

# Profiles

with Jennifer Barr



Bob MacArthur has been in the printing business all his life. In 1927 at the age of 15 he started working for the Acton Free Press and retired from the same company (then called Dills Printing and Publishing) five years ago. He was away for nine years working in Little Current in the 50s printing, of course.

"Printing is all I know," says Bob modestly. Seems like a simple statement but it encompasses a great deal. Job specialization was unheard of in 1927. The four-and-a-half member staff did every job going, working long hours for an average of six cents a man hour. Bob received \$5 a week and tried to squeeze 15 hours of work daily into 11. "I was highly over paid" says Bob.

There isn't a job connected with the paper that Bob hasn't done. He was a printer's devil, floor sweeper, press operator, compositor, linotypist, reporter and advertising salesman—usually all at once.

He'd start at 7 a.m. stirring up the soft coal fire for the steam-powered Prouty Press. He swept floors, cleared snow and fetched water. When he started his apprenticeship, the Free Press was housed in the Dills Building, now Acton Mews shopping mall. Prior to this the company was situated where the Bank of Nova Scotia now stands.

Bob started working with H.P. Moore and Arlof Dills in the days of their joint ownership.

Shortly after Bob joined, Mr. Dills took over the company and Mr. Moore relinquished his Free Press ties although still maintaining his desk in the building for his office as police magistrate. As well as learning to operate the Prouty Press printing two pages of the four page paper at a time, Bob became an expert linotypist. Linotype was a fairly recent innovation, having been brought to Acton in 1919, the first in Halton. Prior to this, type was laboriously hand set, two columns in a ten hour shift.

Type was set mirror fashion in large full-page cases. Bob learned to read backwards as fast as he can read forwards. Ads were cut mounted on wood. Photographs were sent away to be engraved—an expensive process. Zinc was mostly used but copper or brass was employed for finer detail. When plastic mounting came in some of the detail was lost, according to Bob. Even ad pictures were cast in metal from grooved cardboard.

Bob remembers his embarrassment when he spilled four cases (pages) of type all ready to go on the press for that week's publication. "It all went out the back (of the press). I must have forgot to close the dogs—boy, the air was blue."

Bob and the staff worked all night to put that type back together but the paper got out on time. Evenings, Bob attended hydro and council meetings doing such a knowledgeable job he was appointed to the hydro commission.

In 1943 when the Milton Canadian Champion was purchased Bob travelled back and forth with ads and papers. He received a dollar for attending Milton Council plus 75 cents for supper and 10 cents a mile expense money.

"I never asked for a raise in my life" Bob says proudly. "If the Dills had the money, we got it, if not we didn't."

There were no paid holidays in those days, either.

In addition to a spicily varied life, printing also brought Bob his wife, Sabra MacArthur worked part-time in the offices of the Free Press for 11 years starting at 20 cents an hour, she recalls. Both were raised in the area and trace their family histories back to early settlers. They have one son John and a granddaughter.

One of Bob's greatest treasures presented to him at his retirement dinner is an old linotype case containing mementos of his 50 years in printing. Among the ad cuts, type styles, and logos is a zinc engraved picture of Bob. He hasn't changed much.



Bob MacArthur

## Sprackman drops objection to industrial park rezoning

Jerry Sprackman's Landawn Shopping Centres has withdrawn its objections to rezoning of some land off Highway 25 just north of Acton for an industrial park.

Halton Hills planning board was informed last Tuesday night that

Landawn, which wants to build a plaza on the east side of Acton, had dropped its objection. Early in 1980 Halton Hills rezoned about 70 acres of land north-west of the railway tracks from rural designation to industrial for Alteo Construction. The region

approved the rezoning for the 90 per cent of the site which is within the urban servicing (water and sewers) boundary while 10 per cent of the site wasn't approved for rezoning.

Landawn objected to the rezoning and the Ontario Municipal Board had set a hearing for November 9. With the objection dropped the hearing won't be needed.

## Approve lots on private road

A six single family estate home subdivision located on 15 acres of a 100 acre operating farm, off Highway 25 was given draft approval by Halton Hills planning board, this week.

A private road, running off Highway 25 south of Ten Sideroad, will be maintained jointly by the seven owners

One of the conditions to be included in the subdivision agreement at

the insistence of the Ministry of the Environment states the barn will not house more than six head of livestock. A certificate of compliance issued jointly by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and the Ministry of Environment regarding the number of livestock in the barn will have to be produced by the owner. The number of livestock allowed will then have to be registered on title of the lot owners.

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