



**sharon's  
sunshine**

By Sharon Brain

# Won Spring Fair halter for best showman (girls)

When we were young, the best weekend in the year was the 24th of May.

It was the weekend of the Richmond Hill Fair, and the whole family got involved.

My grandfather would be on the loudspeaker. My father organized things.

My mother presented trophies. My brothers worked in the ring.

I supervised the midway. The midway there was the best in the world. It was better than the Ex because you didn't have to go with your parents.

There's something about two adults watching you while you whiz around on the ferris wheel that takes a little of the adventure away.

If it was really as dangerous as you hoped, they wouldn't be so calm, would they?

## Young freedom

But at the Richmond Hill Fair, parents turned you loose. They spent all their time down at the show rings looking at horses and cows and all those things they could have seen just as well at home.

You got to head off into a carnival-land where you could eat greasy food prepared by strange people, gorge

yourself on candy floss, and get dizzy on rides until your money ran out.

For kids like us who did not even have a corner store, this was freedom defined.

Then one year, I took it into my head I wanted to take part in the fair too. I think the desire was prompted by sheer exhibitionism.

I decided the easiest route to fame would be to show a calf.

All you had to do was get a calf that looked respectable, put a halter on it, and walk it around the ring. Everyone would watch, and then applaud when I won first prize.

So I got Daisy. I went to the barn after school and practised dragging the foolish creature around the barnyard.

She didn't like it much. Neither did I. She would stand when she was supposed to walk, and run away every chance she got. I hated chasing her around, and I hated my father for suggesting a good big stick might solve the problem.

I was a small-l liberal even then.

## White for short

The day of the fair, I headed off dressed in white from head to foot. Why do exhibitors wear that outfit? Don't they realize what cows do when they get excited?

After I got Daisy calmed down, I wiped my shoes off with some grass,

and scraped away at my pants. Then I picked up my number and waited.

I brushed and combed Daisy till she rolled her eyes and begged me to stop. Then I waited.

The sounds of music from the midway sounded wonderful. Kids wandered by eating candy floss. I could see the ferris wheel in the distance.

I waited, and looked at Daisy with loathing in my heart.

## Finally my turn

Finally it was our turn. I dragged Daisy into the ring.

I tried to pretend everyone at the fair was not gathered around to watch my triumph. But I knew they were.

Daisy seemed to know it too. She charged part way into the ring, then overwhelmed by the audience, she stopped dead.

The huge calf behind her resented being held up and did a little tap dance on her heels.

I tugged her forward as best I could. The onlookers seemed to find something funny in the sight of a 10-

year-old girl dragging all that veal about on a halter.

I was not laughing. We lined up. The judges started to inspect each calf at close range. I asked Daisy to stand nicely. This was the last straw.

## Daisy bolted

She saw the opening in the ring and decided to call it a day.

She dashed for the gate. I followed. I would have been the only person in the ring without a calf.

I could hardly pretend she wasn't mine.

An athletic farmer at the gate stopped her and cracked her on the nose. Thoroughly cowed, we both quietly walked back to our place.

I won a halter for Best Showmanship-Girls.

I was the only girl in the show. That night I gave Daisy to my older brother.

Since then, I keep my calves in stockings or in the freezer.

I go to the fair as a spectator, and inspector of candy floss.

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**yesterdays**

by mary dawson

## Spring Fair began in 1849

One of the oldest annual events in Canada, Richmond Hill's Fair will this year celebrate its 128th birthday with an interesting and exciting three-day program.

When that first fair was held in 1849 its site was a two acre lot west of the Palmer House on the southwest corner of Arnold Street and Yonge Street.

As a crowd pleaser, a tight-rope walker displayed his art on a rope stretched between the Palmer House and the Dominion Hotel across Yonge Street.

Everything was exhibited in the open air. Cattle were tied to fences.

Sheep and hogs were in pens. Poultry was shown in crates. Horse races were held on the road.

## 5 Hill hotels

At the time Richmond Hill boasted five hotels, a blacksmith shop and two carriage factories.

Crowds came from the neighboring countryside in horse-drawn wagons and buggies.

Some of the more adventurous residents of the city to the south used the stage coaches to spend a day in the country, making the journey over corduroy roads.

Since there was no public address system available, a man with a loud voice, mounted on horseback, made the rounds of the hotels calling out the list of events, summoning the thirst quenchers to participate.

## Money source

Shortly after the village of Richmond Hill came into being in 1873, it received its share of the clergy reserve and municipal loan funds.

Part of this money was used to purchase firefighting equipment and a park (the nucleus of the town's present central park).

Lorne Avenue came into being as a gift from the Trench family. The roadway was to provide access from Yonge Street to the new park. The park was to become the site for more than a century of the annual fair.

In the new park a grandstand was built close to the north fence.

Below the seats room was provided for the exhibition of sewing and fancy work.

The first agricultural hall boasted 50 windows. It was built in 1889.

Community women served meals to as many as 350 people at a sitting in this large hall.

## Village band

The village band under the direction of A. J. Hune, the village's clerk-treasurer, provided entertainment for the fairgoer for many years.

The popular midway is a fairly recent addition to the fair's program — but the horse has been a constant attraction since the earliest days. Classes for heavy and light horses (which provided the power needed on the farms and the transportation of the day) are still contenders for the interest of the crowds.

But they have been joined by the hunters and jumpers, ponies, Western saddle horses, palominos, appaloosas and Arabian steeds in more recent years.

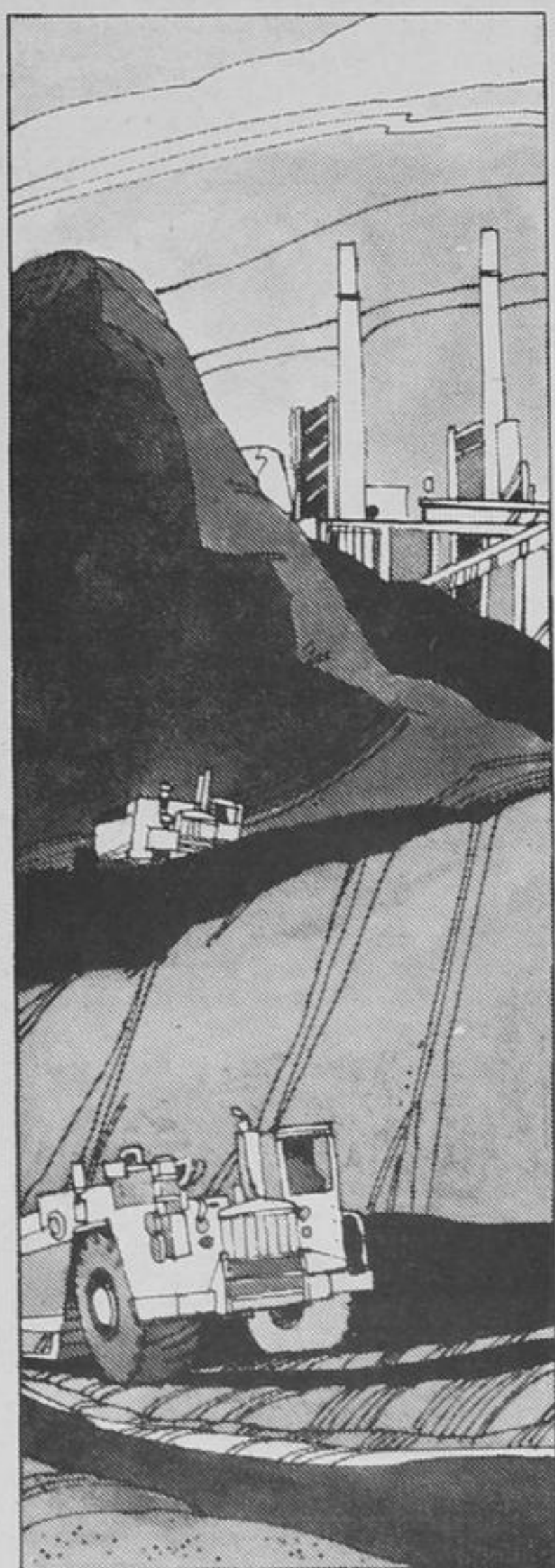
## May 24 date

Traditionally the fair was held May 24. Bad weather on several successive years led the agricultural society, which sponsors the annual event, to advance the date by a week.

Its duration was lengthened from one to two days, and then to three days.

The move has had mixed results. Good weather usually prevails and the fair offers hours of pleasant pastime.

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