

# The penny-wise Olans wave good-bye

In an evening jammed with memorable quotes and quips, a packed crowd in the Rotary Room of the Keeler Centre celebrated their time with Eileen and Keith Olan, and waved their goodbyes last Saturday.

The well-loved couple is ending their 18-year ownership of the Castleton General Store later this month - leaving behind a store that has continued long traditions and has become the focal point of the area.

## Send those pennies

Representatives from all aspects of the Olans' lives took few moments to chide or praise them, or simply reminisce.

Old buddy, Malcolm Tucker returned from Sarnia with Audrey. Both took a few pokes.

Malcolm recalled conversations he had had with Keith about pricing.

In Malcolm's words, "I am sure that you have noticed over the years that he always took a penny off everything in the store. I used to tell him why don't you round it off to the nearest dollar."

But Keith would say, "The people who come into my store are not only customers, they are my friends. They

expect me to give them a deal, so I always reduce my prices for them."

After suggesting, tongue-in-cheek that the customers have been robbing Keith at his 'generous store' all these years, Malcolm suggested that everyone find all those pennies they have been hoarding all these years, and take them back to Keith at the store.

Malcolm started the collection himself with a roll of American pennies he had picked up in Michigan just for the occasion.

## The money man

Keith's dealings with money were the subject of more than one speech.

His granddaughter Christine, in a touching tribute, wrote in her poem, "He sells lots of honey, and makes lots of money. The store is fine and closes at nine. .... I love my grandpa's store. Have you ever been before?"

Poker playing buddy Ian Chapman scolded Keith for bragging about winning enough money to buy Eileen a new dress for the Olan Ovation on Saturday. The unforeseen happened, Keith had an unusual night at the table with his friends.



**What to wear to Rotary?** Morris Tait (left) and Jim Williams recall the days when Keith was the president of Rotary.

He lost at cards and paid for his bravado at the roast.

Ray Rolfe recounted how he and his wife Brenda had taken the Olans and their dogs into their home on the night of a hydro outage. Keith and Eileen brought cans of Irish stew and buns to cook over the Rolfe gas stove. The next day Ray claims the items were on his bill at the store.

Ray later recanted all of the prodding done about Keith's stinginess, with the comment, "Keith is generous with his time as well as with his money."

Linda Marshman and Irene Clarke lauded Keith's longstanding assistance with Castleton United Church and Castleton Sports Club activities.

Linda quoted former minister, Randy Banks, who noted Keith's penny pinching approach to the minister's vacation compensation, his stint as lighting technician for church musicals, and the moral support he gave Santa prior to visiting pre-schoolers.

## Many contributions

A Sports Club poem listed his term as bingo chair, raffle ticket seller, the Snowball Tourney, and Nevada ticket sales amongst Keith's many community activities.

A list of the Olan contributions to the

community has to include the annual Castleton Golf Tournament, started by Keith six years ago as a way to get people in the community together and get to know each other better.

Derek Jones hoped that Keith's handyman skills were better than his golf game. In case they weren't, he gave the directions from Keith and Eileen's new home in Courtice to the nearest hospital by car, bus route and even by taxi.

Customer and friend, Ray Rolfe, ignored the time limits, with numerous anecdotes.

He recalled the first time he met Keith in the store, after recently moving into Castleton. Keith called the newcomer aside to explain post office box number policy.

In a thunderous voice from behind the counter Keith called out, "I need a word with you, Mr. Rolfe." Followed by, "What were you thinking, putting General Delivery on your change of address form. Do you think I'm a mind reader? Your box number is 153. Fill this out and I'll get you the key!"

Ray went home to his wife, Brenda, and commented that he had just met Mr. Crusty at the store, and "man do I pity his wife."

From then on, anything that was addressed General Delivery was put in Ray's box, wrapped in an elastic.

A few weeks later, Keith took him back into his home where they shared a few beers, Ray was introduced into the community and he learned how to play darts.

There aren't many things that Keith Olan isn't successful at, darts included. Ray figures he has beaten Keith at the game three times in about 1,400 games they have played together.

Ray has a list of phrases he is tired of hearing Keith say. Things like, "Hard luck, buddy", or "I can't believe that didn't go in." The one Ray hates most is, "That will be a Molson Export for me, Ray. Thanks very much, and cheers."

## Eileen's unending support

Ray praised Eileen for her patience, remembering the times friends had poured Keith into the Olan home at 1 a.m., or returned there for a few more games of darts after the Thursday Night League was over.

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Keith, centre, reintroduced strawberry and vanilla ice cream with David O'Flynn and Betty Chandler - as a Keeler Centre benefit in 2002.

