

People fascinate local historian

By MAGGIE HANNAH
Herald staff writer

Living in a community that had an unusual name started one of Halton Hill's better known journalists on the road to public recognition, although his love of people did a lot to turn his research into something saleable.

John McDonald lived in Dolly Varden for 19 years and his curiosity grew until one day in 1971 when he decided to look into the background of the little community with the strange name. He went to the library expecting to pick up a book and find out about it. Neither Georgetown nor Acton library possessed what he wanted. He talked to Herald publisher Walter Biehn but newspaper files had little to offer either. He finally began tracking down former residents of the area and listening to their stories and stories they had heard as children which were handed down from people who remember the Dolly in its heyday.

His research turned up two theories for the name. The first, which he has heard from several sources, says that it was named after a woman of ill repute who lived up in the hills near the Dolly and committed suicide by pouring kerosene on herself. The second is John's own theory and stems from the fact that many of the residents of the area came from a part of London, England described in Dickens' novel *Barnaby Rudge*. The leading female character in the novel was Dolly Varden and women wore Dolly Varden fashions right up into the early 1920s, he says. Thus he suspects that the community was named after Dolly.

LIME KILNS

The community centred around lime kilns and had about 100 hands at its height. The kilns were opened in the 1860s and finally closed in 1931 with the advent of modern technology.

"People fascinate me," John says, and his many interests seem to bear this out.

John graduated from Ryerson in 1971 after studying Radio, Television Arts. His most important courses, however, he says were the evening courses in public relations and personnel relations which he took on his own. He is still working on intensive study courses in Management Studies from Sheridan College. He started with Gage Stationery in Georgetown in 1974 and is personnel manager with DRG,

the firm that took Gage over. John's interest in people led him to run as a Ward 3 representative for Halton Hills council in the election and he topped the polls not only for his ward but for all the candidates running in any single ward. Now he is anxious to get on the job although he expects it will take time to get into the routine of things.

"I hope people will realize I'm accessible," he says. John is also an avid jogger and chucked about the number of cars he had to push out of the snow Monday morning while he was out for his run.

"I guess I'll have to take a quieter street next time it storms," he says.

John was born in Milton in 1947 and came to Dolly Varden at the age of five. He got his elementary education in a one-room school at the corner of Highway Seven and the Fourth Lane, Bannockburn School is now a house but John remembers the school concerts there when he was a child.

SCHOOL CONCERTS

"I guess my most embarrassing memories of those school concerts come as I get older," he laughs. "We were square dancing or something and I had long underwear on. I roll it up so it didn't show but it slipped while we were moving around."

Another member of that community remembers a much younger John with plenty of freckles, at least one missing front tooth and a thorough disregard for his audience. John was in the first grade that year and it was his first concert. His good trousers must have been a bit big for they started to slide in the middle of his recitation. John stopped right there to hitch them up, gave the audience a big grin and continued with his recitation. The expert wiggled to settle the offending pants nearly brought the house down, the lady says, and no one ever did hear the rest of his recitation. They were too busy laughing.

John's musical career began when he sang in the Halton Music Festivals. "There was this other kid named John Mc... something or other. I can't remember the last part," he says. "He always won. Every year when they'd call out the name I'd beat him, but I never did."

Even if the festival adjudicators didn't favour him he went on to begin singing with a band during his second year at

Acton High School and continued singing during his last two years of secondary education, which he took in Georgetown, and right through Ryerson. Now he is singing with a band called The Dolly Varden Revue which does mostly 60s music, contemporary rock and country and western music, he says.

John is a member of the Esquering Historical Society and has been with the group since it was organized in 1975. When he was campaigning for the election he hoped people wouldn't think he was interested only in the past since his work with the society and his historical writings seemed to be his most visible claims to fame.

HALTON SKETCHES

His book, *Halton Sketches*, resulted from his research on Dolly Varden, he says. "So much of the Dolly's history overlapped into Limehouse that I got involved with researching Limehouse too," he says. "The Limehouse spread out into Acton and Georgetown."

He published his findings in local newspapers starting in 1974 and two years later they were released as a book.

"I started out with my research in a cardboard box on a corner of the bookshelf," he says, "and now I have a five-drawer filing cabinet and I'm thinking of getting another one."

"I wouldn't want to guess how many people I've talked to. Most of the good pictures I have, have come from people who have left the area. The people I've met are one of the most gratifying things about doing the history," he adds.

John says he has begun interviewing people and is already 16 of 17 chapters into a second book on the area. While it will contain a continuation of the type of material in his original work, it may also touch lightly on the Depression as Halton residents knew it. "I wish more people could understand what past generations have gone through," he says. "I feel it would help them to appreciate more what we have as a result of their efforts."

Although it is very much a thing for the future he hints that he may one day do a book on the depression.

John's grandmother was a Scott from Limehouse and her family will be included in the

next book he says. Part of that story will tell how his Roman Catholic grandfather from Priceville left his church to marry his staunchly Presbyterian grandmother in 1899 and more or less cut himself off from the rest of his family as a result of it.

BACK TO CHURCH
"But he went back to the church once a year," he says, "Just to keep in touch, I suppose."

John's father, Russell, was one of nine children and spent his life in the area. He worked at Domtar for 18 years along with such familiar people as Tom Hill and Russ Miller. He died in 1967.

John is the eldest of nine children and they all still live near by "between Cruesen", Corners and Brampton," he

says. He has a three-year-old son also named John. Most of his life was spent in a house on a lot off his grandmother's farm at the Dolly. She sold the farm in 1963 or 1964 and it is now part of Indusmin Quarries.

Before the farm was sold however, John remembers an old tramp who lived in one of the unused kilns at the Dolly.

PERFECTLY HARMLESS
Alec Shaw must have been quite an old man, John says, and he suspects that he probably had some sort of psychiatric problem but he was perfectly harmless and enjoyed talking to youngsters.

"They tried to keep him in the Manor in Milton but he wouldn't stay. He said he lived in trenches in the First War so long that he couldn't stand

being cooped up in a civilized house. I don't know if he was shell-shocked or what was wrong with him," John says. "He had the kiln lined with cardboard and he always had a fire going. I can smell the smoke from it just talking to you. I haven't thought about him in years."

"The township dump was at the back of Grandma's farm and he used to go back there and scrounge for food in the garbage. I remember we took him up the remains of our turkey one Christmas. He was kind of taken back by it."

"I don't know what happened to him, whether he moved on or they put him in an institution, or what. I just know he wasn't there when they started quarrying after the farm was sold."



JOHN McDONALD

Already There
President Franklin Roosevelt, FDR, was once told that Wendell Wilkie had his eyes on the Presidential chair.

"That may be true," FDR said, "but look what I've got on it."

Are you NEW TO TOWN, or have you just moved into a new home?????



WELCOME SERVICE

Would like to call on you with "HOUSEWARMING GIFTS" and information about Georgetown.

For this information and Housewarming gifts, call Joan Gillespie at: 877-4812

HEARING AID CENTRES

—GEORGETOWN—
GEORGETOWN OPTICAL
Georgetown Market Place
877-3567

—ACTON—
22 Main St. S.
853-2211

Having A Hearing Problem?

Problems With Your Hearing Aid?

Mr. F.L. Burke will be in Georgetown Friday, Dec. 1 from 9:00 to 12:00 noon.

In Acton Friday, Dec. 1 from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Bellone HEARING AID SERVICE



IGA DOLLAR DAYS

CHICKEN NOODLE
IGA Soup Mix 8 ENVS \$1

IN TOMATO SAUCE
Heinz Spaghetti 4 8 FL. OZ TINS \$1

WITH PECTION
Aylmer Strawberry or Raspberry Jam 24 FL OZ JAR \$1

VEGETABLE OIL
Pam No Stick Spray 9 OZ AERO TIN \$1

ASSORTED COLORS
Scott Paper Towels 2 ROLL PKG \$1

EXCEPT BABY
IGA Shampoo or Creme Rinse 500 ml PLASTIC BTL \$1

POLY
Quiklik Kitchen Garbage Bags 2 PKGS OF 12 \$1

GRAIN OF GOLD
White Sliced Bread 3 24 OZ LOAVES \$1

FRESH!
7 CHOP ECONOMY PACK
Loin 2 RIB 4 CENTRE 1 TENDERLOIN \$1.59

EVERSWEET, RIND ON
Side Bacon 99¢

SWIFT'S PREMIUM
Sizzlean PKG 12 OZ \$1.78

FANCY
Del Monte Peas 3 14 FL OZ TINS \$1

CHOICE
IGA Cream Style Corn 4 14 FL OZ TINS \$1

KRAFT PROCESS
Cheez Whiz 16 OZ JAR \$1.39

IGA, ROYAL GOLD, RANDOM WEIGHTS
Brick or Colby Cheese LB \$1.79

REGULAR, 100% VEGETABLE OIL
Imperial Margarine 3 LB CTN \$1.99

REYNOLD'S WRAP 18" WIDTH
Aluminum Foil 50 FT. ROLL CUTTER BOX \$1.99

CANADA NO. 1 GRADE
P.E.I. Potatoes 10-LB. BAG 49¢

PRODUCE OF U.S.A. FLORIDA MARSH SEEDLESS
Red or White Grapefruit 8 \$1

PRODUCE OF REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
Outspan Valencia Oranges DOZ. 99¢

PRIDE OF CANADA, SLICED
Cooked Ham 6 OZ PKG \$1.09

PRIDE OF CANADA, SLICED
MAG & CHEESE, MCKCK CHICKEN, LUNCHEON OR BOLOGNA 6 OZ PKG 59¢

Sandwich Meats BY THE PIECE GOLDEN GARLIC \$1.39

Polish Sausage LB \$1.39

BURN'S, PORK & BEEF SMALL LINK OR FARM STYLE \$1.09

Breakfast Sausages LB \$1.09

ASSORTED FLAVORS
Allen's Fruit Drinks 2 16 FL OZ TINS \$1

GAINES, BEEF FLAVORED
Top Choice Dog Food 2 kg BOX \$2.49

ALL PURPOSE GRIND
Maxwell House Coffee 1 LB BAG \$2.88

Heinz Ketchup 32 FL OZ BTL \$1.19

Bold or Oxydol Powdered Detergent 6 LITRE BOX \$2.99

FROZEN, BEEF, CHICKEN, TURKEY OR SALISBURY STEAK
Savarin Dinners 11 OZ PKG 79¢

HIGH LINER, FROZEN
Ocean Perch Fillets 16 OZ PKG \$1.39

RHODES, FROZEN, 100% WHOLE WHEAT OR WHITE PKG OF 1 X BREAD DOUGH 16 OZ LOAVES \$1.39

NABISCO Shredded Wheat 450 g BOX 69¢

BASSETT'S Licorice Allsorts 600 g PKG \$1.49

BLENDRITE IGA Pure Lard 1 LB CTN 59¢

ONTARIO GROWN CANADA NO 1 GRADE
Carrots or Onions 2 LB BAG 29¢

PRODUCE OF U.S.A CANADA NO 1 GRADE
Cucumbers SIZE 24'S EA 29¢

ONTARIO GROWN CANADA FANCY GRADE
McIntosh Apples 5 LB BAG \$1.39

Give to Christmas Seals
YOUR gift is a Matter of Life and Death

Five Star Bingo
Hundreds of One Line & Full Card Winners of \$10.00 cash
22 Sets of Luggage
3 Grand Prizes of 1 Week For Two in Orlando Florida
Monday thru Friday at 10 a.m. and 11 a.m. on CFTO Television Channel 9

Now-Paul Green
Director, Consumer Affairs

What is a 'Wholegrain'?

Have you ever wondered what a 'wholegrain' is? A wholegrain still contains its original bran, endosperm, and germ. Nothing has been removed, and nothing added.

The bran is the outer coating of the grain. It serves to protect the grain, and it provides dietary fiber. The endosperm is the energy source of the grain and is the largest section of the grain. Originally designed to feed the young seed as it grew, it is eaten as a good source of carbohydrates and protein. The germ is the center core of the grain, and supplies vitamins, minerals and protein.

Wholegrains supply us with carbohydrates for energy; protein to help build strong bodies; iron for rich, red blood; and thiamin and riboflavin to help maintain healthy nerves, skin and eyes.

Mrs. Green is available to talk to groups about shopping and other subjects of consumer interest. Please write: Box 665, Toronto M4V 2N6.