

Niece recalls 'Uncle Orv'

Orville Wright's connection with Georgian Bay

by Shirley Whittington
In 1911, Ivanette Miller and her two young cousins went flying with their Uncle Orville. They were the first youngsters ever to go aloft in an airplane in the United States.
Last week, Mrs. Miller and her husband flew to Toronto in a modern jet—one of the millions of globe-shrinking craft that crowd the skies of the seventies.
In her lifetime, Mrs. Miller has seen an explosion of aeronautical technology that is almost beyond comprehension.
Mr. and Mrs. Harold Miller came to Midland to view a collection of Wright memorabilia that has been placed in the Huronia Museum by Guy and Kathy Johnstone. They were delighted with the photographs of "Uncle Orv and Uncle Wilbur" and requested copies of some documents to be added to existing Wright collections in the US.

Few people know that Orville Wright had a Georgian Bay connection. The famous aviation pioneer who with his brother designed the first powered aircraft and flew it at Kitty Hawk North Carolina, found fame and all its attendant publicity tedious. He longed to get away from it all, and in 1916, he rented a cottage on Waubec Island in Georgian Bay. While there, he frequently took his meals at Franceville—a summer resort owned and operated by Kathy Johnstone's grandparents.

Bought Lambert Island
Wright so enjoyed the privacy and beauty of Georgian Bay that in 1918 he bought Lambert Island, north-east of Beausoleil. He summered there until 1941, when he was called home by the Pentagon for advice on aeronautical development.

The island remained in the Wright family until the early fifties when it was purchased by a Toronto publishing magnate, and here, fate took an ironic twist. The new owner was as anxious for privacy and seclusion as Wright had been. As soon as he took possession of the island, he ordered that everything that had any connection with the famous inventor be demolished.

"It's too bad," said Mrs. Miller, whose husband was executor of the Wright estate. "We had removed Uncle Orv's personal effects, but there were so many other ingenious inventions in that cottage that we would have liked to preserve."

According to Mrs. Miller, Orville in later years spent many a winter afternoon in his Dayton laboratory devising amenities for his beloved summer home. "He built a lazy Susan for the dining table," she recalls. "It was on ball bearings. We'd just pile the food on it, and nobody had to pass anything."

There's a photograph in the museum of Wright's inclined railway, powered with a gasoline engine. It carried guests and supplies up the hill from the dock to the cottage. "Orville broke his finger once, working with that engine," recalled Mr. Miller. "And he set it himself."

added Mrs. Miller. "He used a piece of pipe for a cast. He was the kind of man who did things for himself. He even drew up his own will."

Toaster
Another Wright invention was a toaster that worked with a kerosene lamp. Wright refused to have electricity on his island.

Somewhere in Simcoe county, the Millers are sure there is an old fedora with screened holes in the crown that belonged to Orville Wright—part of the precious memorabilia that disappeared when the place was demolished. "He fished

natural. They shared everything." There were many famous visitors at Lambert Island during the Wright years. Vilhjalmur Stefansson and A.Y. Jackson both spent time there. A visit by Amelia Earhart has not been documented, but since she made a flight from Wasaga Beach, it is probable that she took that opportunity to visit an old friend. The gift of the compass makes a Lambert Island visit seem even more likely.

The Wright brothers were both excellent mechanics, and they built their early aircraft in

their bicycle sales and repair shop in Dayton Ohio. Mrs. Miller remembers that shop, which has since been restored, and moved to Greenfield Village in Michigan. "My mother used to drop me off there while she went shopping, and my uncles would baby sit me until she got back."

She's drawing on such family memories for a book about her famous uncles which she is presently writing.

Wilbur Wright died in 1920 of typhoid fever. Orville sold his interest in the Wright Company in 1915. He served on the

National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, and lived quietly until his death in 1948. One of the Miller's most precious possessions is a strip of movie film, showing

"Uncle Orv" carving the turkey the Christmas before his death.

The quiet summers of Orville Wright's life were spent on Georgian Bay. He loved the rocks and the solitude and the

wonderful fishing. And it isn't unreasonable to imagine him, watching the gulls soaring in the blue summer sky, and thinking about his passion—controlled flight.



Special visitor

Mrs. Ivanette Miller (right) of Dayton, Ohio visited the Huronia Museum recently to view some of 'Uncle Orv's' memorabilia. Along with Mrs. Miller are Kathy and Guy Johnstone. Staff photo

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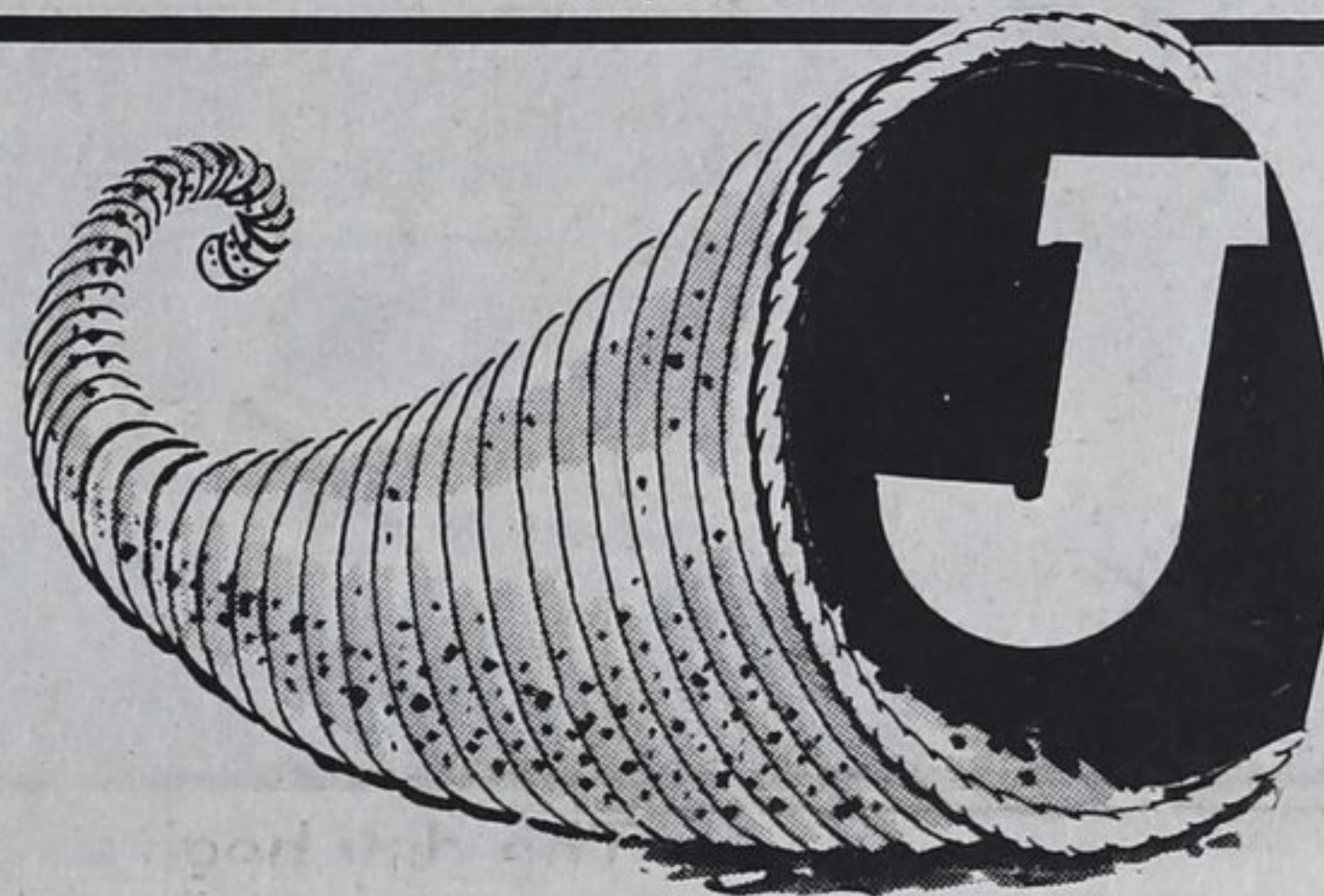
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Victoria Day Weekend 1978

As Follows

MONDAYS -	SOUTH OF THE RIVER, AND EAST END OF TOWN.
TUESDAYS -	WEST OF 45th STREET AND NORTH OF BAY COLONY SUB-DIVISION
WEDNESDAYS -	45th STREET TO WEST OF 35th STREET (INCLUDING BAY COLONY SUB-DIVISION AND WILSON SUB-DIVISION)
THURSDAYS -	35th STREET TO 18th STREET
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