

Silk flowers fill local warehouse

by Jennifer Barr
In the midst of winter, one corner of Acton is breaking out in masses of colorful blooms. A 14,000 square foot warehouse on Frederick Street is filled to overflowing with exquisite silk flowers, the inventory of Don Robb



Don Robb

Imports, a local firm. Millions of flowers pass through Don Robb's hands yearly on their way from Hong Kong to retail florists who use them in flower arrangements and corsages.

Don and Colleen Robb have lived in Acton eight years. Their import firm has been in existence for four of those years and is now doing very nicely, according to Don.

Fourteen years in the florist business, eight of them with Calvert-Dale of Brampton as a salesman, provided Don with the background needed for going out on his own.

Four years ago, he left his secure job, travelled to Hong Kong for three weeks visiting manufacturers and setting up an import agent, came home, went to the bank,

and set up his own business. Sounds easy, but it never is. Lots of hard work is always the key ingredient to any success and the Robbs put in many hours.

"It was very tough to start, especially with inflation."

But life is looking better now, although the Robbs still work long hours.

Don is on the road most of the time, selling his product and seeking new markets. Colleen is "the backbone of the business", according to her husband. She does everything from handling the phones, to packing orders and doing the book work.

An additional salesman, Allen Stewart from Brampton, joined the Robbs a year ago. Further assistance comes from the Robb children, Gail, 14, and Darren, 9, who help after school.

A new venture for the Robbs is a sizeable full color catalogue printed by Dills Printing and Publishing Co. Ltd., now Inland Publishing Co. Limited, with design advice from John McNabb of the company. The catalogue will go to 200 new retailers extolling the virtues of Robb Imports fine flowers—35 varieties in 25 colours.

The business is a fashion gamble. Don has to predict the fashion trends and have appropriate colors. If he finds one color or type of bloom is not moving, he goes out and creates his own fashion demand.

Today's hot colours are the muted pinks, roses and mauves seen in women's clothing. Don had to anticipate this trend some time ago. Right now he's trying to outguess next year's buy-

ing whims. "You've got to keep ahead. It's interesting but it's scary. If you guess wrong, thousands of dollars go down the drain."

Fortunately, Don hasn't guessed wrong very much, although a small section of the warehouse is labelled 'Don Robb's Follies' and contains several thousands of unsaleable blooms. Nobody

can bat a thousand all the time. Don feels the trend towards good artificial blooms is going strong and can only get better, specially with the quality of silk flowers he's able to import—"the finest".

Don Robb's advice for anyone wishing to become their own boss—"Go ahead and start any business—just as long as it's a success."



Colleen Robb sorts orders from the hundreds of thousands of silk flowers that go through Don Robb Imports from Hong Kong to Canada's retail florists.



TOURING THE KITCHEN at Halton Manor are members of Halton region's Health and Social Services committee. The tour was arranged by the region to familiarize new members of the committee with the facility. From left are committee chairman Walter Mulkewich; Roy Paul, a member of the consulting firm preparing the report on the manor for the committee; Laurie Mannell; Don Gordon; Jim Grieve; Ed Wood; and assistant manor administrator Gord Timbers. Neither Mr. Mannell nor Mr. Gordon are committee members, but accompanied the trip.

Traffic Act changes

In an effort to cut down tailgating by commercial vehicles, trucks traveling over 60 kilometres an hour on Ontario roads will be forbidden to follow any vehicle closer than 60 metres or approximately 200 feet.

Any drivers convicted of a third, or more, drinking and driving charge will lose their licences for a minimum of three years.

These new amendments to The Highway Traffic Act were included in Bill 159 which received third and final reading last week, Minister of Transportation and Communications Jim Snow said this week.

"It is now a specific offence to drive a motor vehicle in contravention of conditions contained in the licence or imposed by the regulations," Snow pointed out, adding, "This affects a person who is driving without glasses when his licence requires that he do so."

"The law now makes it illegal for the driver of the vehicle approaching from the rear to move beyond the front of the vehicle being overtaken."

"We have also plugged a loophole in respect to commercial traffic on highways. In recent years, many municipal boundaries have moved beyond built up areas leaving high-speed sections of highway not covered specifically by sections of the HTA."

"Where necessary," Snow continued, "we have changed the reference from highways 'outside a city, town or village, to cover all highways where the

maximum speed limit is more than 60 kilometres an hour.

"An important section affected by this change is that which prohibits commercial vehicles from following one another closer than 60 metres. To prevent tailgating by commercial vehicles generally, we have broadened this section to include the following of any vehicle if the truck is moving at over 60 kilometres per hour."

"We have also broadened the means by which police officers can carry out the emergency closing of highways. Prior to this, policemen had to be physically present on the scene and in situations where major storms covered a substantial area, it was difficult to position police officers at all strategic points."

"Under the new regulations," Snow pointed out, "The police can close a highway by posting traffic barriers and will have the power to enlist the assistance of highway maintenance personnel to carry out the necessary work."

"Finally, an amendment allows for a left-hand turn on a red light—after coming to a stop—from a one-way street to another one-way street."

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Peter Hannam Federation head

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) returned six incumbents and elected a woman to its seven-person executive, at the 42nd annual convention held in Hamilton.

Peter Hannam, a cash crop farmer near Guelph, was reelected by acclamation for his third term as president. Mr. Hannam received several standing ovations for his work this past year from the nearly 500 delegates at the three-day convention. He has been president of a number of agricultural organizations during the last 10 years and was first elected to OFA's Board of Directors in 1974.

farmer near Perth, in Lanark County, was also returned for his third term as first vice-president. He has been an OFA Director for over six years and has also served on the Board of Directors for the Canadian Federation of Agriculture.

Four candidates contested the position of second vice-president, with Ron White, a dairy farmer near Denfield, in Middlesex County, being elected. Mr. White has been on the OFA executive for two years.

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