingly in demand throughout North America. Not bad for a computer neophytes who learned from ground zero up.

Photo By Mandy Martin

The Corkery's are equally comfortable talking the technical jargon, or the every-day language of the neophyte.

"We remember what it's like," they recall with amusement. "We don't want people to feel confused or buy more than they need. It doesn't need to be that way."

The pragmatic approach is what's bringing in business from large operations in the Metro Toronto area, as well as individuals from

throughout Ontario and North America.

"We do a lot of troubleshooting for people. I'll work on something until we get it fixed," notes Darlene.

Originally from New York state, Darlene says life in Colborne is just fine with her, and with daughter Angela and son Jim. ("Jim helps us out quite a bit now.")

In 1986, the Corkery's built their first computer. From that point on, as they

undertook projects for friends and acquaintances, word of mouth spread about their capabilities, honesty and reliability.

"In 1994, we thought we better establish ourselves as a separate business," says Len.

Now, in a new office setup adjacent to their home, the telephone rings constantly with enquiries and calls. Leafing through an eight-page telephone bill, Len points out the fax and calls all over North America.

Plugged into the Internet, the company also makes full use of e-mail and fax communication.

With a new classroom facility added this past winter, their business, Computer Solutions now offers in-Colborne classroom instruction for adults and children, or small groups of friends or business employees who want to upgrade their skills - or launch themselves into the world of computers.

With five-people per class, participants are guaranteed personal attention and help.

"We're planning to hold some computer camps for kids this summer, too," notes Ann. "We'll mix in-classroom computer time with outside activities."

The Corkery's see a particular advantage for seniors purchasing computers now. Joining the Internet, they have access to e-mail, chat lines and hours and hours of browsing time from worldwide sites.

"The computer business is a hard business," notes Ann. "It's very competitive. You can't just sit there. You have to serve people as well."

Because the Corkery's assemble their own computer systems, they take time to talk with people to understand how they want to use their computer and where they see the future taking them.

"We also deal in trade-ins," notes Len. "We have a good market for used equipment here. Colborne and this area isn't a high wage area. People watch how they spend carefully. We have to suit our market."

With the upgrades,

retrofitting, repairs, networking and new sales filling their business hours, the Corkery's are also overseeing installation of networking systems in large industrial and manufacturing businesses in southern Ontario. Because the couple knows their product from the ground up, their confidence and knowledge is highly valued in the marketplace.

"This beats driving," Len assures. "There's a real social aspect to this, too."

The Corkery's have never looked back following the 1984 accident.

They live where they want to live, love what they do for a living and have never questioned their own abilities to succeed. And there's more than a little satisfaction in having the world come calling them for their expertise and products.

"People wonder how we can be in business in a small village," says Len.

Waving the phone bill, with calls from California, Europe, throughout Canada, he notes with pride, "Well, here we are!"