

NEIGHBORS

Mr. Mushroom

The Castor Review launches a series of profiles on people who've made their mark in area communities.

When Nick Pora talks about mushrooms, you listen. The tall, lean, ex-Romanian's knowledge of the umbrella-shaped fungi is mesmerizing.

In the past three years, Mr. Pora has turned this wealth of knowledge into a burgeoning local industry.

Continental Mushrooms, about a mile east of Metcalfe, is easily visible from Regional Road 6. The bright green and yellow farm is an unlikely protrusion on the otherwise flat landscape.

To some, locating this type of industry 25 miles from the nearest city probably seemed competitively foolhardy but from Mr. Pora's viewpoint, the spot was ideal. He had little trouble convincing bankers of the logic.

What with the farm gradually becoming totally family operated, it is hard to doubt Nick Pora's continued success. Wife, Virginia is the bookkeeper and Leanna, 24,

the manager. Sandra, 22, intends to join the operation when she finishes university and Nick, Jr., 13, is already helping with the picking. The eldest daughter is happy for the moment as a pharmacist at Montfort Hospital in Ottawa.

Perhaps most importantly is Mr. Pora's philosophy as boss: "I don't want to raise prices, I want to raise mushrooms."

But there's a corollary: "When you go into business and lose money people call you stupid. When you make money, they call you a crook. There's no happy medium."

"You have to make a profit to create jobs. I tell the men once a week that the fortunes of the plant depend on how hard they work. If the plant doesn't do well, nobody will have a job including me."

He claims to practice what he preaches.

"I'm not the highest paid employee here, my mechanic is at \$350 a week. I get \$25 more than the truck drivers."

Employees benefit from a profit-sharing scheme on the

basis that "you have to get people involved to get work done."

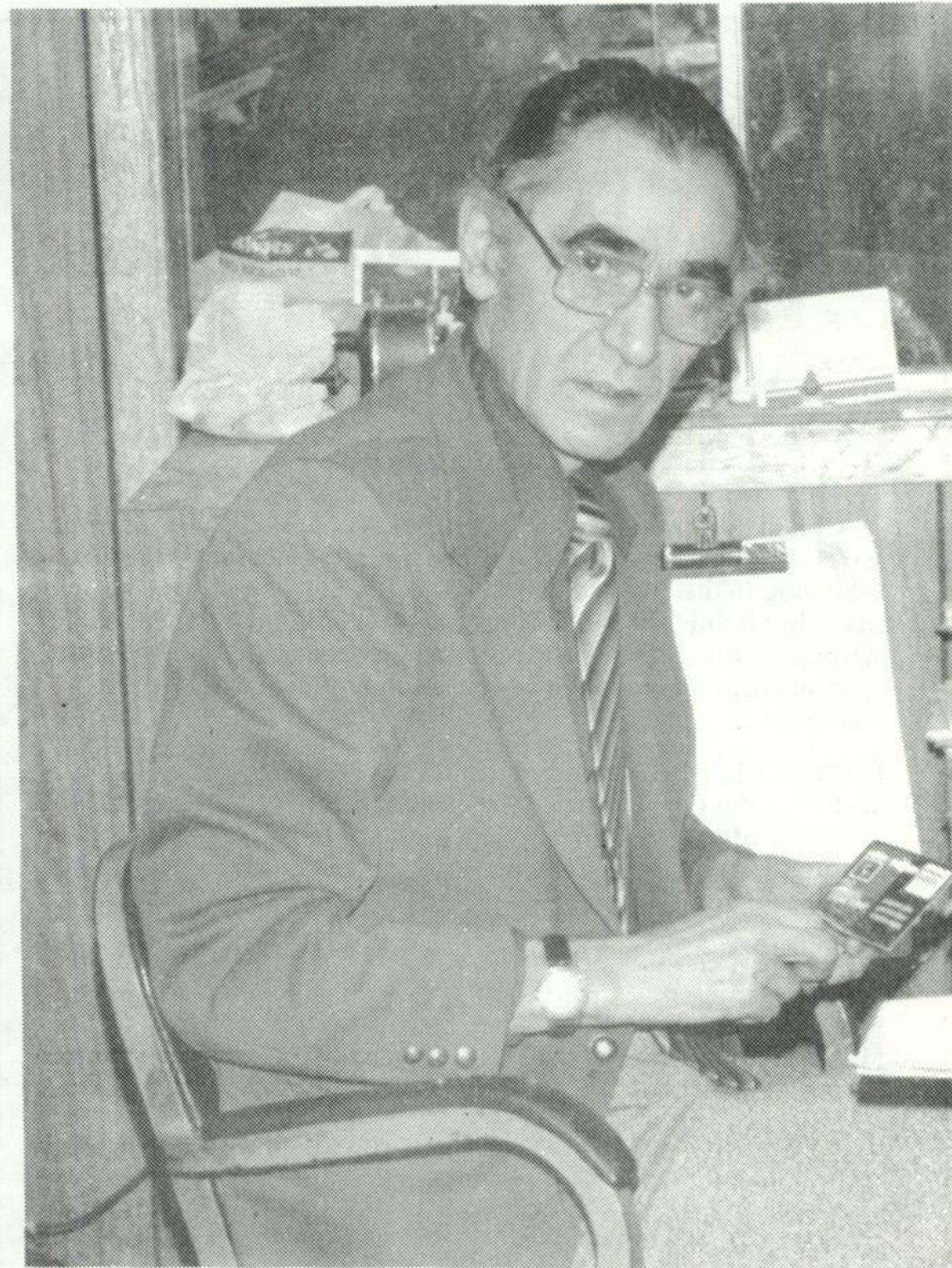
"Our books are open to our employees. If we make money they get bonuses. Nobody asks for a raise here, they get it before they have to."

Mr. Pora fled Romania in 1951 just ahead of the invading Russians, worked in a chocolate factory in Paris for five years then came to Canada. He managed mushroom farms at Montreal and Levis where he learned English, ironically, and later at Pickering where he spent 14 years.

Building his own farm wasn't without its setbacks. Ruined crops forced the plant to close three times in succession until the sensitive timing between growing periods was co-ordinated.

And, at 62, he has no plans to retire.

"I've worked all my life; can't stay idle. If I retire I'm going to drop dead. I don't want a situation where all I have to do is sit around and count money. I just worry about doing the best job."



Nick Pora



Before and After

Russell Township council lived up to its word in convincing Prescott-Russell counties council to yank the clutter of advertising signs at the junction of Road 33 and the Russell-Embrun Road. As the after shot shows, the removal of the signs restored an unobstructed view of the serene Castor countryside.



Answers to Sports Quiz

1. East Germany
2. Secretariat, Jockey Ron Turcotte

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Notice to Readers

The Castor Review invites contributions from its readers. We feel one of our best features is regular nostalgia pictures and accompanying stories. This material can only be acquired from veteran Castor-area residents who have accumulated it over the years. Another space which only your contribution can fill is the correspondence column. Why not take time to comment on the issues of the day or offer any opinion you feel may be of interest.



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