

Air Force at the start of the Second World War, but his father was not well. He would die of a heart attack in 1943, and his son would take over the farm. When he was called to duty and the situation was made known, the Air Force decided he would serve his country better by staying on the farm.

He always suspected his mother had something to do with that, but he has no regrets. It left him in the enviable position of being one of very few eligible bachelors around, but he was in no hurry to get married because he didn't have enough money.

He still didn't have a lot when he married Shirley Harnden June 12, 1948, in St. Andrew's United Church, where they are still members. Their reception was held at Mrs. Johnston's family home on nearby Charlotte Street.

The Johnstons began their married life as dairy farmers on 200 acres in what is essentially downtown Grafton now. Grafton Public School, which their children attended, sits on a large lot carved out of their acreage.

"I always thought farming was a good life for the kids," she said of sons John and James and daughter Jean.

"Half the kids in the village came to our place," her husband added. "We gave the kids work to do, and their parents loved it."

That's exactly how John and Jean worked their way through university, Mrs. Johnston said. They hired them to work on the farm instead of hiring someone else.

Mothers usually didn't work in those days, but Mrs. Johnston did for a while at Canadian Canneries in Cobourg. There were canneries almost everywhere in those days, and she transferred to their Grafton plant on Canning Factory Road. It closed in the early 1950s, and Mr. Johnston still recalls lobbying the Minister of Agriculture not to sell it to an American company. But it was sold, and has sat empty ever since.

The Johnston insurance agency was set up in their home

County Road 2 when Mrs. Johnston got into the field through her father, Floyd Harnden (known as F.S. because there were two Floyd Harndens in Grafton). He had been a Co-operators agent for 20 years and wanted to retire.

She was one of very few women in the insurance business at the time.

"I always remember the chap who said, 'I am very surprised they hired you when you were still of child-bearing age,'" she said.

Her children, in fact, were 11, 14 and 17 when she began, but she found it helpful to be working at home. "I did a lot of my work at night after the kids had gone to bed," she said. "It was nice and quiet."

The agency operated until 1982, when Mrs. Johnston went to work at Hamilton Township Mutual Insurance Company for three years before she retired. Being a board member (and eventual president) of that company is how her husband came to get involved in the insurance business, as an underwriter.

Their children all settled locally. Their late son James lived and raised his family in Grafton, as did John. Jean left the area for a while when she became a minister, but now works in nearby Prince Edward County.

Their six grandchildren haven't scattered too far, except for one in Australia and one in Alabama. They also have one great-grandchild.

Since retirement to a lovely

property on Cranberry Lake, where they indulge their love of gardening and bird watching, they have kept busy with the local horticultural club, bowling, church activities and shuffleboard. They helped put together *When The Lakes Roared*, the 1997 history of Haldimand Township.

They were also key players in securing a Horizons grant to build the shuffleboard court in Grafton and a Trillium grant to renovate it.

"We pretty well work together," Mr. Johnston said. "We've always done things together, and we've always had an interest in them. We even have the same politics, so we never argue about that."

Mrs. Johnston said common interests is the secret of their success, and keeping active is what has kept them relatively healthy.

It was at a granddaughter's request a few years ago that they compiled their memoirs for the family.

The 28 pages of memories and six pages of photos that will

likely figure in many of the conversations at the June 14 celebration at St. Andrew's United Church — where it all began.

Local writer finalist for national award

Cobourg Chronicle
Eric F. Wright of Little Lake Road in Salem has been shortlisted in a national writing competition for his suspense novel, *The Lightning File*.

A retired pastor, Mr. Wright has six published books to his credit including *Through a Country Window*, the widely appreciated story of his and his wife's move from the city to a log home in the country. Mr. Wright is also the editor of the *Fellowship LINK* magazine, a quarterly for mature adults.

Mr. Wright's book highlights gaps in Canada's security systems that invite the attention of potential terrorists. The story follows the fictional investigations of journalist Josh Radley as he seeks to unravel an Arabic file containing the key to a four-pronged plot targeting American interests from Canadian soil.

The winner in the mystery/suspense category was to be announced Wednesday, June 11 at a black-tie awards gala at World Vision headquarters in Mississauga. The gala is the premier event honouring the work of Canadian writers who are Christian. The 30 award categories include the best non-fiction books, novels, articles, columns, poems, scripts and song lyrics written by Canadian citizens or permanent residents who affirm The Apostles' Creed. In all, there were 225 entries from writers

in eight provinces.

"I am very gratified to be shortlisted for this award," Mr. Wright says. "Readers have told me they found *The Lightning File* a pulse-racing thriller that is hard to put down. They also appreciate that it is set in Northumberland and Toronto."

This year's contestants include some of Canada's best-known Christian writers, including Jean Vanier (founder of L'Arche), Lorna Dueck (TV host of Listen Up), James Houston, Mark Buchanan, Bruxy Cavey, Jim Cantelon, John Redekop, Grace Fox and Linda Hall.

The Awards Gala was to be hosted by Herbie Kuhn, popular speaker and in-house announcer for the Toronto Raptors basketball team.

The Leslie K. Tarr Award for career achievement, sponsored by Tyndale University College and Seminary, will be presented to Connie Brummel Crook of Peterborough. She is the author of 12 award-winning books about Canadian history that are used in public school classrooms and libraries across Canada. Her young adult novels and children's picture books have portrayed such Canadian heroines as Laura Secord and Nellie McClung.

The Word Guild membership consists of over Canadian 325 writers and editors.