

Raised on farm, Maltby owns, operates factory

By MAGGIE HANNAH
Herald staff writer

Needing extra money for some reason is a problem most couples face at some point in their lives. If they have been living on the husband's income, it isn't unusual to learn that the wife has gone out and got a job to provide that extra cash.

When the wife starts up her own company making threaded products in stainless steel to supplement the family income, however, that's a new twist to the standard answer.

That was the answer Gail Maltby chose when she opened MGM Machining in a corner of a building on the eastern edge of Acton in February.

"I'm starting two new businesses, really," Mrs. Maltby says. "My horses will have to pay for themselves eventually but I needed the money to keep them until they could reach that point. This (she gestures to the big machine and piles of steel rods from which she manufactures the threaded products) is how I'll make the money to tide myself over."

If operating a virtual one-woman machine shop sounds like an unusual occupation for a woman, Mrs. Maltby doesn't see it as such.

FARMER'S DAUGHTER

"I was raised on a farm," she says. "There was always all sorts of machinery around, and you learned how to work. You also learned not to mind getting dirty. If that bothered you, you got out of it. I'm the grubbier person I know. This machine spits oil all over me. I don't like it, but I don't really mind. I really enjoy cleaning stalls but that wouldn't suit a lot of people. It's all in what suits you."

Mrs. Maltby says she has always been interested in horses. As a girl there was always a team of heavy horses around and her grandfather preferred using the horses to using the tractor unless there was a real rush about finishing the job.

"Grandad would use one horse to plough the garden and I'd wind up on his back," she recalls. "You couldn't really say you were riding it. Not those horses. But they were there and I liked them."

She enjoyed going to Mohawk Raceway occasionally to see the harness horses and laughs about how she'd look for a friend to go along for company because her husband George, just loathed it and would only be dragged out once or twice a year - if she was lucky.

A neighbor, Don Swackhammer, also like race horses and it was through him Mrs. Maltby bought her first standard bred. Although she had always been interested in horses, she couldn't make up her mind to really try raising them until Mr. Swackhammer found a mare for her.

EXTRA PUSH

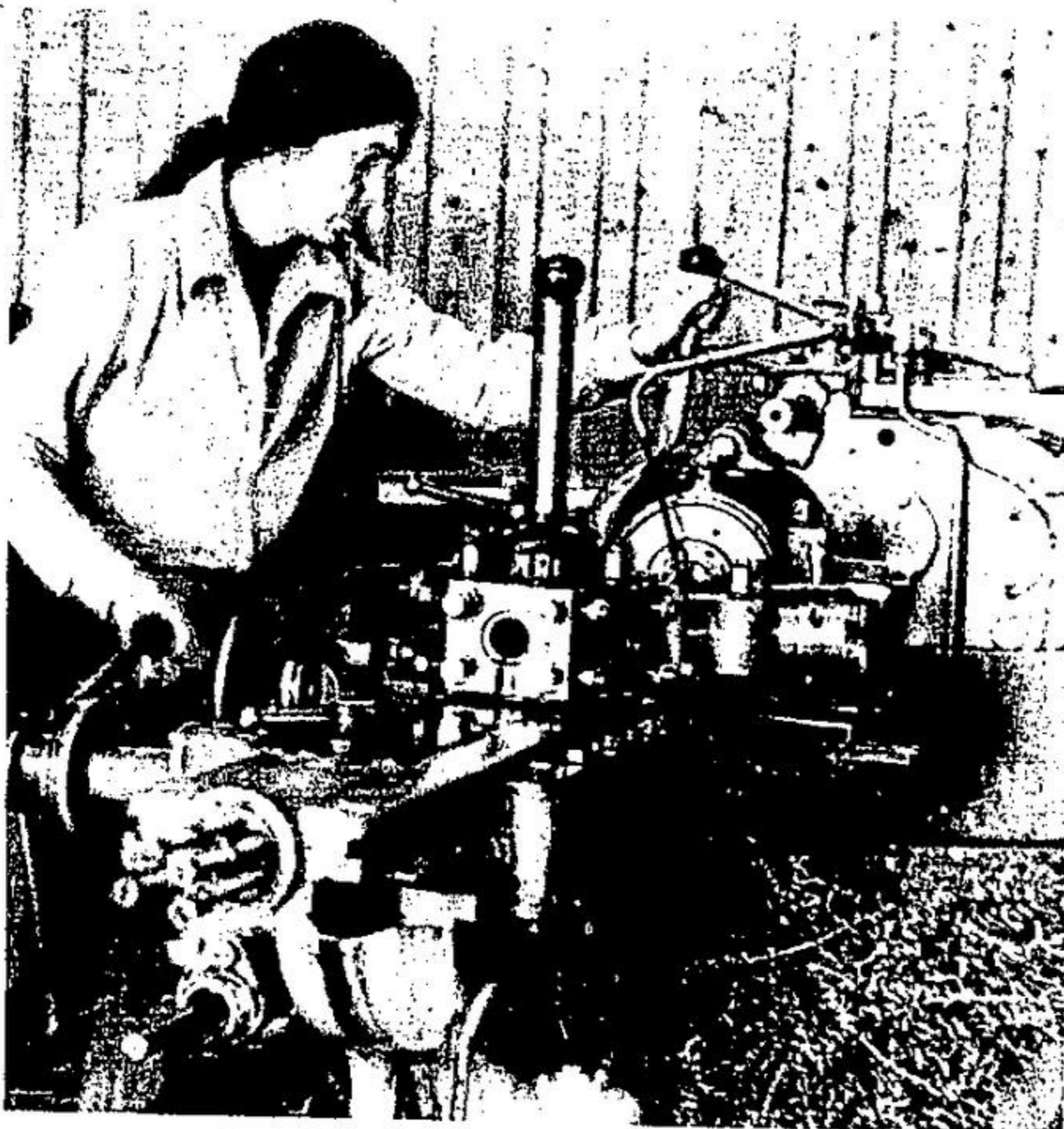
"Don was that extra little push that helped me make up my mind," she laughs. "I don't know whether I should kill him or thank him. And I guess I won't know for some time to come until I see how it works out."

Mrs. Maltby owns a two-year-old, a mare in foal and a weanling and her son has a pony.

She bought a yearling last year and Bill Wellwood of Mississauga spent six months training her. She entered three races this summer and won her third start, the Trillium Stakes in London. Unfortunately she chipped a bone in her foot in that race and ended her career on the track.

Although he isn't a race fan Mr. Maltby went to watch her horse race and their three sons are all involved with the horses.

"It's not the betting that hooks orse owners, Mrs. Maltby says. It's the working with the horses and caring for them and nursing them along while you



Gail Maltby, owner behind MGM Machining, produces screws, studs and "all types of threaded gizmos" on her machine. Although it's dirty, tiring work she prefers running her own business to being accountable to someone else.

(Herald photo)

hope they'll make a race horse.

"If you get a little bit involved you either get out very fast or you get so hung up on it that you can't leave," she says. "George told me if I wanted the horses that was okay with him but I'd have to figure out how to pay for them myself."

Mrs. Maltby says she pondered her financial options for months wondering if she should go back to work and, if she did, what work should she get to. She had worked as a switchboard operator at Beardmore's when she first left school, in the order department at Porter's (now known as Diston Saw) and eventually sold real estate for G. Alec Johnson for a few years.

While real estate seemed a logical choice she knew the hours would interfere badly with the time she spends with her family since many customers can only go out at night and the salesman must be available when the customer is ready.

Three or four years ago, Mrs. Maltby says her husband often mentioned how difficult it was for his company, Atlas Alloys, to locate a supply of studs and bolts on short notice.

MARKET THERE

"I knew there was a market for these things," she says. "The fact that George knew a lot of people in the business helped and he was able to help me find a machine and the equipment for it. It made it a lot easier."

She set up her operation in a corner of the Queen Tire building on Highway Seven on the eastern outskirts of Acton in February and works there most days.

"I've never in my life worked as hard physically as I am right now," she admits "and I have to wonder how long I can stand it."

Mrs. Maltby says she is still recovering from harvesting on their Third Line farm north of Acton.

"I need the hay and grain for the horses but I can't be doing that and be in here at the same time," she says. "The work is getting ahead of me. Right now I have enough work for one and a half machines and I'm going flat out to keep up. I'm going to have to make a choice soon. Either I cut back a bit or I go out and dig up more work, buy another machine and hire someone else to work with me. I'm thinking about it but I have

it made up my mind which to do yet."

Her customers are strictly Canadian firms, mainly in the Toronto area. She says she accepts no orders smaller than 100 of anything since the machines takes a long time to set up and costs would make the price of small orders prohibitive.

Manufacturing "studs, bolts and all kinds of threaded gizmos" is a recent addition to her lifestyle. Many people in Halton Hills know Mrs. Maltby's involvement in politics and the Herald asked how her business would mix with this interest.

She considers her answer very seriously as she tries to explain how she has changed

and her priorities have shifted.

"When I got active in party politics I needed to be out with people," she says. "That was when Guy (her second son) had a tendon transfer in his foot and he spent so much of the year in bed. He was out of school almost all year. He had a teacher coming in to see him and I was home with him all the time. He started having trouble with his heart then,

too. I needed to get out and get involved with people."

"I find I haven't the patience to listen to people's little complaints anymore," she continues. "I used to have all kinds of patience with people and I don't have it now. I don't get upset the way I used to. I don't let things bother me now unless they're really important. I haven't stopped liking people. I just changed my priorities, and now I haven't time to get involved in politics any more."

STILL INTERESTED

"I still keep an eye on what the government is doing. I like a good discussion and I'll talk to anyone about any issue still. I very much enjoy a friendly disagreement as long as no one gets personal about it and starts putting you down for what you believe. I don't think anyone really completely agrees with the total philosophy of any of the parties. They just stick to the one that has the most points they agree with and criticize the parts they don't agree with. Unless you're the elected representative or on the party executive. Then you have to keep quiet. They don't like that."

It was her political work that landed her the appointment to the Credit Valley Conservative Authority. She is just over a year into her second three-year appointment to CVCA.

"People seem to think you get rich going to meetings," she says. "You get \$22 a meeting plus gas mileage. There may be the odd two-hour meeting but most of them last about four hours. Now if you break that down to an hourly wage and remember that most of us spend another hour and a half on the road getting to the meeting, it isn't any fantastic sum. And you don't get paid for the number of times you get called to look at something the staff is having a problem with. You do that on your own."

Mrs. Maltby is chairman of the CVCA's Park and Recreation Advisory Board. While her own committee meets as often as staff concerns require, she also attends full authority meetings once a month from September to May and the executive meets at least once every two weeks.

WARD 2 COUNCILLOR

Aside from her own political involvement, Mrs. Maltby has had the role of politician's wife to contend with for the last few

years. Her husband is a Ward 2 councillor for Halton Hills.

"I know a lot of people thought I'd talked George into running for council," she says, "but that was strictly his decision. I knew what he'd be getting into and I wouldn't try to talk anyone into that."

The bricks far outnumber the bouquets for local councillors just as they do in the higher level of politics and thus persuasion and wages never make the job worth the work unless there is personal satisfaction too, she feels.

One of the things that really amazed me in the beginning was the number of people who didn't realize George had another job," she says. "They seemed to think the being a councillor was his full-time job and when they called him he should be right here to talk to them. A lot of people just simply don't know they can call him at work, and when they get that number it's okay. But there's still that few who think he was elected and they have the right therefore to speak to him this minute."

Mrs. Maltby doesn't believe

local voters should get a two-for-one deal at the polls.

"When people elect a councillor, they haven't elected that person's husband or wife too," she says. "I don't think they have any right to expect anything of the husband or wife. It really irritates me when I hear people making personal remarks about a politician's husband or wife. They have no right to be interested in a politician's family unless they feel the partner is going to hinder the elected councillor. It's a bunch of nonsense hung over from the higher levels of politics."

"I went out and campaigned with George the first time he ran but I don't any more. And I don't go to things with him. I feel someone has to be at home with the kids and if he's on council business then the person at home is me. Whether it's caring them to something they're involved in themselves or helping them with homework or just playing a game with them, the boys need me more than the town does."

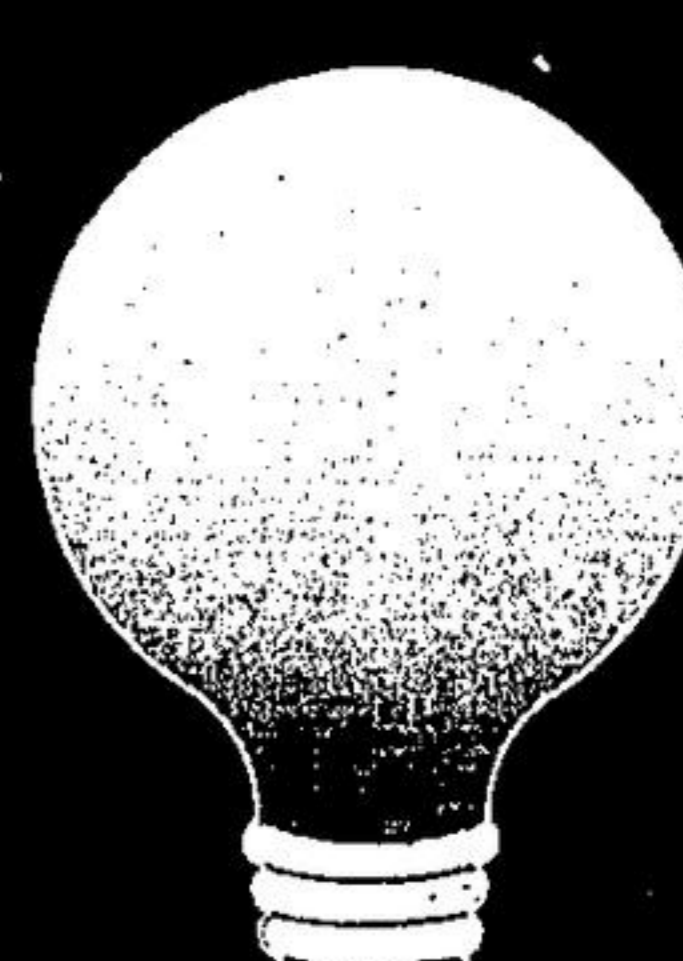
Mr. and Mrs. Maltby have three sons, Greg, Guy and Geoff.

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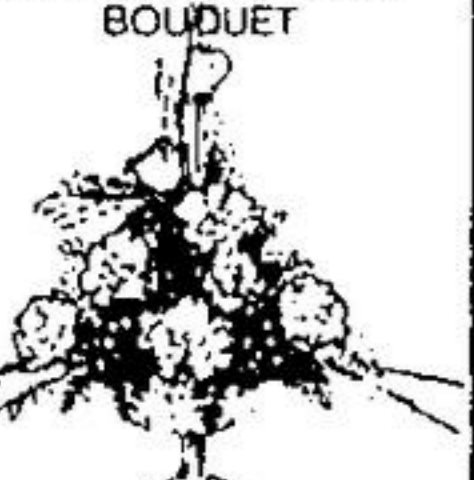
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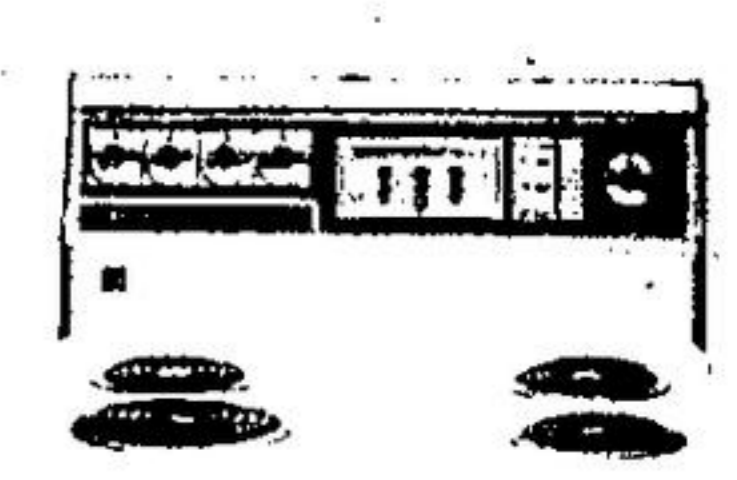
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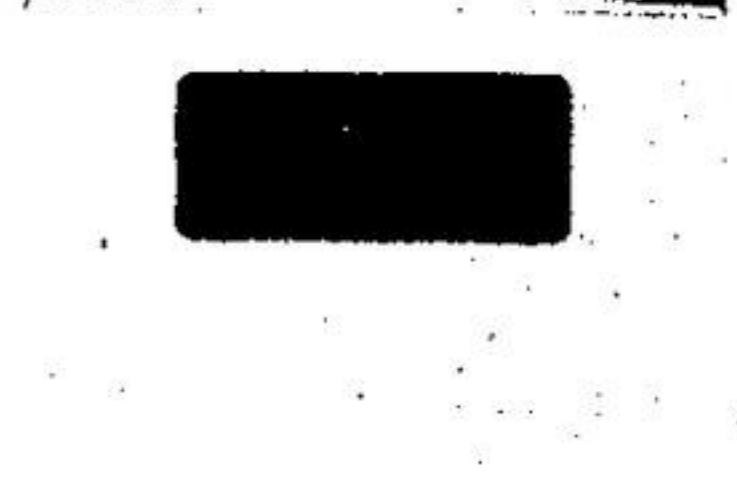


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