

Backyard garden was Ytzen Verbeek's 'pride and joy'

BY DOUG HARRISON
The Acton Tanner

Ytzen Verbeek always had a garden wherever he lived. And wherever he could put a flower, he did.

"His garden was his pride and joy. He always made time to look after his flowers, even when he was working," said his son John, while overlooking his dad's Victoria Avenue garden on Friday.

The elder Verbeek worked for nine years at United Aggregates Limited before retiring in 1990.

Mr. Verbeek recently suffered a heart-attack and died outside his Victoria Avenue home, 10 minutes after being notified by an Acton Horticultural Society member that he had captured first prize in the *Urban Residential Vegetable Garden* category of the annual Garden Contest. He was 69.

"He went over to shake (next-door neighbour) Mr. (Ed) McGilloway's hand, since he won the *Urban Residential Flowers and Lawn* previous winners class. Dad walked up the driveway to come home for dinner and had a heart attack at the back door," said John, an Acton resident. Mr. Verbeek had suffered a heart attack a few years ago.

Mr. Verbeek's garden, which measures around 60-feet by 70-feet, is filled with green and red cabbage, red beets, onions, potatoes, carrots, lettuce, beans, strawberries and raspberries, to name a few.

"He had so much that he would give so much away — to his neighbours and kids," stated John, the only son of four children. "The lady who judged his garden was surprised how organized it was."

Mr. Verbeek, who volunteered with Acton's Meals on Wheels program, came to Acton with his wife Frances in 1954 from Holland, where he grew up growing gardens.

"He looked at other people's gardens and got ideas. He got ideas from everyone. But I think sometimes people got ideas from him," said John, 37.

If anything needed a touch-up

around his property, be it the garden, other flowers that brightened the perimeter of the backyard or shingles on the roof, Mr. Verbeek insisted he do it alone.

"He was stubborn that way," laughed his son. "But he was a great dad. He loved his kids, his eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. He spent as much time with them since he retired as he could."

John said he will take care of the garden until everything is picked from it. If problems arise and he doesn't have the time, he'll find someone who does.

Mr. Verbeek is also responsible for the lovely and colourful flowers that surround the Beth-El Christian Reformed Church, where he served as caretaker.

"He was an avid gardener and he loved his church," said Joan Waldie of the Acton Horticultural Society. "There was something very endearing about him. I was very touched by his dedication to his garden and the flowers around the church."

"He was truly a gentleman and a very devout man in his church."

Waldie said the Verbeek Memorial Award will be given out next year to the church in town with the best-kept grounds.



YTZEN VERBEEK



TEETER-TODDLER!

Young Kevin Hamilton, 20-months-old, holds on tight as mom Ann balances him in mid-air at Prospect Park last Wednesday afternoon. (Doug Harrison photo)

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