

# Time has come to finally 'relax' for retiring fairground custodians

*Couple turn over responsibilities after nearly half a century*

By Robin Downton-Poirier  
SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION

They've been surprised by wildlife, lovingly chased by dogs and they've handled emergencies during events, but now, after more than 48 years, it's time for Bruce and Annie Bird to retire from their positions as custodians of the Milton Fair Grounds.

"We have worked year-round, almost seven days a week for so many years, and now it will be nice to have some time to relax and visit with friends when we feel like it," said Annie. "My son told me he's been waiting for us to retire for years now."

Bruce, 82, and Annie, 78, accepted the job in 1959 "to help someone out." Bruce was doing shift work at P.L. Robertson and Annie took care of their home and family, and then they worked at the fairgrounds afterward.

Neither believed that that they would have stuck with it for so long, said Annie. But the custodial job "kept them healthy."

"We were always on the move there for several hours each day, mowing lawns, cleaning the buildings, some heavy lifting, whatever needed to be done. It kept us healthy and active and we enjoyed every bit of it," she said.

Being custodians, Annie and Bruce mowed and trimmed the lawns and cleaned the eight buildings on the 23-acre property every day. During the auctions, the couple also ran the lunch counter. Most days, they worked for several hours, moving at their own pace and enjoying the time together. Some days though, said Annie, they would be at the fairgrounds all day if there was a big event happening.

Annie said the fairgrounds have become a lot busier in the past five or six years with a number of bigger functions scheduled including dog shows, picnics, and the Strawberry Fair, all which made their job a bit more demanding.

"With the bigger events, we spent more time on the grounds, made sure the washrooms were kept clean, and continuously maintained the buildings. If we hadn't, I guess it would have been a lot messier to clean up at the end," she said.

The Birds, married for nearly 62 years, have five children, 12 grandchildren, and 10 great-grandchildren, most who have helped them at one time or another at the fairgrounds, said Annie.

"One of the best things about being there was we were basically our own bosses," she said. "We could work in the



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**A STROLL DOWN MEMORY LANE:** Bruce and Annie Bird — in front of the old grandstand — take a walk around the fairgrounds.

morning or at night, whatever we liked or needed, and we could bring the kids with us. Then, after they had their own children, the grandchildren came with us, too, sometimes."

Annie said she and her husband had many surprises over

• see DOGS on page A15

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The survey will be available beginning April 21, 2008 at [www.hdsb.ca](http://www.hdsb.ca)

Parents may complete the survey on-line from wherever Internet access is available (home, work, or at your child's school). If you do not have access to the Internet, please discuss alternatives with your child's school Principal or Vice-Principal.

**NOTE:** To log-on and for security purposes, parents must have their child's/children's Ontario Education Number (OEN), the number found at the top of the report card.

Further information is available through your child's school or by contacting the Research Department, Halton District School Board at (905) 335-3665, ext. 3280.

Halton District School Board

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