

Local man builds new career

GOODWOOD — last February. After Keath Barrie made a more than eighteen years rather unusual decision in an interesting and

rewarding vocation he quit the security of his job and embarked on a career as a singer and composer.

It is perhaps even more remarkable that this man, fast approaching middle age, is succeeding, in a fiercely competitive market that is usually thought, to preserve of the young.

It is just not true that you have to aim at the youth market to be successful, Keath Barrie pointed out. He said the belief that under-thirties

buy the most records is a fallacy. He feels there is a vast market for material aimed at more mature audiences.

"The older people are totally ignored," he said, "there's nothing for them, so they don't buy records." But Keath Barrie is changing that.

So far he has put out two albums, both of which are selling well. The first album is fast approaching the gold mark, with the other not far behind.

As well, Keath has

appeared regularly on T.V., given numerous personal appearances and toured the country with Ann Murray.

"Singing has always been part of my life. I just asked myself, can I make a living at it?"

The answer seems obvious.

Enrolment

STOUFFVILLE — Stouffville District Secondary School is expected to have an enrolment of 823 students this September, making it the smallest high school in York Region.

According to projected enrolment figures recently submitted to the York County Board of Education, the busiest of the high schools will be Markham District, with an anticipated enrolment of 2,020.

New school for principal

LAKE WILCOX — The principal of Lake Wilcox Public School, Bob Anderson, will not be back in September.

Mr. Anderson, principal at the local school for four years, has accepted a new position. He will head up a special education school in Newmarket.



Keath Barrie, a singer and composer residing in Goodwood, is becoming internationally known and has two best-selling albums to his credit.

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SIXTEEN YEARS OF RAPID GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT CULMINATE IN NEW BUILDING NEW FACILITIES FOR UNDERWOOD CHEMICALS & BROADLOOM

New Markham headquarters houses modern showroom, roomy warehouse

If anyone were to tell Ron Underwood of Markham that Canada is not the land of unlimited opportunity, he might get quite an argument.

Even so, it takes unusual determination, good thinking and a lot of a special kind of energy to build a million dollar business from scratch in just sixteen years.

That is exactly what Ron Underwood has done. Today, as president of Underwoods, he heads up a corporate complex which embraces a three-branch, retail-wholesale-broadloom operation, a commercial and industrial building cleaning and maintenance organization, along with a rapidly developing janitorial supply service which is heavily engaged in the supply and formulation of a wide range of professional cleaning and sanitation chemicals, waxes and treatments.

Stacked in the quarter-million cubic foot warehouse, is a broad selection of paper products, lighting supplies and the miscellaneous of professional building maintenance and cleaning including such items as mops, brooms, mats, waste receptacles, garbage bags, hot drinks cups, paper towels, fluorescent tubes and a full line of motorized equipment for cleaning floors, carpets and walls.

It all started about twenty-six years ago when Ron Underwood was eight years old. That was when the "selling bug" first bit him. As his first venture into the realm of commerce, he sold the then well-known Watkins Products line — cosmetics and lotions for the ladies — door to door. And he made money. Not much, but enough to wet his appetite.

By the age of ten, he was into the Christmas card business and had negotiated his first bank loan, strictly on his own. For Ron, business "on the side" became a way of life and it blended with an active participation in students' affairs, sports and education.

By the time he was eighteen, Ron had assembled the nucleus of an industrial cleaning operation with vehicles, motorized cleaning equipment and a small staff of workers.

Ron never hesitated to leap into the fray personally, and in his early days, became

extremely adept with a mop. That phase of his life is now far in the background, but his single-minded determination to grow and build the Underwood business into a large and modern corporation has never flagged.

There's an appealing, maybe unique, thing about the business enterprises headed up by Ron Underwood. They all dovetail neatly, logically, like a jigsaw puzzle.

That in itself tells you something about the kind of man Ron Underwood is. He is a big man, heavy-set, approaching his mid-thirties. He thinks about a question before answering it, you can see him turning the question over in his mind, looking for a full, complete answer. The answer, when it comes, is precise and to the point. Then he stops. No last-minute additions, no fumbling to correct a hasty phrase — he gives you an answer and he stands by it.

Conversely, the kind of man Ron Underwood is, tells you something about his businesses.

In some ways, it sounds like a Horatio Alger story, one of the "Local Boy Makes Good" tales so beloved by our Victorian ancestors. Ron was born and raised in Markham; he still lives here, on Markham Street, in fact. You can't get much more "home-town" than that.

The Alger heroes, though, achieved their success by a stroke of heroism or luck; saving the runaway horse with the banker's daughter aboard. Ron can justly say that such strokes of fortune played little or no part in his endeavours.

He started 16 years ago by establishing Underwood Building Maintenance Ltd. In 1960, few people had the vision to see the potential in this field, but Ron saw it and stuck with it.

"I guess that it's still the best-known part of the business," he says reflectively. "People noticed those brightly-painted trucks all over the place, and that's what established the name in their minds."

Things have changed, he points out. The company generally presents a lower profile these days, and the bright red trucks are pretty well a thing of the past.

"We're much more specialized now in the

clients we service," Ron says. "We're doing a lot of work for municipalities, boards of education and large corporations. However, we still maintain our long-time relationships with our Markham and area clientele."

From UBM, the Underwood "empire" — although he would never call it that — spread and grew. And it grew logically.

What do maintenance people deal with frequently? Rugs, right? Hence, Underwood Broadloom Mills. This division of the company now operates in three growing areas: Markham, Newmarket and Barrie. They're warehouse-type operations, displaying, in stock, hundreds of full rolls of latest styles, types and colours of carpeting.

Ron Underwood operates on the policy of supplying carpeting to the customer at the best price for all concerned, consistent with quality. The company takes great pains to deal with people on a local, personalized basis.

"We have all our merchandise in stock, so the customer can see it and assess it right in the store," Ron says. "We've also made it our business to hire the best people in the trade for our installation service. We try to give each customer individual attention, in both selecting carpet and completing the installation."

Managing the Newmarket Broadloom operation is Ed Gold, who has been on the job for several years. Ed is an expert in interior design, colouration and specialty advertising. He can and does write his own copy and directs his own commercials for T.V.

In charge of the newest UBM branch, Ed Gold heads up what is now one of the largest and most modern flooring warehouses in the area.

His inborn good taste is responsible for a lot of repeat customers and he is aided by Glenn Townsley, born and raised in Newmarket, who is a specialist in vinyl hard surface flooring and linoleum.

Head office personnel include such people as: Howard Stone, Vice-President, Broadloom Division; Alan Marks, General Manager; and Ian Miller, Carpet Installation Manager.

several smaller related companies supporting these main ventures.

Overall, Ron estimates that his enterprises employ 180 or 200 people, full and part-time.

"I guess that puts us among the top dozen employers in this area," he reflects with a trace of pride.

Ron enjoys living and working in Markham. He reports excellent cooperation and a sympathetic hearing from officials and politicians at all levels. While much of the company's work is done in Metro, Ron feels Markham is the best location. "We'll be here for a long while to come," he says.

In spite of his obvious work load, Ron finds time to contribute to the affairs of the community and his industry. He was one of the Markham Jaycee charter members rising to Chapter president, the youngest in Canada; he was instrumental in the formation of the Markham Hospital Foundation Group and participated in the Family Life Centre Fund. Several times, he

has been elected to the executive of the Canadian Sanitation Standards Association and he was president of the Markham Chamber of Commerce.

Ron has come a long way in 16 years, from a small maintenance service to a complex of high volume companies offering a wide range of services and products.

What makes Underwood Chemicals function? First of all, they recognize and cater to the contract cleaner as well as building management. Then, they use every available modern tool of business to enhance and improve their service.

This includes specialized salesmen, magazine advertising, a modern showroom, cash and carry concept, audio visual show-and-tell techniques, direct mail and personalized service. The use of a highly skilled telephone order department together with a scientifically designed catalogue makes for a simplified order processing on the one hand, while the beautiful showroom encourages personal visits at which

time goods can be examined at leisure.

In some ways, Ron Underwood is hard to believe. The typical "success story" sounds hackneyed to some people.

But — there he is. A big, relaxed man who sits at ease behind his plain desk, smiles and nods, answers questions thoughtfully and precisely.

"We have a sort of motto," he observes. "We won't knowingly let any customer be dissatisfied with our product or service. It's not formal, or anything like that; but everyone who works for me knows it."

This is no great speech, just a quiet, off-the-cuff statement of simple philosophy. It's probably the key to the whole phenomenon of Ron Underwood, but he just sort of says it quietly.

He's an unusual man, Ron Underwood, and even the most objective listing of his accomplishments sounds like a fairy-tale. But we might all be a lot better off if there were more like him.

Trustee visits the midnight sun

STOUFFVILLE — Trustee Harry Bowes was off last weekend for a quick jaunt to the Arctic

where he learned that the area really lives up to its title of the "land of the midnight sun."

Harry left Malton airport Saturday afternoon on a four hour charter flight that took him to Frobisher Bay on Baffin Island.

He arrived at 11 o'clock at night when the sky looked slightly overcast "as if before a rainstorm."

From then on until 3 a.m. when he left the sky continued to get brighter Harry said.

He expressed

amazement that "hundreds of children" were running around all night. "They just go to sleep whenever they get tired," he commented.

Harry spent a brief five hours at Frobisher Bay before flying back but he said this was ample time to take a quick look around. The flight was fairly economical as it only cost \$169.

As a school board trustee Harry was particularly interested in inspecting the local schools. He was given a tour of the elementary school where the majority of students are Eskimos.

"It had a huge gym with full equipment" said Harry. In sharp contrast to Summitview Public School.

"They had pretty good schools but they were only built four or five years ago," he explained.

The tour was given a demonstration of Eskimo games and were shown native sealing and hunting equipment.

The ice in the bay was just beginning to break up according to Harry and any crevasses around were full of snow. Buildings all stand on stilts so they won't sink into the permafrost.

The tundra was covered with a half inch layer of moss and Harry

likened it to walking on a sponge.

They were taken to an Eskimo village outside of Frobisher Bay and were shown through a native home. He described them as being "cottage type shacks".

Harry said the price of gas, at one dollar per gallon, wasn't too far out of line with prices in this area but a loaf of bread cost a phenomenal \$1.80. A bag of peanuts that sells for 15 cents here goes for 50 cents there and a can of pop costs the same.

By Sunday Harry was back home, with some Arctic charr that he purchased, as a souvenir of the trip.

Re-alignment may be completed this year

MARKHAM — The much-discussed Robinson Street, re-alignment project, could be completed as early as Nov. 1 of this year.

This hope was voiced by councillor Bud Bonner this week. Survey work, he said, should begin this month.

The Robinson extension will utilize the space between the Bank of Nova Scotia and Towne Optical, veering both right and left to link up with Church and Joseph Streets.

Traffic patterns will be reversed, councillor Bonner explained, with the vehicular flow moving west on Church and east on Joseph. Both will be "dead-ends" at Main. Small parkettes will be established at these locations.

The re-alignment will

allow additional parking on Main and east of Main. Councillor Bonner sees little disruption of the north-south traffic flow during construction. No

homes had to be expropriated on Church Street as anticipated in the original plan and the Gospel Church will not be moved, said Mr. Bonner.

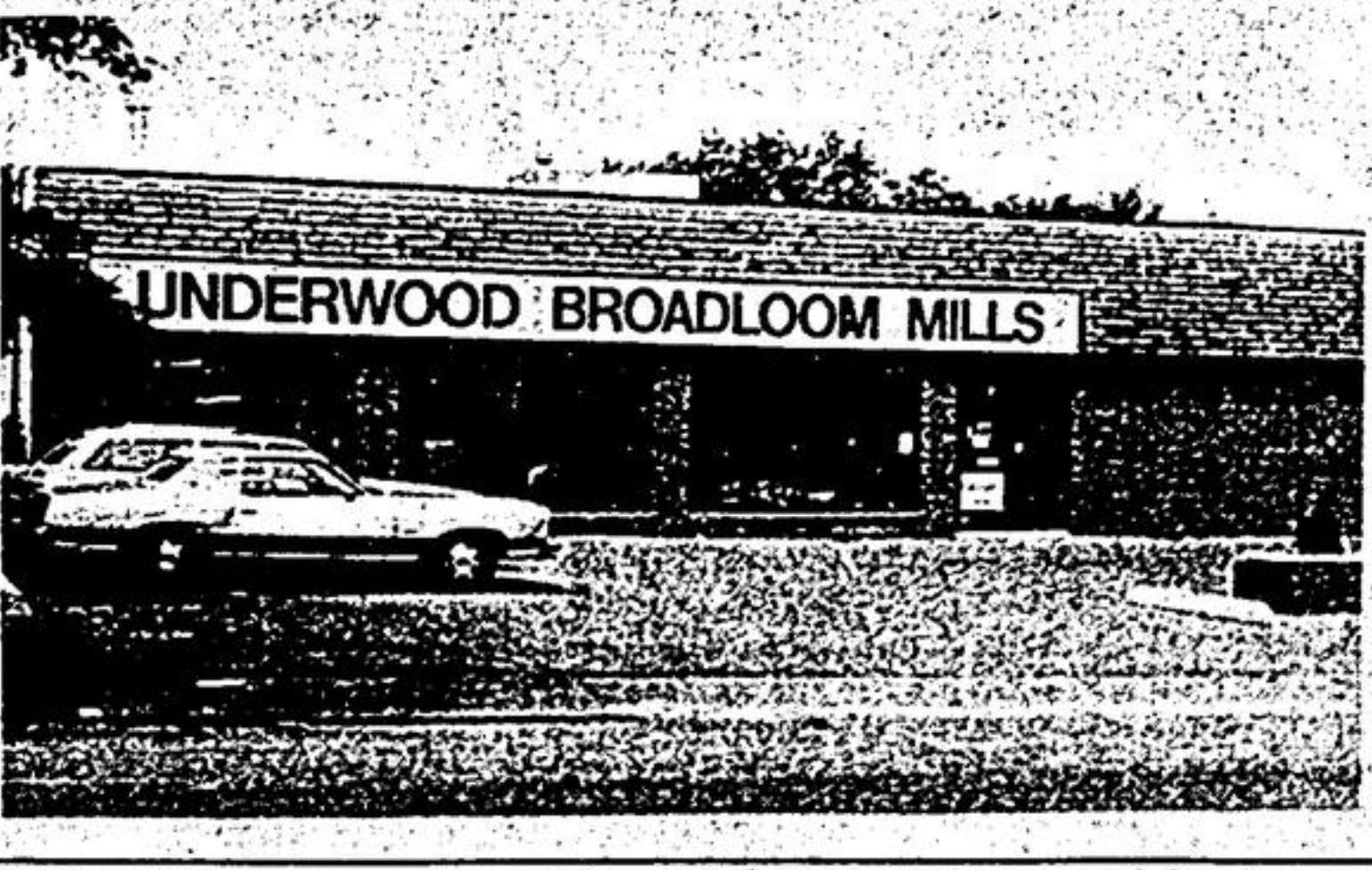
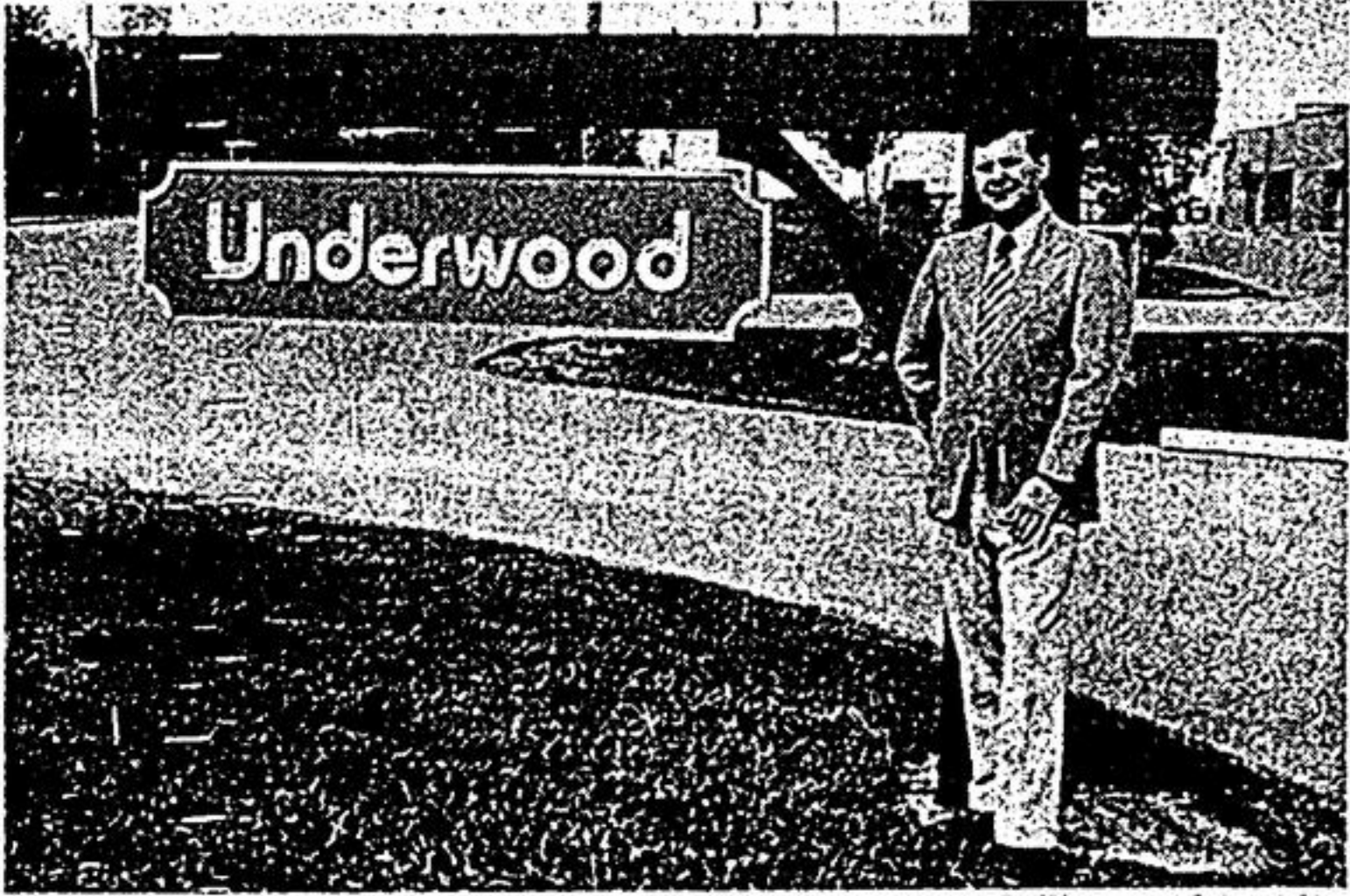
Committee set

MARKHAM — A committee has been formed and a campaign is underway, to make Markham's new indoor swimming pool a reality. The target figure is \$425,000, with a comparable donation to come from Wintario.

Ron Dancy of the Kinsmen Club is spearheading the drive. He's the committee chairman. Others include: Doug Johnson (Kinsmen); Linda Johnson (Kinetics); Toni Ignagni (Kinetics); Mike

Crompton (Rotary); Mary Stewart (Rotary); Clyde Wheeler (Veterans); Harold Snowball (Firemen); Ross Lawton (Firemen); Tony Russell (Veterans); Don Boynton (Victoria Square Lions) and Alex Barton (Town Treasurer).

Additional names may be added in the weeks ahead, Mr. Dancy said. The committee meets on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month at the Markham Centennial Centre, McCowan Road.



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