



Though it is partially hidden by a sprawling backyard tree, the Wintjes have spent so much time and effort on their camper bus it almost feels like part of the family. Left to right are Annette, John, Luke and Frances. Missing are Ann-Marie, 15 and Mark, 8. (Liberal photo by Bruce Hogg)

And away we go

Truckin' across Canada in home-made camper

A dream many Canadians have is to be able to see this vast country of ours. For the family of John and Annette Wintjes of Thornhill, that dream came true last month with the aid of a unique form of transportation.

Five years ago the Wintjes bought an old school bus from Aurora Bus Lines. At that time, the vehicle had 150,000 original miles on it.

With the help of some friends, it took John nearly a year to tear out the seats and put in a kitchen and toilet. With that done, he installed proper braces on the roof to hold a medium-sized tent. With a little more work, the family had its own do-it-yourself mobile home — a sort of double-decker bus that can easily sleep five people.

"The whole idea of camping is to be able to sleep in a tent," said John, a contractor who lives on Colborne St. "Seeing as we couldn't afford one of those big Winnebagos, I thought this might be a good way to get around before the kids get old enough to have summer jobs and not want to go."

The kids' are Lee Anne, 15, Luke, 13, Frances, 11 and Mark, 8. It was because of them their mother felt it was time to get out and see Canada. She came from the south of Holland 14 years ago and also had a yen for travel.

It was five years ago next month the family acquired the bus and the following August they had their first outing. Averaging about 10 miles per gallon (good for mobile homes) they trucked out to Algonquin Park for the weekend.

Everything went pretty smoothly, except the radiator boiled over on the way home. Minor repairs were in order.

The next trip out was to Sault Ste. Marie. The bus' engine block cracked on the way back and that threw the Wintjes' travel plans out of whack for awhile.

"We replaced the block for \$2,400," said Annette. "The bus hasn't proven to be cheap and I doubt if it will every pay for itself. But I certainly wouldn't sell it for what it has cost us."

The first long-range test for the camper bus came three years ago on a trip to Newfoundland. It was actually a pilgrimage for the eldest Wintjes' girl, Lee Anne, who was born in St. John's.

"We didn't quite make it that far because we ran out of time and things were a little too emotional for Lee Anne," said Annette.

The family loved the east coast and thought the people of Newfoundland were just fantastic. They even got a free bus wash on the way back from the island because of precautions ordered by health officials, due to a potato blight.

"Time has sort of stood still on Newfoundland. People we met there were just great — warm and open. Easterners are not in such a hurry to die as we are here," said Annette.

On June 28 of this year, the Wintjes great Western foray began. The tent was designed especially for this sort of trip, which took the family to Vancouver. They drove through places like Sault Ste. Marie, Thunderbay, Winnipeg, Regina and pretty well all the western provincial capitals.

The family was impressed with the provincial parks and the trailer parks they used along the Trans-Canada Highway.

"It was amazing the help you could get out there with just one phone call. We were like one big wagon train at Banff, with all the people eating together," said John.

The trip lasted 30 days and the group even crossed the Alaska Highway. Across the prairies, temperatures hit 34 (C), but the bus held out.

Back home, the bus is frequently used to take the Wintjes' kids and their friends, who attend a private school, on day-outings. The next long trip — barely in the planning stages — is a three-month jaunt to Alaska. John and Annette are obviously enchanted with that part of the country.

They are projecting a wait of about two years,

though, for various reasons — not the least of which are financial. John expects to take a course in auto mechanics to learn all there is to know about engines, while Annette would simply like to learn how to drive the bus.

"One of the best parts about it is driving on the highway — everyone looks at us in amazement and waves," said John.

"We become compatriots with everyone on the road driving a camper or a trailer or a mobile home ... but I don't recommend it to anyone working with a tight budget."

Liberal goes up

Regular home subscribers to The Liberal will immediately notice a change to this and subsequent editions of the paper.

The weekly price has increased to 25 cents, due to several uncontrollable factors.

Metrospan Printing and Publishing Ltd., which publishes The Liberal, has tried to maintain the home-delivery per paper cost at 20 cents. But because of increased costs for ink, newsprint and circulation (specifically, the carriers who bring the newspaper to your door) the extra nickel becomes effective this week.

Spring flooding

Oak Ridges gets some relief

Oak Ridges residents are seeing many improvements in their area this month.

Work on the Lake Wilcox outlet channel began the first week of August and last week the Town of Richmond Hill began construction of a

storm sewer system along Fergus Avenue, with branches reaching across Moray and Wildwood Avenues.

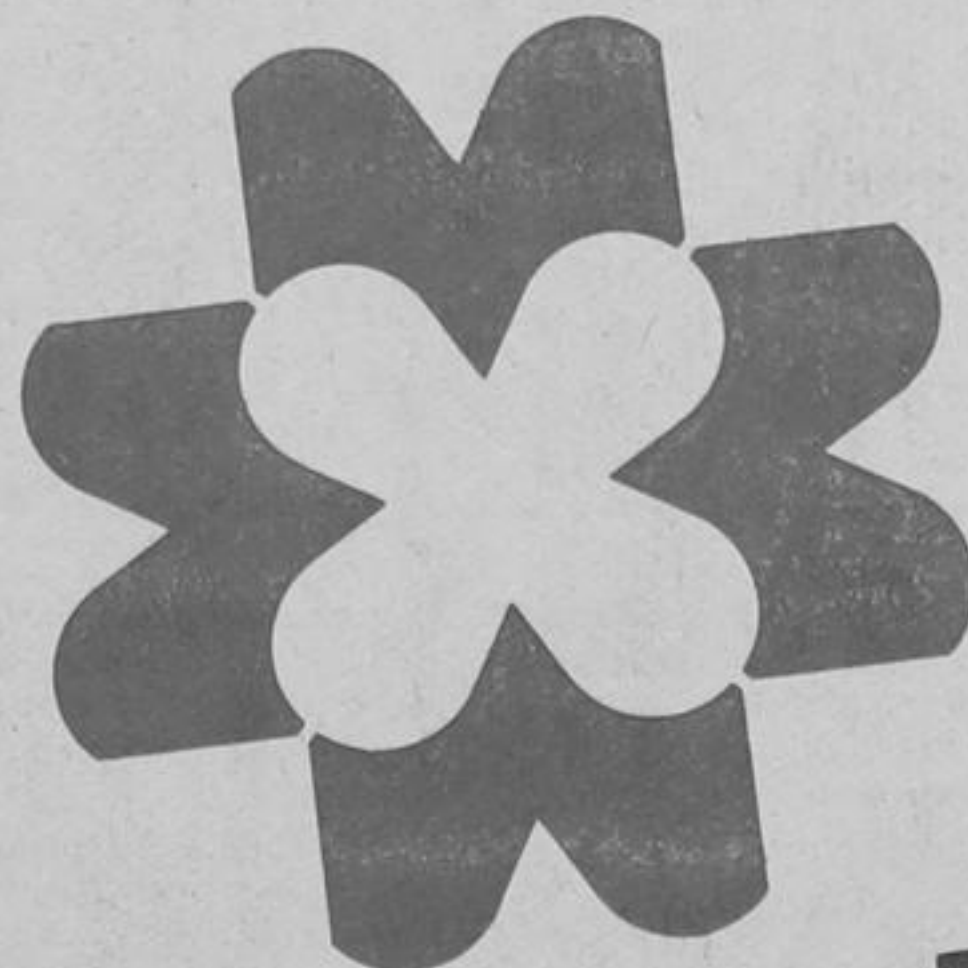
and malfunctioning septic systems. This storm sewer should correct these problems.

from the municipality and the provincial government.

A property on the south side of North Lake Road, has been acquired under the Neighbourhood Improvement Program to provide an easement for

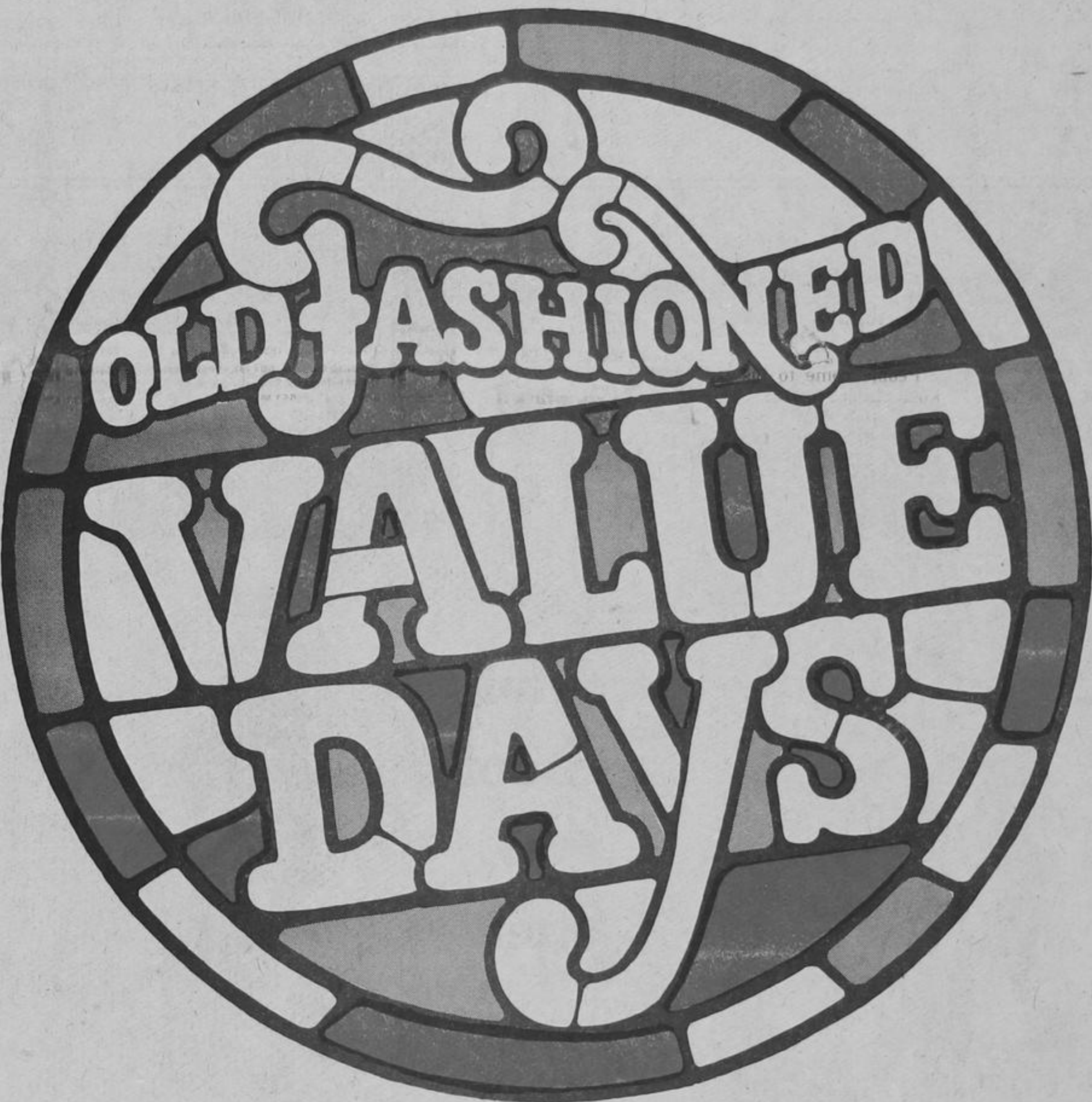
the channel running to the Lake and upon completion of the storm sewer project, this property will be landscaped and maintained as a neighbourhood parkette.

The project is expected to take about six weeks.



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Centennial Pool gets a facelift

Centennial Pool will close its doors September 4 — but it's just for annual painting and repairs.

Aquatic Supervisor at Centennial Pool, John Pirie, said usually the pool is closed just before Christmas, but because of changes in programming, this year the pool will be closed between September 4 and 23.

It will take about 10 hours to drain the 177,000-gallon, 25-metre pool and about a week to fill it again.

"It takes awhile to get the temperature from 55 to 80 degrees," said Mr. Pirie.

Painting of the pool, the walls in the pool area and the boys dressing room, will take the full three weeks because of the problem of drying time.

The fall instruction program will begin September 23 and continue until December 17. For more information call Centennial Pool at 884-6651.

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