

NEIGHBORS

By Ann Davelaar

The Crerars

Honey is their Beesness

Ian Crerar, 46, senior partner of the Crerar Honey Farm near Vernon, has devoted his life to beekeeping.

"You like your business. It's not all money, or you wouldn't do it," he says.

Ian's grandfather came from Scotland and started keeping bees as a sideline to his dairy herd. Ian's father moved to the present site of the Honey Farm and kept sheep as well as bees. Sugar rationing during World War II led to beekeeping as a full-time occupation for the Crerar family.

Today, Ian's wife, Bette, 45, and most of their children take part in the operation, which produces 300,000 pounds of honey per year. Bette is the office manager and principal storekeeper. Janet, 18, a Grade 13 student, helps her mother in the store.

Danny, 24, does carpentry, electrical and mechanical work for the farm when he has time away from his job as carpenter. Jeffrey, 22, junior partner of the company, looks after the bees. The youngest son, Kenny, 12, labels jars for money to buy hockey equipment.

Ian himself goes out in his red truck to do wholesale and delivery. When he is not out on the road, Ian supervises the daily work schedule.

The Crerar family and their staff work very hard, especially from September to March. In September, after the honey has been gathered, Jeffrey and his

crew prepare a thick syrup from sugar and water. They place a can holding about 70 pounds of syrup upside-down on each of 600 hives. Holes punched in the lid allow the 10,000 bees in each colony to feed during the long winter.

Then the crew closes and covers the hives to make them wind-and-waterproof for the winter. The bees are left to survive as best they can until the following March, when the first flowers appear.

During the winter months a lot of effort goes into processing the honey. The workers cut open the combs, extract the honey, heat and package it. They collect the wax and sell it to a dealer, so it can be used as foundation for the next season's honeycombs. The workers label the containers and store them in a large special room called a cooler.

The store, conveniently built onto the house, is open all winter. Would you like liquid or creamed honey? Plain honey-butter or with a dash of cinnamon? Take your choice! They'll even fill up a plastic pail which you can bring back for refills.

You may want to buy ready-made wax candles or get sheets of dyed wax, wicks and an instruction booklet, so you can try to make your own creation. Perhaps a special cookbook or a sampler-pack containing several kinds of honey may tempt you.

The Crerar honey operation grosses about \$200,000 annually. Ian regularly delivers his product to around 100 independent stores

and fruitstands, and the Honey Farm store accounts for approximately 25% of sales.

But like every owner-operator, Ian is concerned about the future of his business. The cost of fuel and containers is constantly rising. And the weather also plays an important part. Last year the Crerar family had a very small crop, like most other honey-producers in eastern Ontario and Quebec, because of the low snowfall of the previous winter.

"It really puts you to the wall," Ian says. "If you have to buy honey to keep your trade and borrow at 19 1/2%, your (profit) margin is very small. It was one of the toughest years we've ever had."



Janet Crerar fills a honey jar.

WINCHESTER TOURS

Niagara in Blossom Time — Enjoy the Niagara Area in blossom time. Stay in the quaint beauty of Niagara-On-The-Lake. May 7-10. \$210 per person, twin.

Wonderland — The Family Weekend. Canada's newest attraction — our answer to "Disneyworld" 370 acres of adventure, fun and fantasy for the whole family. Plus a visit to the fabulous Metro Zoo. July 9-12, adult \$152, child (under 16) \$70.

Penn Dutch — Take a little time away from this world's hustle and bustle and come along with us to experience the simple life of Amish. June 15-18. \$215 per person twin.

New York — Labour Day Weekend — Come to "The Big Apple". Visit the city that's unlike any other city in the world. Sept. 4-7. \$269 per person twin.

WINCHESTER TOURS & Travel Agency Ltd. 14 Drentex St.

Marilyn Sullivan — Outside Agent Russell Area, 445-2017

M. D. Ross Realty Ltd.

FOR YOUR REAL ESTATE NEEDS

Hwy. 31 at Greely

821-2362

R. S. Eldridge
Cartage

STONE, SAND, FILL, TOP SOIL & SNOW REMOVAL

Russell, Ont.

Bob Eldridge
445-2864

BARIBAULT, BESEAU, CAMPBELL & McCUAIG

Barristers, Solicitors & Notaries Public

90 Main St. N.
Chesterville, Ont.
448-2349

Industriel St.
Embrun, Ont.
443-5683

WARD MALLETTE

COMPTABLES AGRÉÉS
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

C.P. 128 (P.O. Box 128), Embrun, Ontario, Canada

KOA 1W0 (613) 443-5201



Representatives:

Rob McVey — 526-0076
Jim Senos — 445-5372

NEW AND USED CARS AND TRUCKS
GMC TRUCKS—DAILY RENTALS AND LEASING

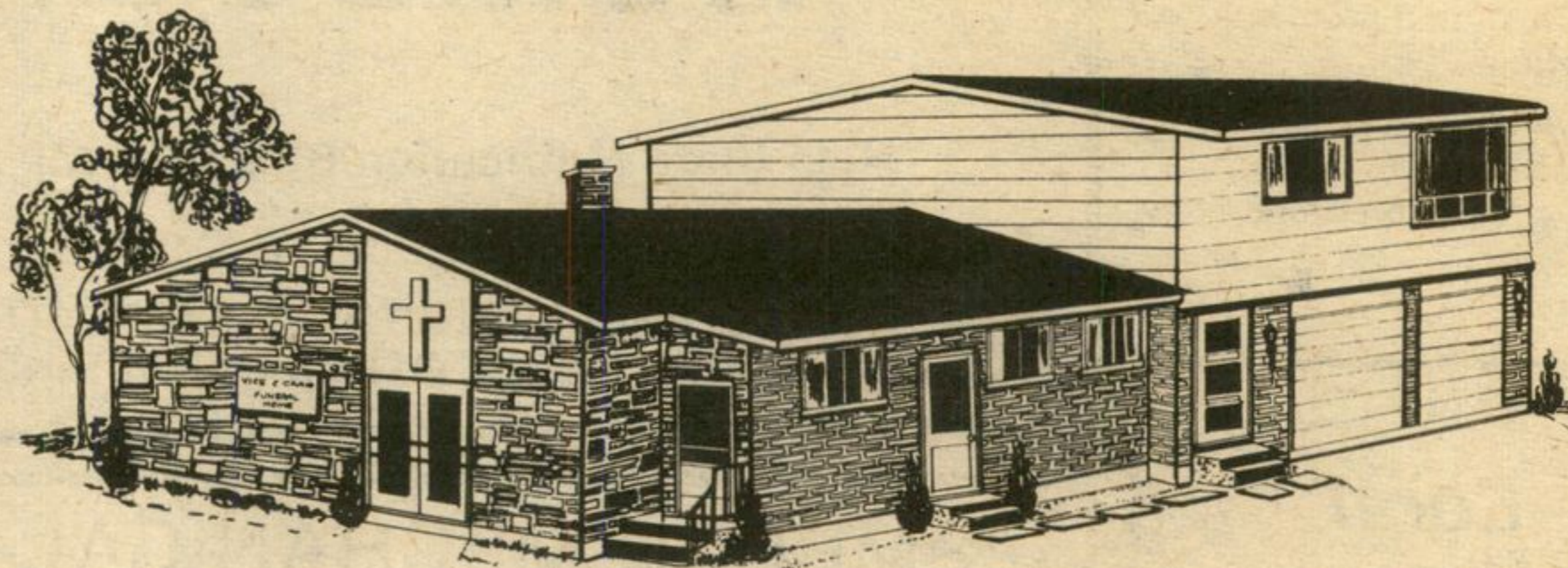
1492 Youville Dr. Orleans 824-8550

VICE & CRAIG FUNERAL HOMES INC.

WINCHESTER
505 Church
774-2120

CHESTERVILLE
62 Queen
448-2120

METCALFE
Highway 31
821-2120



Metcalfe

RESIDENT FUNERAL DIRECTOR - CHRISTOPHER DUNCAN
ASSOCIATE FUNERAL DIRECTOR - C. MELVIN VICE

Serving the Metcalfe, Vernon, Russell, Gloucester and Osgoode areas since January 1966.

Information on Funeral Pre-Planning available with no obligation

Telephone 821-2120

Russell Area No Toll Charge Call 774-2120