

FOCUS

Little bit by little bit: a "big bit" is done to save Lone Pine Marsh Sanctuary

BY JOHN LIPTAY

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Creating 200 jars of jams and jellies as a fund raiser is a minor event for Murial Braham, who lives on Shelter Valley Road.

Murial, who has ancestral roots in Haldimand Township, retired last year from serving for 10 years on the township council.

Her story includes a list of energetic civic contributions. One example is her push to name all township roads with specific signs.

"I had teenagers on a work program busy in my barn for the whole summer. They cut out, painted and assembled the signs."

Murial is in her 84th year but seems to have the energy of a woman half her age. Of even greater amazement is her enthusiasm for public projects. But what tops all her attributes is her uncanny ability to initiate and complete a major project.

The crowning example of this is the Lone Pine Marsh Sanctuary Inc., for which she is primarily responsible.

When asked to tell the story, she displayed a satisfying smile, sighing and saying, "It all began in 1991.

"I became aware of a marshy 43-acre parcel of land on County Road 21, about eight kilometres east of Vernonville, and experienced a vision that this would be an ideal site for a marsh sanctuary.

"I had known that marsh lands were quickly disappearing in Ontario. I had read that 80 per cent were now gone, giving way to 'progress an development.' I realized that this did not auger well for the conserving of our natural environment.

"And so, I simply bought it. I paid \$48,000 for the marsh and then proceeded to give it away to the people of this planet. It now belongs to the public. It is protected as a sanctuary and will stay that way forever.

"In the process of purchasing this marsh, I encountered a very pleasant and welcome surprise. The Willow Beach Field Naturalists contributed \$5,000 toward paying for the property. They also gave me \$2,000 towards legal fees and operating expenditures. I

continue to thank them for their great generosity and interest in this project.

"I had the marsh analyzed by the Ministry of Natural Resources, and they reported that it was a Class 1 marsh, a top-quality wetland."

The land is now incorporated as the Lone Pine Marsh Sanctuary Inc. It is administered by a special board consisting of Murial Braham, Wayne Buck LL.B., Sharon Kearns, L.R. (Lou) MacIntosh, George MacLeod, Heather-Lynne Meacock, Mark Rupke and Terrance Korotki. Murial wishes to add that new board members are always welcome.

And now, the explanation for Murial's current fund raiser, the sale of jams and jellies: last year, it was decided that an additional 45-acre adjacent buffer zone was to be purchased for \$60,000.

With enthusiastic gratitude, Murial speaks of tremendous support.

"People have been wonderful in contributing to the paying off of this debt."

Some substantial contributors have been the Grafton Legion, the Colborne Legion, Casko Impregnated of Cobourg and the Lioness Club of Cobourg.

At her retirement dinner, a corporate gift of \$5,000 was received from Clearnet in Scarborough. The cheque was eight feet wide, and Christine Stewart and Doug Galt helped to present it.

"There have been many private donations too," Murial reports, with much gratitude evident in her smile.

In 1994, a support group — Friends of the Lone Pine Marsh Sanctuary — was formed. There are now 125 members. The membership fee is \$10 per family, and Murial says that new members are very welcome. Call her at 349-2410. Newsletters are sent periodically to all members. Official receipts for tax purposes will be mailed for any donation.

Murial has undertaken the fund-raising work of creating 200 jars of jams and jellies. These will be sold in Grafton at St. John's Books, 1812 Antiques, The Tole Lantern, the township office and possibly other places who will



Murial Braham, left, prepares her renowned jams and jellies assisted by Joan Bishop. Sales are to benefit the Lone Pine Marsh Sanctuary Inc.

Photo by John Liptay

agree to encourage sales at no personal commission or profit.

"I really thank these local businesses for their help," Murial wishes to say. "They are wonderful friends!

"See those wooden bases that hold two jars together — they were constructed by a local retiree. So many people are helping!"

Edith Watson, a volunteer for the Lone Pine Marsh, said, "Yes, today is crab apple day. Yesterday was peach day. Tomorrow will be plum day. So far we've made jams and jellies from cherries, oranges, mulberries, apricots (grown on Murial's farm), strawberries, raspber-

ries, blueberries and peaches. Most of these fruits have been donated by friends of the marsh."

Murial modestly says, "It's my little bit."

But Joan Bishop, another volunteer, quickly adds, "It's not a little bit, it's a big bit! She's always doing a big bit for the marsh."

At this point, Murial recalls an important memory.

"I want to tell you that Christine Stewart was a charter member of our incorporation. That shows that our minister of the environment is keen at the heart level in preserving the environment."

Then she wanted to speak about another fund raiser.

"On October 17 at 1 p.m., we're going to have an auction sale at the marsh. Some of the interesting items to be auctioned off are 60 pounds of local honey, a weekend at a cottage in Muskoka, a dinner and dance for two at the Royal York, two prepared wills by a lawyer, a Lake Ontario cruise, etc. We hope to get many more donations. We hope to raise \$2,000 at the auction.

"At the rate we're going, we hope to have our buffer zone paid off by August 1999. We have only another \$36,000 to go," she says so confidently.

When asked why she is involved in all this, she said,

"It's very important for all people on this planet to work towards preserving our natural environment. The conservation of wetlands is just one example. This is where I'm doing my little bit. (There's that little-bit notion again!)

"I get so much satisfaction from working with wonderful people. Being involved in this project has been exciting for me.

"Yes, life is very exciting for me. I do as I please. I do all kinds of crazy things. I guess it's just in me."

When asked when she'll stop her public projects, she conceded, "I'll take a rest when the debt is cleared.

"But I'm interested in helping out with the Haldimand Community Centre. That's another important project. We've got to get that debt paid off too."

When asked where she gets the energy to do all this, she said, "It's just in me. It has always been in me. I must have inherited it from my mother. She was a going concern right up to her end in her 80s. I guess it's my ancestral spirit."

Murial also grows nut trees. She produced a commercially viable heart nut tree. She planted 300 of these and donates packages of heart nuts to the local horticultural society as a fund raiser.

Carol Bessie, who lives adjacent to the marsh, was eager to speak about the benefits of living so close to the sanctuary.

"We always hear such wonderful sounds coming from this wetland. There is a great number of birds that are attracted to this area. This year a pair of great horned owls nested in that tree. We see pileated woodpeckers. It's such a great place!"

The board has listed an inventory of sightings in the sanctuary.

It includes the secretive least bittern, the tropical-looking arrow arum, muskrat, yellow-throated warblers, Virginia rails, painted and snapping turtles, blue-winged teals, herons, Canada geese and a variety of migrating water fowl.

Anyone having North Haldimand news can fax John Liptay at 349-3565.