

# Donated property to be protected as nature reserve



Members of Major Alexander Lex MacKenzie's family join John Grant and Alan Stacey of the Nature Conservancy of Canada at the donated property that'll be protected as the Bear Den Nature Reserve.

By **ROBIN DOWNTON-POIRIER**  
Special to *The Champion*

A piece of property once owned by MPP Major Addison Alexander 'Lex' MacKenzie has been donated to the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) to keep it protected for future generations to enjoy.

"Both Aunt Jessie (MacKenzie Dalziel Glynn) and I are big supporters of the NCC," said Sandy Agnew, a member of the MacKenzie family and nephew to Jessie Glynn, the owner of the property.

"By donating the property, we know that it will be preserved and enjoyed by others as we have."

Bear Den Nature Reserve is 13.54 acres of land on the Fifth Line, just south of Rockwood that has been in the MacKenzie family since the 1930s. It was once part of the Canadian National Railway Co. before it went bankrupt. It was then purchased by Donald MacKenzie, a railway employee, and has passed through four familial generations. The name came from an 'outcropping of limestone' at the back of the property that's a porcupine home but not large enough for a bear, said Mr. Agnew.

It simply made a good story to tell the children, he added.

"Bear Den has been the site of many family outings and picnics over the generations," said Mr. Agnew. "Both Jessie Glynn and I came here as youngsters with the rest of the family. We explored

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**SANDY AGNEW**

and had picnics of hot dogs and beans."

The donation was originally made in 1999 but the transfer process takes considerably longer, said Mr. Agnew. He thought it would be appropriate that the official ceremony tie in with Ms Glynn's 100th birthday in early May.

"We presented my aunt with the sign at her 100th birthday party and she was very pleased," said Mr. Agnew. "Unfortunately, she was unable to make it to Bear Den on May 10 to see the sign erected due to her health, but she's happy about all of it."

The MacKenzie family's roots run deep through Ontario history and have left pieces for residents to enjoy — including the Dalziel family home bought by the Humber Valley Conservation Authority in 1954 and now adjacent to (and part of) Black Creek Pioneer Village, as well as the MacKenzie Family home that was moved to Black Creek Pioneer Village around 1971.

A roadway was then named in honour of Mr. Agnew's 'Uncle Lex', the well-used Major MacKenzie Drive, north of Toronto. Now Bear Den has been added to that history.

Mr. Agnew explained that, since the family is quite dispersed, few had taken interest in the land or maintenance.

"The land was quite overgrown and our family is really spread out now. The Guelph Trail Hiking Club takes care of part of it as the trail passes through the property, but the rest was somewhat neglected," he said. "We had a problem with snowmobiles and four-wheelers but that has been resolved. Now that the NCC has it, we rest assured it's going to be preserved."

The NCC, a national charity dedicated to preserving ecologically significant areas, will now take over the property and it will continue to grow in its natural state, said John Grant, the NCC's midwestern Ontario manager. He said the property lies within a provincially-significant tract called the Blue Springs Creek Valley Area of Natural and Scientific Interest. It's a wildlife corridor, a water recharge area for the Eramosa River, and is part of a wetland. "Bear Den will continue to become an old growth land and people will be able to appreciate the natural beauty of the property," he said.

The NCC will conduct a thorough inventory of the plant and animal species on the property and may remove any invasive plant species if needed. As well, any general maintenance, such as fencing, may need to be done in the future. Overall, the NCC is excited about the donation.

"We are thrilled that the family would think to donate it to us," said Mr. Grant. "This was their gift to future Canadians and the Nature Conservancy of Canada was the vehicle."

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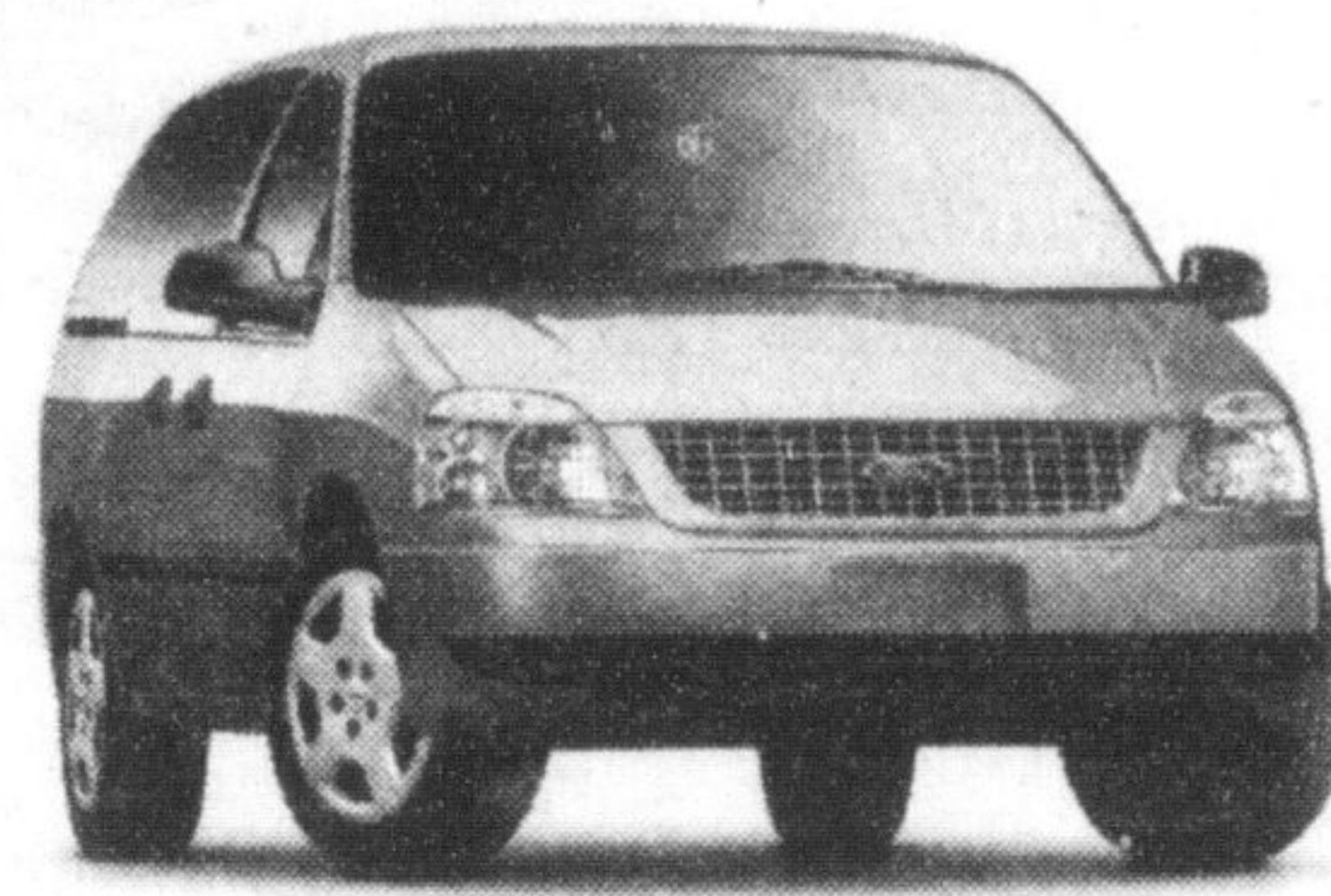
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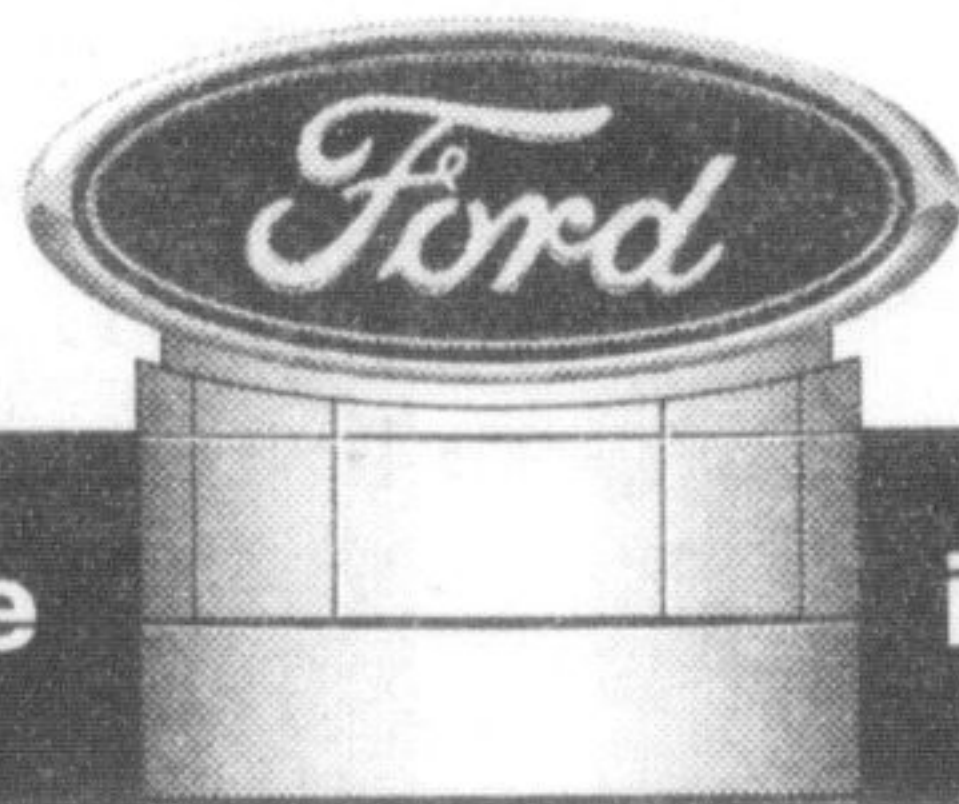
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