

DISCOVERY DAYS FEATURE

The true story of the birth of our York Central

By ANNE FROMER

This is a hitherto secret story. It happens to affect everyone in Richmond Hill today, and it is true.

It is the behind-the-scenes story of how York Central Hospital was built, with starting cash of \$43 although its cost was in the millions.

It involves some honest behind-the-scenes skulduggery.

It also involves several thousand women in York County (as it was called then). And who have never been told, until now, how much power they had.

And how their feminine power was as decisive as a division of heavy artillery in a military operation.

This is how it happened:

Ken Tomlin, who was mayor at the time, thought Richmond Hill ought to have a hospital. The suggestion met stern opposition in the county, because there was a perfectly good hospital at Newmarket, and the County Seat happened to be in Newmarket.

In the County's opinion, the County had room for one hospital, right where it was.

If the County should happen to grow, or if more people moved into Richmond Hill, they should be treated at an expanded hospital in Newmarket. On this viewpoint there was unanimous agreement — in Newmarket.

But Mayor Tomlin, who

was quiet on the surface, but a skilled tactician, thought he knew how to accomplish his objective, if he could find the right man.

So he formed a committee, with a few builders and businessmen and doctors — but no politicians. No politician would think of the ploy he had in mind.

For the chairman of the committee, he chose Doug Storms. Tom gave him his correct title: Major-General Douglas Storms, retired chief of the Canadian corps of Engineers. Doug, as his fellow committeemen called him, had achieved a wartime reputation of getting things done — and damn the red tape.

So, now a civilian, unable to pull rank, he set out to do the same thing. A huge, muscular man, of nearly six foot five, he was the closest thing the committee had ever known to the irresistible force.

Once, in a friendly, laughing argument with a husky builder, Doug picked him up and shook him like a terrier shakes a rat, until the builder (laughing until it hurt, because nothing so ridiculous as this had ever happened to him before, finally agreed to some minor clause.

The obvious course, it was decided was to bring in a professional fundraiser and raise donations necessary to make up the necessary third. (Figures are foggy among former committee members

after so many years, but it was about a million and a half.)

The fund-raiser, after surveying the community, pointed out that Richmond Hill lacked the industries which normally contributed the bulk of any drive; the average family would give \$5; a big spender \$25 — this was necessary public involvement, but would still yield only a fraction of what was needed.

The only source of funds was the county itself. If it could be persuaded to add just a mill to the tax rate, then the federal and provincial governments would put up the rest.

The committee counted its funds: Doug fined everybody \$1 for every minute he was late; which used to burn up a doctor who had rushed from delivering a baby. "No excuse", said Doug. "You're four minutes late. Hand the treasurer four dollars — NOW!"

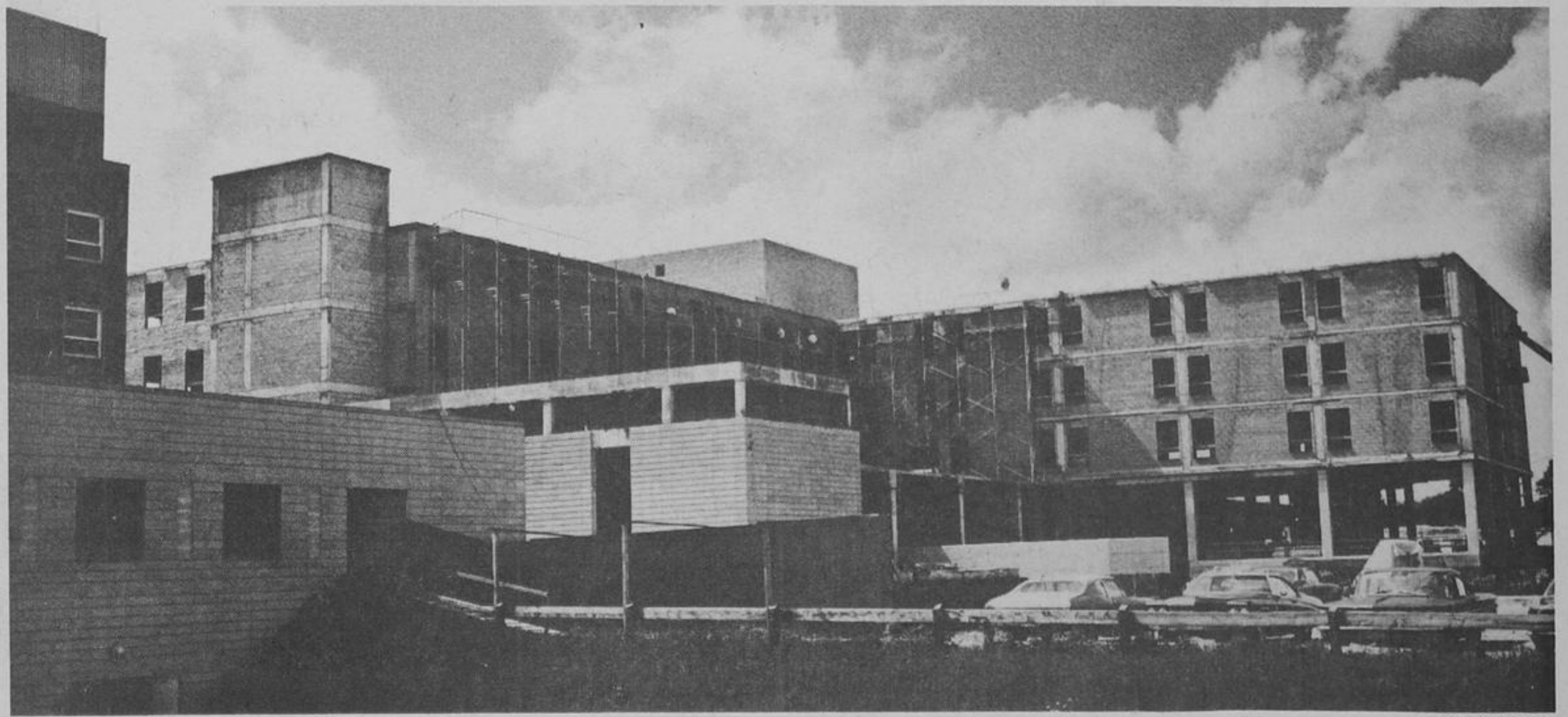
The money was handed over, but the members soon learned to get to meetings on the dot, and it was evident that the building fund would stay at \$43.

But it was realized that a Newmarket County headquarters would never agree to a separate hospital at Richmond Hill.

Some forgotten genius came up with the idea that the two hospitals should be twins, both belonging to the County. If Newmarket was York County Hospital, then Richmond Hill quickly became York Central Hospital.

With this manoeuvre in hand, Doug Storms figuratively stormed the next meeting of the County.

An emergency meeting was called of the committee in Richmond Hill. "Do you know what those gentlemen did?" he roared. (Note some editing has been necessary). "The gentlemen laughed at me. We didn't get a single blessed vote."



(Photo by Samuil)

York Central's Langstaff Wing under construction

There was a silence. "Without the County's mill, we'll just have to disband the committee," someone said.

"The dickens we will," said Doug. "Those gentlemen up there don't know where the real power lies." He leaned forward conspiratorily. "Didn't anybody ever tell you that every town in North America is run by ten women with baby carriages?"

He paused. "Now let's harness the women of this County and sic them on the gentlemen and sons of gentlemen of the County of York."

The late Jack Smith, who was then owner and publisher of The Liberal, joined in the conspiracy. Together he and Doug approached an architect and had him sketch up a beautiful hospital, of about the size the total budget would produce. A sketch with trees, people, landscaping — and all that tender loving care behind the bricks and mortar.

The Liberal ran it across its front page: "This is Richmond Hill's new hospital" the headline shouted.

Below that came machiavelli: "Volunteers wanted immediately for gift shop; teenagers needed as candy-strippers; urgent demand for volunteers to help patients."

Committees were organized, with appropriate chairman, in every conceivable hamlet; several chapters in Richmond Hill itself, in Maple, in Buttonville, Oak Ridges, Aurora, Temperanceville, and every dot on the map.

The Liberal next clarified: "Hospital going up. Women advised to get busy sewing uniforms, candy stripe aprons."

Committee members were recruited to visit all these chapters, to tell the women how useful they would be (far more useful than anyone imagined.)

Then Doug called on all of them personally,

shaking his head sadly: "We'd be digging your hospital right now," he said, "if it were not for the members of the County Council. They refuse to let you have your money."

"Well, they won't listen to a solitary man. But I'll tell you what. I'll bet they'll listen to you."

He fumbled in his pockets. "I just happen to have with me a list of every single member of that council who refuses to pass that small resolution that will let your hospital have its money. I think I have enough copies of the list for each one of you ladies. Note that the home telephone number of every councillor is given; also his office number."

He grinned at them. "Let's let them know how you feel about their dastardly actions on sitting on your money. How many women here are willing to spend an hour every day for the next two weeks, calling every single member of

that cursed committee? Both at his home and at his office. Be very polite. Just ask him to explain again why he won't let the hospital volunteers go to work. Then call him back next day to explain it again, that there were a few points you wanted to clear up.

"Every member every day. Every one of you. Marvellous. Sure, bug him at work, until his boss gets after him. And at their wives."

The women looked around them. "I'm sorry," Doug said. "I'd forgotten that the wife of every single member is a member of some ladies aid committee somewhere. Well... that doesn't let you off the hook. You can bug him at home. Tell him how the voters feel about his treachery. Yes, it is treachery. Let's not forget it. Let's make those phone calls!"

When Doug went to the next meeting of County Council, his arrival was greeted with prolonged laughter and applause. "You win!" they said. "The ladies got your confounded hospital. Now, tell them to get off our backs."

So the money came through, the drive was held for additional funds. And then another strategy meeting. Where to build. Richmond Hill had no suitable land. The nearest was the site chosen, where the hospital could hook into the town's water and sewer grid.

Into this picture stepped the hated Ontario Water Resources Commission. The commission (now re-named Ministry of the Environment) had for years been fighting a running battle with Richmond Hill, which wanted to expand its small treatment plant. The OWRC refused, holding out for a big lakefront plant and a Big Pipe to serve all of York County.

But the government couldn't turn down a hospital, could it? Yes, it could and did.

"Okay," said Doug. "We've got the money. We've got the building permit from Vaughan. The OWRC will have to work out something with Richmond Hill."

But the answer was still no.

Doug sought and obtained a meeting with the Ontario cabinet.

"We are building this hospital, right where it says on this map. We are letting the contracts this week."

"If the sewers are not ready when we are, then we'll open up the tap and let the (word missing) run all over the streets." And that, ladies, is how the hospital was built, and how, finally the OWRC got its lakefront plant and now, at last the big pipe. All because of a few feminine phone calls.

And one very determined man.

He's dead now, Doug Storms. Major General Douglas Storms, Richmond Hill, or Canada, may never see his like again.

Advertisement issue deferred

York County Board of Education last week disagreed with a suggestion by East Gwillimbury Trustee, John Denison, that whatever the education director wants, the education director gets. The board was dealing with a recommendation by Aurora's Norm Weller that it veto a "help wanted" notice of the board's.

Weller had moved that the position of technician, as advertised for by staff, not be filled until authorized by the trustees.

The ad said the technician was needed by the plant and sites department, at a salary of between \$9,288 and \$13,608.

In speaking against it, Weller said it had been the board's decision not to fill the position until authorized, but the matter had never been discussed further.

He suggested that the job could be done by one of the board's "upgraded caretakers".

Education Director Sam Chapman said he felt it was necessary to "have this additional help".

King Trustee, Margaret Coburn, said she felt such evaluation "should be done by people who are qualified, and I think this has been done".

Denison said the motion was outside of the board's role. The director had been given a budget and should be allowed to work within it.

Said Weller: "The majority of the board said he shouldn't be hired. We should abide by the majority, or we should all resign."

When asked by Markham's John Stephens, if there had been any replies to the ad since it was placed in the newspapers, John Kippen, assistant to the education director, said there hadn't.

Stephens suggested the matter be deferred until next meeting for a report from the staff on the need for a position at this time. Also, with no applicants for the job, how could the work be spread out among the staff.

Denison said he felt that, if the director had agreed the technician was required, he should get him.

However, the motion to defer was carried 9-8.

Bridge winners

By CLETA DIEKEN 727-5789

Wednesday, September 7 — North-South: Rose Morrell and Grace Saunders; Jack and Billye Mavor; Rita Parisella and Bev Jones.

East-West: Ruth Browning and Ann Payment; Hank Sharp and Sherry Vogan; Cleta Dieken and Ann Jansen.

Friday, September 9 — North-South: Ross Jenkinson and Fred Dieken; Dave Rosati and Richard Charlebois; John and Wendy Hunter; Peter Osborne and Hank Sharpe.

East-West — Ruth and Gerry Browning; Fred and Theresa Tierney; Katherine and Jack Coats tied with Bob and Anne Manning.

Monday, September 12 — North-South: Bob and Edna Dunn; Joe and Lorrie Coen; Geoff Parker and Bev Jones.

East-West: Jean Goodwin and Marg Melnichuk; John Leonard and Larry Stumpf; Richard Charlebois and Fred Tierney.

For information or partners call Ann Payment 727-3873.

Blood clinic is successful

Last week's blood donor clinic at York Central Hospital attracted more than 300 people and was highly successful, officials say.

Of the 308 who appeared to donate blood, only 36 were rejected, resulting in 272 pints being collected.

HELPMATE INFORMATION COMMUNITY CALENDAR

883-2234

September-October

883-2234

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			21	22	23	24
			Training sessions for parents & teachers at St. John's Baptist, 75 Oxford. 7.30-9.30 p.m. 881-2818.	Main Library, Richmond Hill. Rock musical night. 7.30 p.m.	Main Library, Main "Oliver". 7.30 p.m.	All day — Discovery Days activities at the arena.
			Main library, Richmond Hill. Three films. 7.30 p.m.	Modern Western Square Dancing. 8 p.m. Roselawn Public School, Carrville Road.	Discovery Days activities at the arena. All evening.	Block Parent Garage Sale, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Thornhill United Church, Dudley Ave. (Directly behind Thornhill Farmer's Market).
			28	29	30	1
			Thornhill newcomers' club first evening meeting at 8 p.m. at Heinzman House. 889-8148.	Modern Western Square Dancing. 8 p.m. Roselawn Public School, Carrville Road.	Registration for aquatic club at Centennial Pool, nightly at 5.45 p.m.	Legion Ladies Auxiliary fall dance. 8 p.m. at the Legion.
			Widow and Widowers meeting. Victoria & Grey Trust, Crosby and Yonge. 8:30 p.m. 884-9430.	Registration for aquatic club at Centennial Pool, nightly at 5.45 p.m.	Thornhill Seniors Note: Seminar: Food additives, diabetes and Yoga. 9.30 to 11.30 a.m. 6030 Yonge Street.	Rummage Sale, Thornhill United Church at 10 a.m.
			Richmond Hill aquatic club "Meet the Coach Night". 7.30 to 9.30 p.m. Consumers' Gas Building.			Walkathon and Bikeathon. Canadian Bible Society event starts at St. Mary's Anglican Church at 9 a.m. Call Mrs. Gray 884-3878.
			4	5	6	7
			First meeting of course "New Baby Blues" at Thornhill Community Centre. 7.30 to 9.30 p.m.	For interested groups only, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food is sponsoring a training program at Victoria Square Community Centre from 1 to 4 p.m.	Agriculture and Food Ministry training program continues at Victoria Square Community Centre. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.	
			2	3	4	8
			Big Brothers Car Rally. Victoria Square around noon. Call Ron Shantz, 294-5160.			Flea Market at the Legion from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
			Jazz Concert at Legion Hall from 2 to 6 p.m.			
			"Walk the United Way" walkathon. Starts 12.30 p.m. from Hillcrest Mall.			