

Hamilton fan club

A new generation idolizes Elvis

By ALLISON MacKENZIE
Herald Special

The Elvis In Canada Fan Club is burgeoning with new members, most of whom were either little children or not born when Elvis was the king of rock and roll, according to the club's founder and director, Fran Roberts.

"One third of our members are under 25," says Ms. Roberts. "Our membership varies in age from eight to 80, but a lot of the new members are teens - 12, 14, 15 years of age. Those under 25 weren't born when Elvis Presley started, and a lot of these kids weren't even born when he died!"

The fan club, which is based out of Ms. Robert's Hamilton home and has welcomed 1,500 members world-wide since it began in 1980, is being revamped to lower the membership fee. Ms. Roberts, the sole founder and operator of the non-profit club, says the cost of a one-year membership is going down to \$6 from \$15 to make the club more affordable for young people.

"Young kids can't afford the high costs. But interest is burgeoning in the younger generation and this is who we will have to leave the legacy with," says Ms. Roberts.

Ten years after Presley's sudden death at the age of 42 from alcohol and drug related causes, his appeal is increasing, she continues.

In addition to members from every province in Canada and half of the states in the United States, there are members from Thailand, Greece, Japan, France, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, England, Poland and Australia. Because citizens of communist countries are not allowed to send money out of the country, the club sponsors a project to buy memberships for needy fans behind the iron curtain.

Ms. Roberts thinks the younger

generation are viewing old Elvis movies on TV and that is how they are getting hooked. She says there have been at least a dozen new movies about Elvis in the last 10 years and an untold number of documentaries such as "The Echo will never Die," "68 Special," and "Elvis, Memories."

ABC television network just released a made-for-TV movie about Presley's life. A weekly series, "Elvis," starring Michael St. Gerrard and Millie Perkins is scheduled to begin mid-month on the same network.

Elvis' legend lives on because he was a multi-talented singer first and foremost, she explains. "Elvis' voice is under-rated. We have gotten so caught up in the rumors and the flamboyance, we've forgotten that he could sing every type of music. He sang country, rock and roll, rhythm and blues, gospel, ballads - something for everyone."

"The goal of the club is for fans to communicate, have fun and exchange information about Elvis so we can all learn more," says the enthusiastic fan.

Ms. Roberts says Elvis will always be king. "It's never going to change, although it's not a title he was comfortable with. It came with his return in '68. The Beatles came the closest to his legend, and I always say it took four of them to almost do what Elvis did."

His continuing popularity is exemplified by the over 675,000 people who make the pilgrimage from all over the world to Graceland, Elvis' home in Memphis, Tennessee, each year. It is the second most visited private residence in the United States, exceeded only by the White House. Ms. Roberts, who has been there more than 20

times says Graceland has become an international shrine where fans meet to remember.

The fans come from all parts of society and from all over the world according to Ms. Roberts. "The general public visualizes somebody with black hair and glasses when they think of an Elvis fan. Wrong - most Elvis fans are perfectly normal people that you pass on the street."

Once a year fan club members can participate in an Elvis day in the Hamilton area. Ms. Roberts says between 200 and 300 fans turn out each year to have fun, remember Elvis and share thoughts about him.

"We play Elvis movies and Elvis music. There are dealers selling memorabilia, contests, jive dancing, it's a lot like the '50s. We also run an auction of Elvis memorabilia and '50s merchandise. Last year in the span of 45 minutes we raised \$1,300 for charity," she continues.

Ms. Roberts has been a fan for over three decades. "I'm of the era. I'm 45. I was a teen in '56. I grew up with Elvis through the years. I went to 19 concerts," says Ms. Roberts.

The devoted fan estimates the king made 33 movies and 75 albums containing new material. "If I'm going to put on an album, it's Elvis," she says.

Her favorite movie is "Jail House Rock," but she says it's difficult to pick a favorite song. Depending on her mood, one of

Acton Legion meat draw

By MIKE MANUEL
Acton Legion

We are pleased to announce that our first weekly meat draw, that was held on Feb. 3, was very successful.

The following names were drawn, with a fine selection of meat as prizes.

Colin Baker, Bruce Fowler, John Hoare, Kay James, John Esplin (2), C. Couture, Don Dakin, Marg Holley, Jim Higgins, (Bird) Bruce MacPherson, Harold Townsley and Jim Phillip.

Thanks to all who participated, and we look forward to seeing you all again for our next draw.

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