

# Celebrate Seniors' Month

To mark Seniors Month, Julie Conroy brings us the story of one special resident who connected with her Acton roots later in life.

Donna Rowley was born in Lindsay, under a cabbage, she says.

Donna's mother Laurretta Moore was a truly local Acton girl, with many relatives and connections in the Acton and Rockwood areas. She met her future husband Norman Veit when he was updating his butchers licence so he could follow his trade in Canada. He was born in Congleton, Staffordshire in England, where he graduated from trade school as a butcher.

After Donna's parents married, they moved to Cannington, near Lindsay. Donna tells me that both her parents also worked in a butcher shop and she was left outside in the buggy when they were busy. They had a dog named Brownie, and he stood guard over Donna, barking if anyone came too close to the buggy.

After living and working there for three years, Donna's father saw an advertisement requiring a butcher to work in Chapleau. He applied for the job, and moved there. Donna's mother had to stay behind with Donna until he was settled. When the great day came, Mother loaded their belongings and baby Donna into their car and drove to Cartier (which was the closest point you could drive to). She arranged to leave the car and they boarded the C.P.R. train at Cartier. They arrived in Chapleau at 2.00 a.m., only to find no father waiting for them. One gentleman explained to the weary pair that Dad had to open the shop and get food to a train derailment close by. He took them to their future home and when Donna's mother saw the inside she almost turned around and left.

Her husband and two buddies had been living on their own and there were beer bottles, liquor bottles and dishes everywhere. (Party time) The other men were waiting for their war



A young Donna wearing her father's boots in her beloved Chapleau with her dog Monty

brides to arrive.

Once Mother realized there wasn't another train for quite a while, she started cleaning.

Donna's parents purchased the butcher shop when the opportunity arose, and with a lot of hard work her parents ended up with not just the shop. They expanded the store, added more items, and it became a supermarket.

The store was a great success and Donna tells me that for the holiday season her father would drive to Manitoulin Island and hand pick the turkeys, which would then be killed, and dressed. People trusted her father to such an extent they would just tell him how many people were coming to dinner and what meat they would like and he would select and cut it for them.

Donna spent her young years in Chapleau attending school. After graduating, she went to McGill University in Montreal. At that time she wanted to be a physio therapist and Marilyn Bell was in her class. Donna said she was a great

person and they became friends.

Donna realized the course she was taking wasn't what she wanted and she moved to Toronto and trained at St Michaels Hospital as a registered radiological technologist. She was there three years, and then moved to the Queensway Medical Clinic for 15 years. She then moved to the St Clair/Dufferin Medical Centre (still in Toronto) which was very diverse, and had many different nationalities as patients. In fact she laughingly told me she found herself speaking Pigeon English. She also learned a smattering of Croatian, and Italian, and of course felt at home with French from her years in Chapleau. She was there 20 years and had four technicians working for her. She retired in 1992.

She married in 1964 and

sadly her first husband was killed in an accident with her friend's husband in 1968. She didn't feel she would ever marry again, but started helping her friend Diane's elderly war veteran friend who needed some assistance. His son was busy working as a roofer, and bringing up a young son. Coincidentally, due to the weather, Bill Rowley was at home for a change and it was love at first sight. They were married in 1973 and they have a son, young Bill.

During this time Donna and the two Bills lived in Port Credit.

When Bill had a heart attack in 1991 they decided to reassess where they were living and discussed moving to New Brunswick (which was where Bill Rowley was born), Chapleau, or building a home on a lot in Acton that belonged to Donna's family. Luckily for us they decided to move here. It took quite a while to build the new home, as they did quite a lot of the work themselves. They sold the house in Port Credit, and moved into the still unfinished house in 1992.

The new house is opposite the property her grandparents used to own before it was sold to the Braida family.

Donna still has ties to Chapleau and has a camp (cottage) on a lake in the Chapleau Crown Game Preserve. (This is the largest game preserve in the world.)

She laughs when she says it is very rustic and didn't have many amenities. But it does now have hydro, and indoor plumbing. It takes her 9 1/2 hours to drive there, but she says it's worth the drive.

Son Bill is a talented hair stylist and you may have seen him on City T.V. This year he had the privilege to be (for the third year)

master of ceremonies for the Contessa Awards.

Donna is still a busy lady and it was through her I became involved in the Acton Seniors Centre. She had a way of persuading people to take on challenges. She was president of the Acton Seniors Centre for three years, past president, and chair of the Looking to the Future committee. She's a driver for the Red Cross, a trustee of the Trinity United Church, and a member of both the Rebekah Lodge, and Loyal True Blue Association in a fund raising capacity, raising funds for children. She is also on the Seniors West Planning and



Donna doing what she does best, sweet-talking people into spending their money for the benefit of others. This occasion was the Christmas Bazaar at the Acton Seniors Centre.

Education committee (and involved through this with Links to Care)

She also delivers Meals on Wheels and is a relief driver for Links to Care (previously A.S.S.I.C)

When Donna heard about the "Good Food Box" pro-

gram. (sponsored by a Trillium Grant to encourage healthy eating and a way for people to purchase excellent quality produce and fruit at a reasonable price), she thought it was such a wonderful idea she volunteered to help. She became volunteer assistant to volunteer co-ordinator Pat Frizzell. They work in conjunction with the Seniors West Planning and Education Committee at Links 2 Care (Previously A.S.S.I.C / H.H.C.S.I.) There are approximately 70 customers each month, and Donna and Pat arrange the pick-ups and collect the money at the Acton Seniors Centre, who donate the space.

So I hope you have enjoyed reading about a local girl who returned to Acton

Whenever she had time she loved to spend it with her grandparents Dot and Jim Moore on Queen Street, (now Elma and Reno Braida's home) and to visit her other family members- the Denny's, Coopers, Manns, and McCutcheons. With whom she kept close ties.

She told me one cute story. Donna has a newspaper clipping which says "Little Teddy Tyler carried the flowers behind Henry Denny's coffin. Henry was her Great Uncle, and Ted told her he was so proud to do it, and he reminisced about Great Aunt Maggie who, according to Ted, made the greatest cookies.

Like all busy people she always seems to find time for that one more thing.

So I hope you have enjoyed reading about a local girl who returned to give something back to the community.

As part of St. Joseph's  
150th Anniversary celebrations

Mass on Sunday, June 10  
will be at 10:00 a.m. at the  
Acton Arena.

There will not be Mass in the Church  
on Saturday June 9 or Sunday June 10.



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