

People profile

The caring folks of Clute

by Holly Gagnon

It was at a Knights of Columbus dance in the east end of Toronto where Peggy and her twin sister Glenys were introduced to Bob Guppy and his brother.

Peggy and Bob started going together for the next seven months. "That's when I knew he was the right person for me," Peggy said.

In 1946 they married and left Toronto to embark on a life together in the north.

"I was a city girl coming to the farm," Peggy said.

When Peggy arrived in the Clute area there was no hydro, no telephone and no inside conveniences. They settled on the old Mike Steen farmstead.

"The only phone in Clute was at Mary Golding's grocery store," Peggy said.

"Mom and Dad were heartbroken when I first came up here but then they saw the beauty here - in the sunset. People in the city don't look at beauty. We have to go, go, go, all the time."

Peggy's parents made their first

trip to Clute when Peggy and Bob were expecting their first baby.

"There was a big difference in the highways then," Peggy said of her parents long trip.

Once her parents saw how truly happy she was they were happy for her new lifestyle.

Happiness went hand-in-hand with the hardships of the times though.

"I did all the cooking on the woodstove and we had coal-oil lamps - that I found the hardest," Peggy said. "I used a Thermos to keep the baby's milk warm."

Peggy said she has never been sorry she didn't have the latest conveniences in Clute.

"You're better off for it, having a few hardships. It didn't hurt me a bit," she said.

One of the things that has sustained her over the years has been the compassion of the people in the area. Probably because that compassion has always been a two-way street in Peggy's life.

"People in Cochrane are there to help when you need it," Peggy said.

Peggy found out firsthand when her month-old baby died of pneumonia in December of 1947.

The neighbours, upon hearing of the Guppy's tragedy, dropped what they were doing to aid the family in any way they could, having the chores and meals ready for the heart-broken couple returning home.

In 1949 the Guppy's second son, John was born, followed by Wes in 1951. Peggy and Bob moved to Midland briefly for three months but they returned to Cochrane where Bob worked as the patrol shop foreman for the Department of Highways.

Peggy said when they arrived back in Cochrane a friend yelled across the street "Hi Peggy, Welcome home!"

Peggy looked at Bob and said "I guess we really are home."

John and Wes attended public school in Clute and high school in Cochrane. When John was 21 the family moved to New Liskeard where their father was promoted to equipment supervisor.

Then at the age of 23 John died of cancer.

"He had such dreams of what he wanted to do," Peggy said.

The family returned to Clute and brought John to his resting place in the Clute cemetery.

In 1965 Bob and Peggy bought a small farm on the corner of concession 3 of Clute Township. Their son Wes lives next door with his wife Lise, and children Betty-Joe, George and Snapper.

For five or six winters Peggy and Bob kept the Commando Lake swans for the town, as well as "raising pigeons, chickens, ducks and the odd geese."

Bob passed away at the age of 67 after suffering a second heart attack.

"He was my one and only love," Peggy said. "They don't make men like him today."

Again Peggy found strength from her close friends and neighbours in Clute. Throughout the years they shared in each others joys and sorrows.

The same year Bob died major road work was being done on the Clute Road to cut down the sharp corners leading out of town. The Clute Road, which was nicely visible from Peggy's front window, was altered into a steep, built-up curve.



Enjoying life

Long-time Clute resident Peggy Guppy is a "people person" who enjoys helping others. Peggy volunteers her time in the community in a variety of ways.