

Former CBC director is an entrepreneur now

By NORMAN NELSON

This former CBC producer/director, who has contributed about 1,000 hours of network programming, was flabbergasted when he visited a Milton video store recently.

A young couple in their mid-20s, looking for a movie for the night, selected the classic *Wages of Fear* and then put it back on the shelf. "It's probably the most suspenseful movie every made," he admonished. "And they rejected it because it was black and white."

Bob Jarvis, a self-professed movie buff who has managed to collect about 500 scripts throughout his career, joined the CBC in the early 1950s before the first broadcast had aired. He sat in the director's chair until 1969 when the promise of an American network series lured him to California. "I guess I hoped distant fields would be greener."

His forte was variety, and while at the CBC he directed such notables as Bob Hope, George Burns and Harry Belafonte. His directing credits include episodes of *Front Page Challenge* and *Juliette*.

The highlight of his 18 years at CBC was a 1968 version of *Tom Jones*. "It was the biggest production the CBC had done up to that point — it had a cast of 200 people."

Smothers Brothers

He recalled that current CFTO weatherman Robin Ward played Tom Jones and Douglas Fairbanks was the narrator.

He flips in a video cassette at his Milton home and the 1968 production again comes to life. "Even CBC does not have a copy of this."

His all-time favourite television program is the *Smothers Brothers*. "There was a lot of creativity in it. And I knew the producers personally — I knew Tom and Dick personally."

Unfortunately, the chance to direct his own variety show south of the border evaporated when CBS cancelled the series before it hit the air. "I shifted gears after that. I shifted away from the kind of programming (variety shows) I had been doing here (in Canada)."

"I did commercials, the odd public affairs special, the odd variety show — nothing really of substance." Still, he made a reasonably lucrative living until he and his wife retired to Milton in 1978.

Fortunately, at least for his winter vacation plans, five of his six children elected to stay in California, while the other one lives in Magnetawan in northern Ontario.

Wife Nadia (who was in California visiting grandchildren at the time of the interview) is still involved in the film industry as a costume designer. Most recently, she was costume mistress on the set of the movies *Millenium* and *Gotham*.

Mr. Jarvis said he has no secret ambitions to return to the director's chair. "There hasn't been the kind of TV programming I've done for 15 years."

His TV career began by accident. Interested in theatre, he started out as a teenager volunteering back stage at numerous theatre companies throughout the Golden Horseshoe. "This was the way you learned," he said. "Sometimes you even got to appear on stage."

The experience he gained enabled him to make an easy transition to the new medium of television. "In those days, the CBC wanted anybody who knew anything about television. I didn't know TV — but I knew set building."

After working on set production for the CBC for a couple of months, the Milton resident decided it would make a good career, so he took a six month hiatus to take a television production course in New York.

Those early years, he said, were exiting times. "Everyone was learning together. We worked incredible hours. Some weeks you would work as much as 90 hours."

Retired but busier

These days, he's retired — but busier than ever. He has a number of projects on the go and many more up his sleeve. They range from practical business initiatives to imaginative hobbyhorses.

An example of the latter is a unique product for cats which he is test marketing to local pet food stores. If the response is good, he'll try to interest a major manufacturer.

There's no doubt that cats would be highly interested in it. Packed in a small glass pop bottle, the product is called Dudley's Kitty Pop. It comes in several flavors, including shrimp, and is advertised as a "gourmet beverage for cats."

On the more practical side he has a videotaping business with two specialties — weddings and recording the contents of clients' premises for insurance purposes. He does about five weddings and 20 house videotapings a year.

His most recent venture, called HomeGuard, is a service to vacationers who would like someone to check up on the house while they're gone. The

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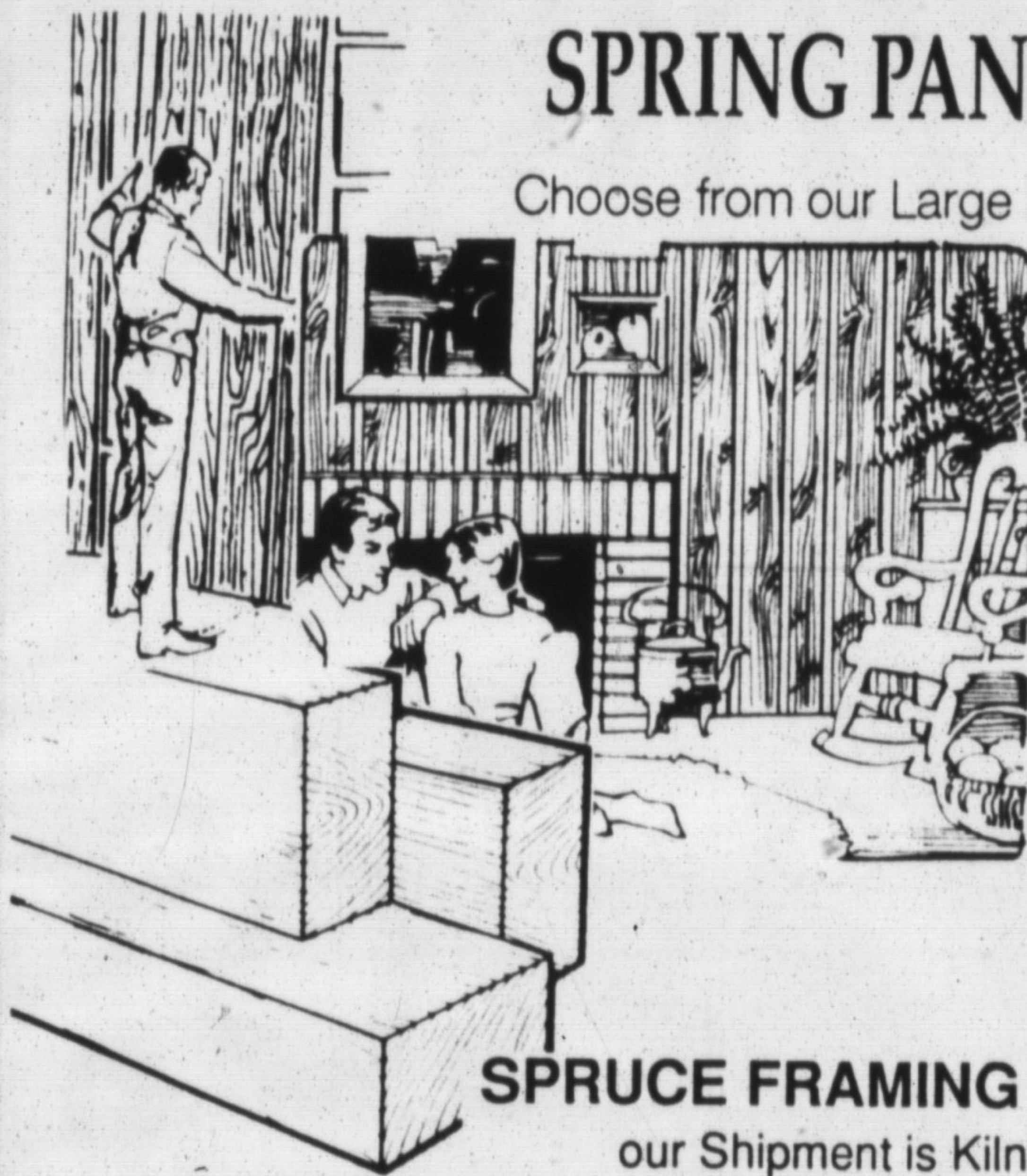
Bob Jarvis, now retired in Milton, can look back on a career that saw him in on the ground floor of television production in Canada during the 1950s. He's not content to reflect on the past, however, and constantly experiments with new product ideas that he hopes will obtain widespread public acceptance.



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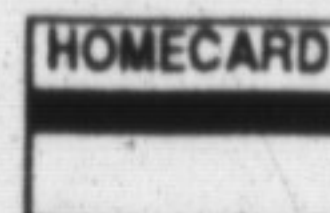
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