

## GREAT MOMENTS IN CANADA'S HISTORY

BY DEBORAH QUAILE  
ARTS EDITOR

The timely release of *Just a Minute More* by Marsha Boulton should prod us to an abundance of cheering for Canada on July 1st, our nation's 132nd birthday.

The newest collection of stories came about when Marsha began scripting and researching the 'Heritage Minutes' which air on national television.

"I contributed most of the stories regarding women building the country - they were missing that component when I began. Patrick Watson, the creative director of the Heritage Minutes series, first bounced some of the ideas off me. I said, 'I don't think there are any women represented here,' and so I became involved with that aspect.

"Nellie McClung, Laura Secord - without a cow - there were so many stories that ... should be told. So I started writing!"

In the third book the author has researched a new collection of personalities and incidents from our past. Twenty-nine stories - from Marilyn Bell, the first woman to swim across Lake Ontario, Hollywood's Canadian connection, or Sir Barton, our triple crown winner - will delight history buffs.

Beginning as early as 1813 and running up to the present day, Marsha weaves tales of excitement and human interest. To celebrate our nation's heritage and the imminent arrival of the new millennium, her three books - *Just A Minute, Just Another Minute, and Just A Minute More* - will be compiled into a boxed set and a hardcover edition in the year 2000.

In spite of herself, Marsha keeps coming across more engrossing tales of unknown history that have a need to be told.

"I have a huge library - a lot of books that are out of

print, old *National Geographic*, and so on," she states. "One day I happened to be reading about thoroughbred racing and that was where I found Sir Barton... As I research one story, I inevitably stumble across a line about something else."

"One of the tales I'm becoming more and more fond of," she continues, "is about Dr. Mahlon Locke, entitled, *Feets don't fail me now*. I recently received a letter from woman who knew Dr. Locke and she said he was just as I described him. It's good to have feedback from someone who knew you nailed the story right on the head."

Many Canadian chronicles have been left untouched to the extent that students may not fully recognize the rich tapestry that our stories weave... until now, that is.

"We don't spend enough time examining Canada's history," Marsha says. "Apparently, some of these stories will be used to test the reading level of Grade 10 students and I think that's lovely. I hope that the kids learn something about their history in the process.

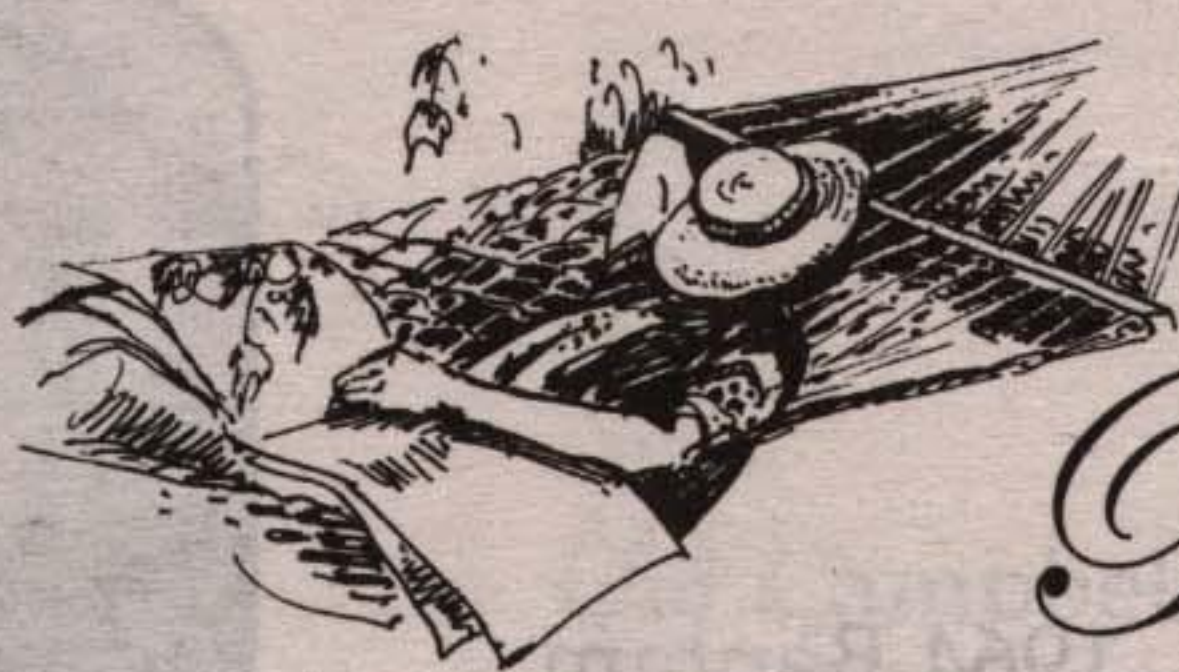
"We need to bring our history to life... to realize that it's more than just dates and things to be memorized," she emphasizes. Readers can only hope that for devoted readers there will be many more minutes of history to come.

Marsha Boulton is the bestselling author of *Letters from the Country* (winner of the Stephen Leacock Award for Humour), *More Letters from the Country*, and the *Just a Minute* series. She is currently working on a third "country letters" book which should be published this autumn. She has toured across Canada and is often featured on CBC Radio's *Fresh Air*. Marsha lives on a farm in Harriston with partner Stephen Williams, who is also a bestselling author.

JUST A MINUTE MORE  
GLIMPSES OF OUR GREAT CANADIAN HERITAGE  
MARSHA BOULTON  
MCARTHUR & COMPANY, TORONTO, 1999  
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# Idle



# Pursuits

## ENAMOURED WITH THE WIRELESS

### Two grandfathers enjoyed years of radio exploration

BY DEBORAH QUAILE  
ARTS EDITOR

In radio's early years, both my grandfathers were keenly interested in sending and receiving, although in somewhat different capacities.

My mother's father, William Stewart, was a teacher for Central Technical School in Toronto from 1942 to 1955. He taught Radio Broadcasting, having come from an elementary school when the Wartime Emergency Training Programme was set up. In his new capacity, Grandfather taught electronics to Airforce personnel. After the war, many of his graduates found work at stations all across the province.

Grandfather had a HAM setup in his home before and after the war. Individual radio setups were not allowed during war years, naturally, in case some of those home broadcasters were actually spies using the equipment to pass along information overseas.

Luckily, my grandmother was an amateur photographer who took a couple of shots of Grandfather William at his rolltop desk, shirtsleeves rolled up, relaxed and smiling, with a tremendously large microphone in front of him and a great map of the world covering the wall behind him.

According to my mother, he often took his children into the back room to talk to a mysterious voice from somewhere

across a continent or around the world. Mom says she never knew what to say to a stranger, but I'm sure even the faceless voice got a thrill out of speaking to someone's child in a place they only knew from an atlas.

I know from the photos that Grandfather's desk was crisscrossed with wires from headphones, speakers and lamps; the cubbyholes filled with a neat assortment of papers, fat radio tubes and other paraphernalia. Directly in front of him was his control panel with its assorted dials, knobs, and the microphone.

The microphone itself looks like it weighed 20 pounds, being roughly the same size as a periscope. Who did he talk to, I wonder? How many special friends did he have that returned calls time after time?

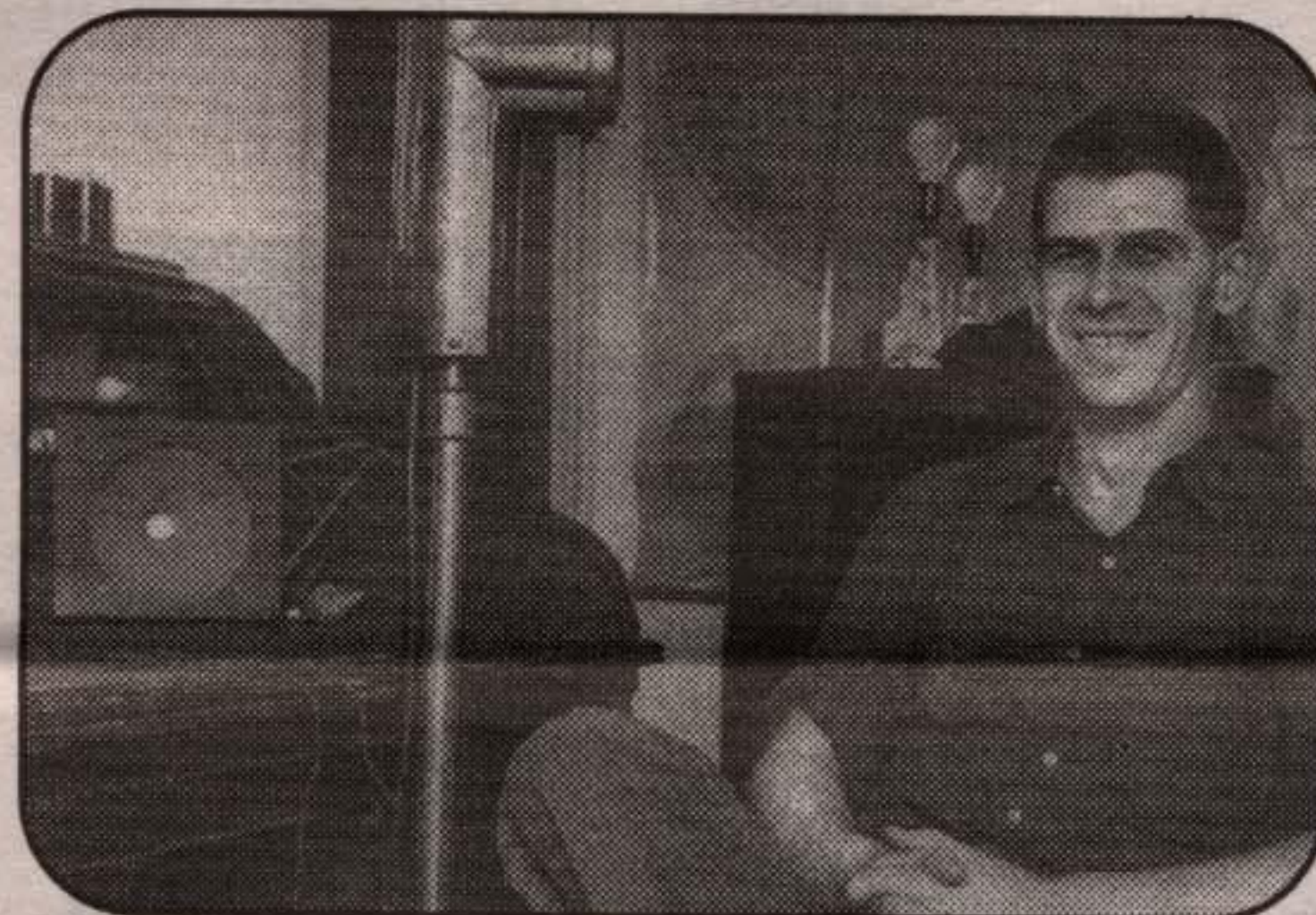
My dad's father had a store in Toronto where he sold radio

goods. He, too, had a HAM setup at home, with a huge home-built antenna wielding its way skyward at the side of their house. In fact, that was how my parents' families met: through hobby radio transmissions.

In a different

sense, I have followed my grandfathers' footsteps of communication, although I work in a wired world. At my laptop daily I receive faxes, send e-mail, write stories and watch the messages that tell me my file has just winged its way to a friend in Alabama, a newspaper in Warton, or just as far as Mississauga to say, "Hi honey, I was thinking about you," to my husband. Without a doubt, both grandfathers would have found my communication pretty nifty too.

It was unfortunate that both grandfathers died young, before I could know them for who they were. I'd like to think that part of their love of radio rubbed off on me. With a little encouragement on a grandfather's lap, perhaps I would have been the next one who sat for hours, manipulating dials and searching the airwaves for sounds of others, looking for a connection half a world away.



## RELIVE RADIO DAYS AT GUELPH CIVIC MUSEUM

BY DEBORAH QUAILE  
ARTS EDITOR

Recapture the thrill of old-time radio during Radio Days at the Guelph Civic Museum. Running until August 29, 1999, the exhibition features antique radios and related items from the 1920's to the 1960's, with emphasis on Canadian technology and its influences.

Steve Valeriote, guest curator and avid radio collector, not only shows visitors the early days when radio was a miraculous new experience, but encourages them to explore changes within the industry. He has drawn from the collections of Guelph and area radio enthusiasts and brought together over 100 radios and accessories, which range from crystal, battery, breadboard, cathedral and tombstone, to Bakelite, catalin, transistor and hi-fi radios. The evolution of styles, sizes, types and the manufacturing locations - from Guelph to Hanover, Elmira, Owen Sound and Toronto - provide a wealth of information. As well, the exhibit provides information on Canadian radio pioneers Reginald Fessenden and E.S. (Ted) Rogers, who were instrumental in "the transmission of sound without wires, hence the British term 'wireless.'" Prior to radio's invention, the only effective long distance communication was by telegraph or telephone. The boxes quickly became an integral part of our culture, where families would gather to listen to hockey games, shows such as *The Shadow* or *Suspense*, political broadcasts, their favourite top singers, or news of the Monarchy.

Other related items on display include speakers, tubes, advertisements, manuals, catalogues and posters. Radio classics and early CBC and CJOY broadcasts can be heard.

The Guelph Museum is open Sunday to Friday from 1 to 5 p.m. until June 26, when summer hours change to daily from 1 to 5 p.m. Admission is \$3 for adults, \$2 for seniors and students, or \$8 for families. Call (519) 836-1221 ext. 223 for more information on this or other upcoming events.

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