

# It's not all business for this community supporter

The Canadian Champion, Wednesday, February 7, 1990



Photo by JOHN WARREN

Jim Strain's children are getting primed to take over the family business. As of last Friday, they'll be following in the footsteps of not only their father but Milton's Business Person of the Year.

By NORM NELSON

It's all in the family for Milton's Business Person of the Year. Jim Strain won the award sponsored by the Milton Chamber of Commerce last week.

Mr. Strain, owner of Creative Memorials on Ontario Street South, had always wanted to follow in his father Gordon's footsteps by making quality memorial stones. And recently he said his 17-year-old daughter, Taya, asked him, "what will it take to run this business?"

In fact, she began working for the company to get her feet wet before she enters college in the fall.

And with 15-year-old son Gordon perhaps waiting in the wings, he chuckled that, "it's truly a third-generation business."

There was never any doubt for Jim. His father and uncle (Frank Swanson) jointly owned Kingsway Monument Works in Toronto, and as a youngster he would ride the granite trucks "trying to keep out of everybody's way."

As a teenager in high school his goal was still firmly focused and after keying in on architectural drafting in college, he joined his father in the business.

Jim's father moved the family to Milton in 1953. "There were no monument dealers here at that time," he explained. "My dad looked at it and thought it was a good area."

In 1965 Gordon, who was 50 at the time, decided to part ways with his brother Frank and form his own business with Jim, who was 21.

The business, Creative Memorials, prospered and today is one of the three largest companies in the retail monument business in Ontario.

Coincidentally, at 46 years of age, Jim, like his father, is excited about pursuing another opportunity. Following a recent business trip to India, he struck up a deal with an Indian manufacturer of granite products to become the sole distributor in Ontario. "Everything from granite monument products to granite

**Community Awards**  
**Businessperson of the Year**

furniture, such as coffee tables, tile floors and wall veneer," he said.

His job is satisfying, he said, because he believes in the service he provides to the public.

Mr. Strain said he has always "looked forward to going to work. I like dealing with the public."

Being named 'Business Person of the Year', he said, came as a shock. "I'm honoured — truly honoured."

Besides providing a valuable service to Milton for more than two decades, he has contributed much to other aspects of community life, primarily through involvement with the boy scouts, the Santa Claus Parade, the Milton

hospital board of directors and the Milton Chamber of Commerce.

He's been continually active as a leader in boy scouts since 1965, and, in fact, spearheaded the formation of the Milton district association. For the Santa Claus Parade he served five years on the organizing committee and three years as the parade marshal.

At Milton District Hospital he completed two consecutive terms as an elected member of the Milton District Hospital board of directors, from 1983 through 1989. With the Milton Chamber of Commerce he completed a three-year term as a member of the board of directors and was on the Showcase committee for all three years, exercising leadership as Showcase manager one year and show chairman another.

Chuckling, he said he offered some advice to this year's chairman, Peter McCuaig — "sit down and talk it over with your wife."

His extensive community involvement, he said, would have been impossible without the support and understanding of wife, Jenny. Elaborating, he said one of his children was born at 6 a.m., "and at 7:30 a.m. I was at scout camp."

## Newspaper is 'Champion' business

It's business as usual this week in Milton, but at *The Canadian Champion* the regular workaday routine is just a bit more satisfying. It's the satisfaction that comes with knowing your efforts are respected by your business peers.

That's because the newspaper has been named Business of the Year by the Milton Chamber of Commerce

manager John Lawrence and special events director Paul Spezial notified publisher Ian Oliver of the award

with an impromptu visit last Friday.

It was obviously a pleasant surprise for Mr. Oliver, who photocopied the notification letter Mr. Lawrence gave him

and passed it out to *Champion* staffers.

see CHAMPION on page 9

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