

Dean Hughes

A friend looks back

By Rex Weyman

As reported last week, local Unionville resident Dean Hughes recently passed away, and his many friends and associates were deeply saddened.

As his oldest friend I had special reason for grieving as I sat back and relived my close relationship with Dean, which started back in 1926, when we were both 18. At the time I was employed as what was then called a Junior Clerk with a bank in Toronto, although I had aspirations of becoming a writer and had actually sold one short story.

Not having a mind for figures, I goofed it up with the bank and was graciously asked to "resign". I was granted two weeks in order to give my replacement some idea of what his Junior Clerk duties would be.

The new J.C. turned out to be a cheerful and chatty young fellow named Aubrey Dean Hughes, and during our friendly chit-chats he admitted that he too had dreams of becoming a writer. So what happened? On my last day at the bank we both left together at closing time and Dean never went back again. I remember him saying "Phooey on a bank job. I'm going to be a writer whatever it takes." And that was the start of our close, ongoing friendship.

From then on our careers followed a curiously parallel pattern. Dean started work with MacLean-Hunter Publishing almost at the same time I was offered a job with the Ryerson Press. Then, in the mid-thirties we both decided to go to England,

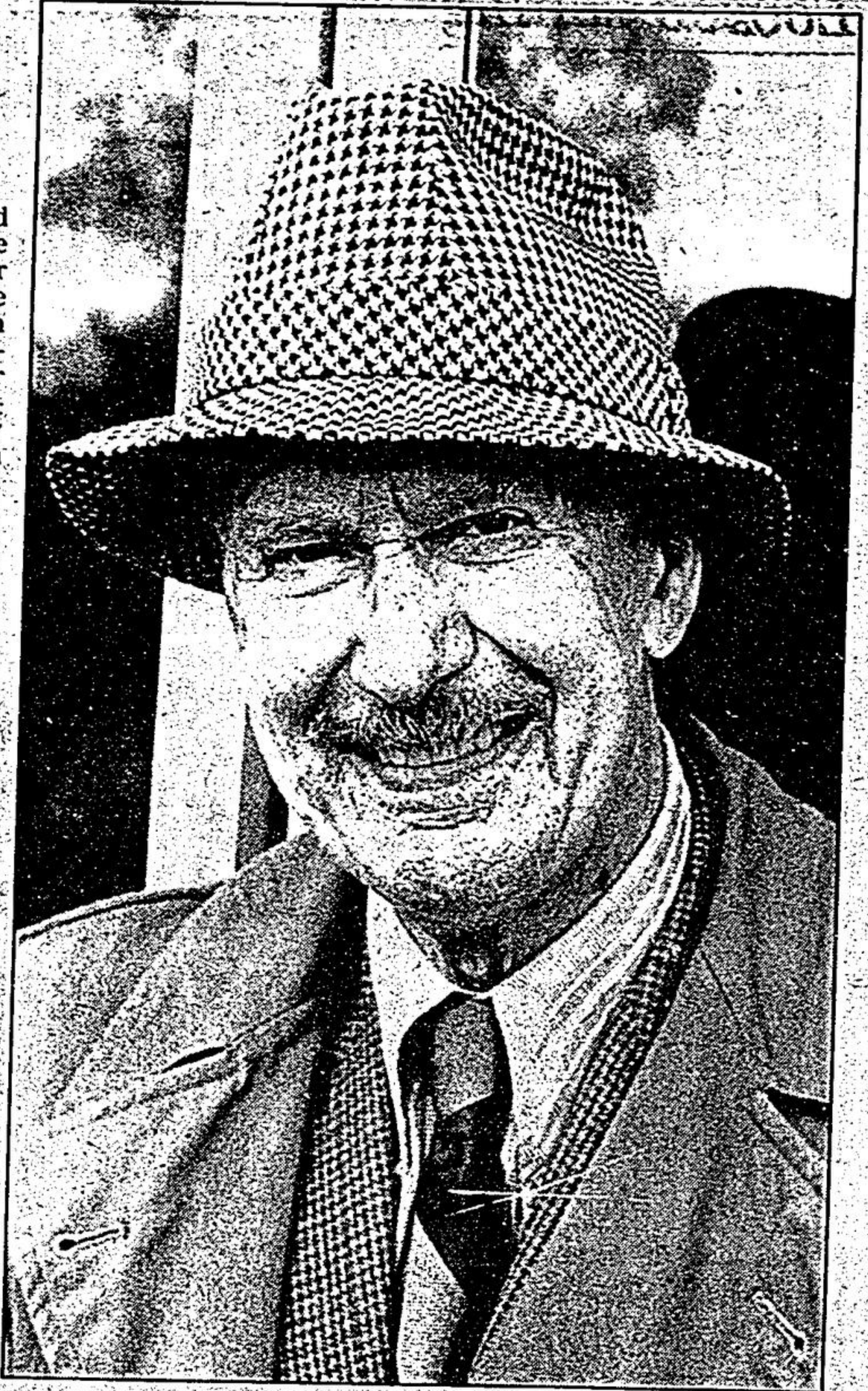
where we holed up in London and both managed to gain creative assignments of one kind or another. But after a year or so we decided to return home, and from that time on, slowly but progressively, we both achieved our shared ambition of becoming professional writers, both of us busy fulltime writing for publication and/or radio and television.

By 1940 we were both married, and Dean and his wife Lyn bought a lovely old farm complete with cows in the barn in what was then tiny, truly rural Unionville.

Almost inevitably, after many trips to join our old friends, my wife Kathleen and I decided to sell up in Toronto and become Unionvillites too. We bought an old farmhouse called "The Cedars" just a skip and a jump from the Hughes' farm. We stayed in the Markham area for some 18 years during which time I greatly enjoyed writing a column for the Economist & Sun entitled "Over The Cedar Rail".

At that time Dean had accepted an important position with what was then Canada's top ad agency, which meant driving into Toronto everyday. I remember him getting up at five in the morning to help his hired man milk the cows before getting dressed to go to work.

But now that's all in the past. My oldest friend has gone and all I have are the snapshots of our many trips and merry escapades together. But as another Dean put it in one of his songs: "Memories Are Made of This". I guess Dean Martin had a lot of happy time to remember, too.

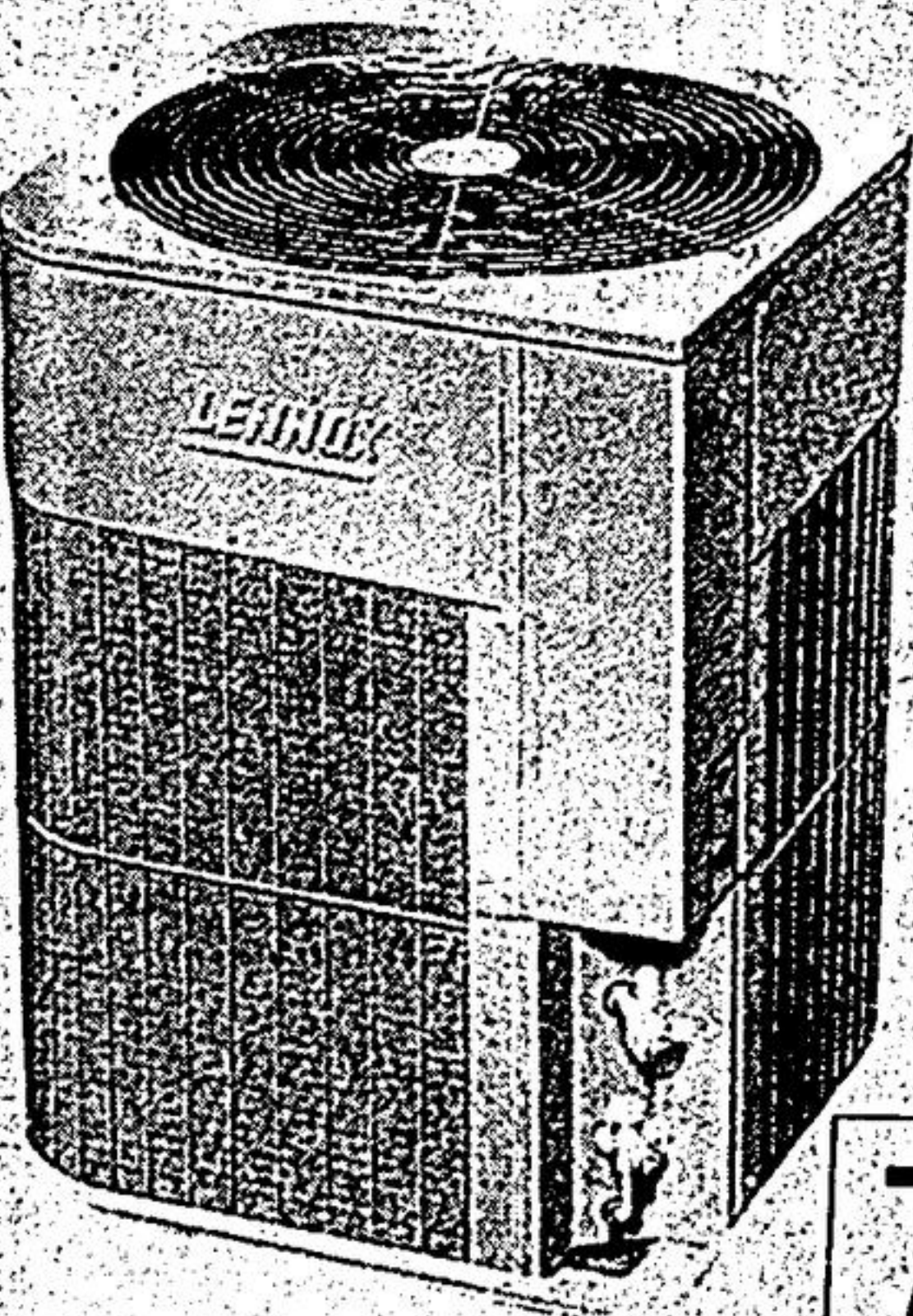


Dean Hughes



Snapshot of Dean Hughes and Rex Weyman

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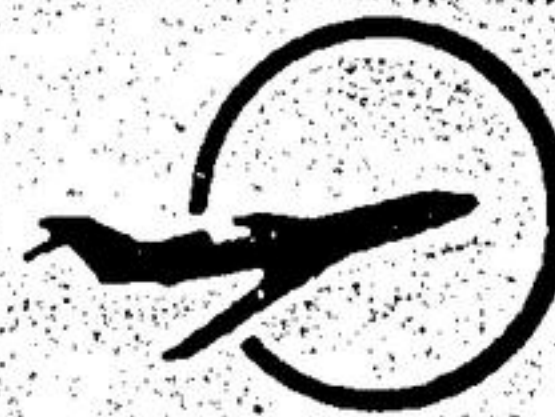
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