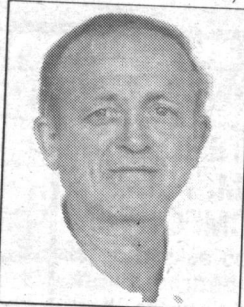


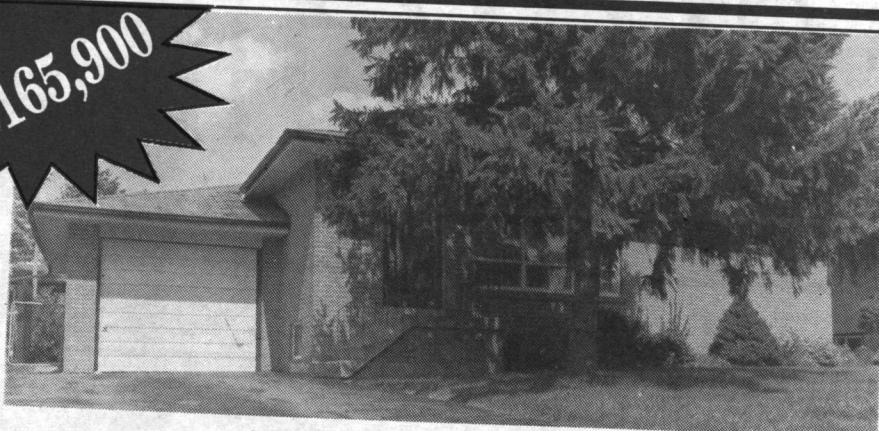
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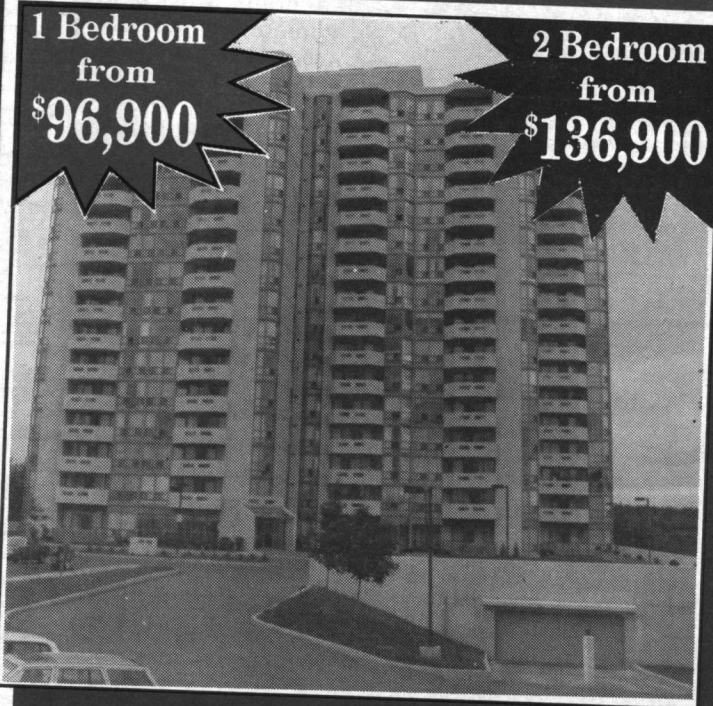
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**Out at the Ranch**

with Bill Ellis

**THE HIGHWAYMAN**



Recently, I have been spending some time at a highway construction company and I could not help remembering another highway builder I knew. My father-in-law, bless him, built highways all over Ontario in concrete, black top and gravel - you name it, he did it! One of his greatest challenges came when his Company won a contract to build ninety miles of gravel highway from the CNR mainline to a group of gold mines in Northern Ontario. As I recall, it was a three year project for a staff of about fifty and all the necessary equipment had to be shipped by rail to the jump off point. This was great country, made up of muskeg, rocky ridges, timber, lakes and rivers.

All staff lived in a self contained camp, comprising of bunk houses, cook house, dining hall, maintenance shops and office, all mounted on huge skids so they could be hauled from camp site to camp site. Yes, electricity generated by a truck motor and generator. Supplies came in daily from Winnipeg via rail.

We had an opportunity to visit the job site for a week during the summer. We had a drawing room on the CNR trans continental when long distance train travel was the only way to go! The dining car was sumptuous and the food was excellent. "Sorry Sir, no Tom Collins on board - I will just make up a pitcher of fresh lemonade for you - back shortly." Now that is what Porters got those big tips for - service.

We got off the train at a village called Savant Lake at 1:00 in the morning. The father-in-law was

there in his pick-up to drive us out forty-five miles to the current camp site. The next morning we wandered down to the kitchen about 10:00 to be greeted by the cook, by name Ollie. He was frying dozens of pork chops for the early dinner shift coming in, but he managed some bacon and pancakes on one corner of the griddle. For that week, he treated us to true Northern hospitality with more food than you could possibly handle.

I was amazed at the versatility of this highway building crew. They located and crushed gravel, they built bridges, they cut timber from the road bed, they bulldozed, shoveled and graded. Their hours were from dawn to dusk, on four meals a day, six days a week. The camp closed only at Christmas and Break-Up. (When the frost comes out of the ground.)

I was treated to some great fishing. Northern Pike and blue pickerel abounded in the various rivers and lakes along the highway. I learned to follow the blazes on the trees, marking the trails, and I didn't get lost, even once!

I learned a new respect for the father-in-law. By the very nature of the business and it's isolation, he had to be diplomat, policeman, peace maker and father confessor. He had to be tough, but fair, but above all, the job had to move. He loved it and I remember suddenly realizing why. Like all builders, he wanted to create something worth while that would exist long after his lifetime. He succeeded nicely - people are still rolling down his highways.

*Bill Ellis is an Associate Broker with Canada Trust Realty, Georgetown.*



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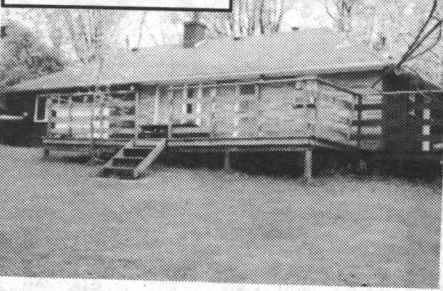


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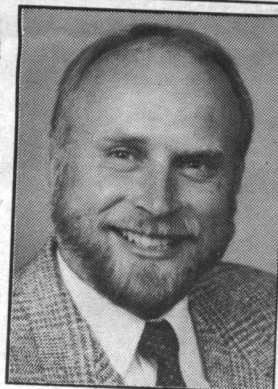
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