

Mull'n it Over with Bonnie Mullen

Septic systems, now known as on-site wastewater systems, were the topic of discussion at a recent workshop I attended at the Ontario Rural Wastewater Centre near Guelph.

The Centre, a partnership with stakeholders in government and industry is associated with the University of Guelph and has been operating for three years. Various systems are set up on-site for demonstration purposes. The Centre offers a variety of courses for installers, building code inspectors, home inspectors, realtors and the public. A seminar for home owners is being offered Saturday, May 25 from 9 a.m. to noon for a cost of \$40.

"We will look at basic operation and function, signs of failure, remedies, alternatives and deal with rural myths," Mike Gibson of the Ontario Rural Wastewater Centre said.

Since the Walkerton tragedy there is renewed concern about wastewater systems in rural areas.

"It is estimated there are 1.2 million systems in Ontario with 25,000 being added each year. Most are conventional systems and there are some alternatives in use," Mr. Gibson explained.

Conventional systems are gravity-fed and consist of a buried tank with at least two chambers connected to the house with a sewer and an outlet T, baffle or effluent filter to control the flow of wastewater from the tank to the drainfield. For a typical three bedroom house, the cost is

\$5,000 to \$10,000 for the installation of a fully in-ground system, or \$9,000 - \$20,000 if it is fully raised. With regular maintenance, pumping every three to five years, a well-maintained system should have a 20 to 25 year life. Where there is not adequate land for a drainfield and/or inappropriate soil types, alternative systems may be considered.

The Waterloo Biofilter has an aerobic biofilter and uses foam cubes as a filter. The cost is comparable to a conventional raised-bed system. The Ecoflo uses peat as a treatment medium and is completely enclosed in a fibre glass shell. Both of these systems have filters and require serving offered by the installation companies every six months. The estimated service cost is \$100 to \$200 annually. These systems require considerably less land space than conventional systems.

Sand Filter Systems typically used for large commercial applications are being adapted for single family homes. They require a pump and discharge to a shallow buried trench system but also use less land than conventional systems. Aerobic Treatment Units manufactured by various companies such as Whitewater, Northern Purification Systems, Norweco and Canadian Biocycle will require a leaching bed. Pealand Systems offer a wetland system using a peat filter. There are also engineered systems customized to meet specific design challenges. At present it is difficult for con-

sumers to get the information needed to make informed choices as installers tend to represent only one manufacturer. However, the manufacturer's web sites may prove helpful.

While installation approvals used to be handled by local health units applications and approvals are now handled by the local building officials.

For more information on the Home Owners Seminar or about on-site wastewater systems contact Mike Gibson at The Ontario Rural Wastewater Centre, 519-824-4120 ext. 4687.



Photo by Naomi Powell

Tory party members since 1946, William Edward Osburne, 81, and wife Alma, 82, were on hand at the Leadership convention, Halton Hills Place on March 23, to show their continuous PC support.

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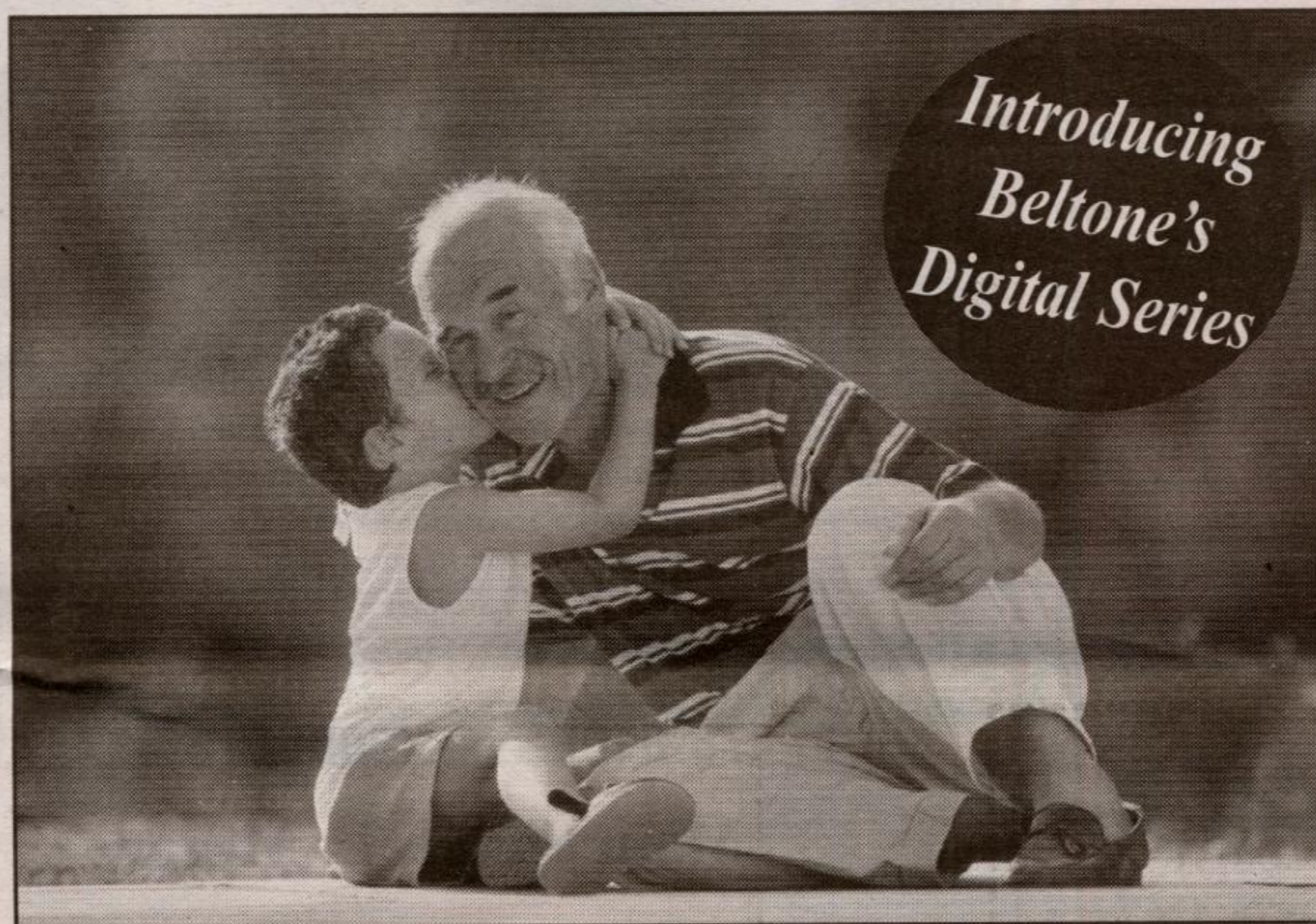
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by Christine

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