

1987 president grew with Fair

By NANCY HOSKIN

As one of the youngest Markham Fair presidents, Rick Wannop had his job cut out for him this past year.

A native of Markham, Mr. Wannop was raised directly across from the Old Fairgrounds, at Hwys 7 and 48. His earliest recollection of the fair is of parking cars and entering school craft projects.

He could also be seen marching alongside his classmates from Franklin Street Public School in the annual fair parade through Markham.

Living where he did the fair was a special attraction for Mr. Wannop. He's never missed a year.

"I parked cars on my parents vacant lot near the house, earning extra income," Mr. Wannop laughed. "I received my first winning ribbon in Grade 2 with a driftwood lamp I had made," he recalled.

Since the fair moved to its new home, on McCowan Rd, just north of 18th Ave., Mr. Wannop has served on several fair committees, from the Tractor Pull and Grounds Maintenance committees to Gates and Admission.

He also takes great pride in being one of the members who recently formed the highly successful Special Attractions Committee.

Mr. Wannop served as a junior

director on the fair board for two years — an elected position designed to attract younger adults, under 26 years of age, to serve on the board.

After having had a taste of leadership, he proceeded to advance up the ladder to his present position as president.

Mr. Wannop, who is a farmer in Markham, helps tend animals and more than 1,300 acres of land and animals in and around Markham, working on his wife's family farm in Locust Hill.

Married to his high school sweetheart, Susan, the Wannops have three children; Andrew, 7, Alison, 4, and Laura, 2. Though he has enjoyed serving as fair president this year, Mr. Wannop says that it has taken many hours and a lot of energy, which at times becomes a strain for someone with a young family.

"There was a minimum of four meetings each month during the year, and of course many, many more as fair time approaches," Mr. Wannop explained.

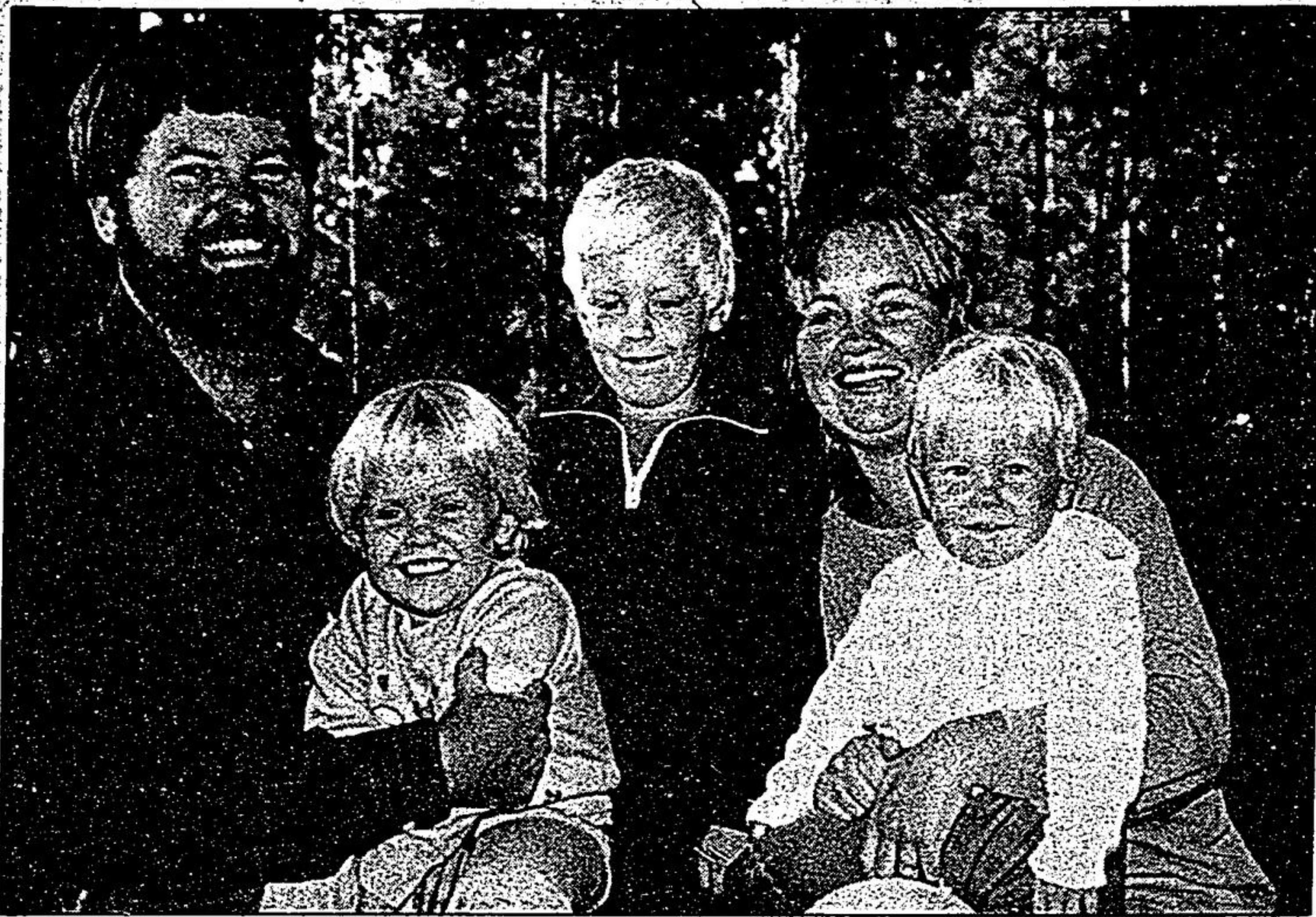
Rick Wannop definitely has a 'right hand man', not only with his Vice-president Dave Morrison, but with his wife Sue. She has remained active this past year helping her husband out by handling phone calls and the hundreds of questions that are asked.

In her spare time Susan under-

took the job of addressing the over 400 banquet invitations sent out to the volunteers who help make the Markham Fair successful.

Over the last few years the Wannop crew has made the Markham Fair a family affair, not only with Rick's involvement, but

with Sue entering photographs and cooking and their two older children entering photography and crafts for competition.



Markham Fair President Rick Wannop (left) has the full support of his family — Alison, 4; Andrew, 7; his wife Sue; and daughter Laura, 2. The Markham farmer grew up attending the Markham Fair and is one of the fair's youngest presidents.

Family Brown at '87 Markham Fair

By BRUCE STAPLEY

In a break with tradition, the Markham Fair's Country and Western Music Show Committee has decided to shelve the amateur talent contest which had for several years made up a considerable portion of the Friday night festivities.

The show, which is held in the Cattle Barn, will feature two red hot country acts this year, Family Brown and Ronnie Prophet. Western Show committee chairman Harold Snowball couldn't be happier with the lineup.

"They were our first two choices this year, and we were able to succeed in lining them both up," he said. It will mean a bit of running around for Ronnie Prophet, because he's playing in Nashville the day before, and in Richmond, Virginia the next afternoon.

Mr. Snowball, who was fair president in 1985, explained that the amateur contest had experienced a dwindling interest in recent years, both in the number of contestants, and in audience sizes. "We thought we'd try going with an all-professional show this year," he said.

The western show has always played to a full house, and Mr. Snowball sees no reason for this year to be any different. The Cattle Barn seats about 1700 people.

"What we are offering is entertainment for the whole family, from young kids to grandmas and grandpas," he says. "We feel it's the perfect matchup for the tractor pull on Friday night."

Mr. Snowball has good reason to be excited about the choice of performers. Family Brown and Ronnie Prophet continue a tradition of quality country performers who have played the Western Show, groups like the Diamond Reo Band, the Good Brothers, and the Mercy Brothers.

Family Brown, recently named Group of the Year at the Canadian Country Music Awards, are a much travelled international country music group.

They have won virtually every award in the Canadian country music scene, as well as a host of international prizes. Recent winners of the title of group entertainer of the year by the Country and Western Music Association in Texas, they were also nominated in each of the past two years in England for international group of the year.

They have appeared on numerous television shows including Hee Haw, Nashville Now, New Country, The Tommy Hunter Show, and the Ronnie Prophet Show.

In fact, it will be the Family Brown band that will accompany prophet for his performance at the Western Show.

Mr. Prophet himself, a native of Nashville, Tennessee, is no stranger to the area. He did a benefit show for the late Ed Wideman at the old arena some years ago, and also performed as part of the Stouffville Centennial program. A seasoned country performer, Mr. Prophet seems to attract enthusiastic audiences wherever he goes.

Harold Snowball takes pride in the fact that the Western Show has become a feature attraction of the Markham Fair. "We feel it has always been a success. We try to put on good family entertainment. All you have to do is sit back in your seat and enjoy it."

The show is scheduled to begin at 8:30. The doors won't open until 8 p.m. due to the length of time required for setup. And it's first come first served, says Snowball, so it would probably be a good idea to get there early to be near the front of the line.

Horse pull competition shows brute strength

By BRUCE STAPLEY

Take a team of Belgian work horses, each one weighing in at well over a ton-and-a-half. Harness them up to a stone boat with an ever-increasing load of cement blocks. Then watch as these muscular brutes strain to their maximum capacity in order to beat the other teams of equally determined animals.

The Horse Pull is one of the most exciting events that the Markham Fair has to offer, an

event that always packs them into the Colosseum. The teams of horses that come to compete are among the best at the sport in North America, coming as they do from parts of Canada and the United States.

"These are not your average work horses," says Glen Lewis, chairman of the committee that puts the Horse Pull together each year. "They are Belgians and Belgian and Percheron Cross. Each team must be trained to compete

in such a grueling event, and these horses are ready."

The first question that comes to mind for the uninitiated is that of the potential for cruelty to the horses. Cruelty is not tolerated, plain and simple. The rules governing the sport specifically state that no abuses of the animals shall be allowed, either in the form of slashing with lines or whipping.

Teamsters soon come to learn the limitations of their horses, and will pull their team out, rather than have them risk injury attempting to pull a weight they are incapable of moving.

The competition is divided into two categories: the Light Horses, with a maximum girth of 165 inches and weight of 3,300 pounds or less, and the Heavy Horses, which have a bigger girth and weight.

Each teamster has three minutes to hitch his team, then six minutes to complete the pull. Three cement blocks are added to the stone boat with each pull, and the team still moving the load at the end wins. The winning team gets \$210 in prize money, with each of the approximately 25 teams guaranteed at least \$90.

"This is the Big League of horse pulling," says Mr. Lewis. "That's why we get the big crowds."

Lewis himself comes by his interest in heavy horses honestly. For 22 years his parents Gord and Lois Lewis of Uxbridge have bred Clydesdales for show. Glen and his brother Stephen, who is also involved with the Horse Pull, have always had a love of horses. The Lewis Clydesdales will be showing at the Markham Fair's Heavy Horse Show on the Thursday and Friday of the Fair.

The Horse Pull starts at 7 p.m. on Saturday night. It is a weather resistant attraction, which makes it a safe bet for viewing on those years when the weatherman is less than cooperative. And as always this year, it promises to be an exhibition of awesome brute strength.

Harry Brillinger recalls early days

By BRUCE STAPLEY

In the early 1900s, Stouffville was a junction for the Grand Trunk Railroad. It was the steam train from Sutton that young Harry Brillinger and his big brothers would catch at the junction, then ride it to the Markham Fair. "It only took us about 20 minutes to get there," he remembers. "That train moved pretty quick."

For Mr. Brillinger, a lifetime Stouffville resident, it was always a struggle to get his brothers to go and look at the animals, his first love.

"My older brothers just wanted to see the manufacturing exhibits. I remember one year how fascinated they were by a company that was putting on a demonstration making the first steel nails. They were making them in all different lengths. They were much stronger than the old iron nails."

Mr. Brillinger would eventually pull the older boys away from the nuts and bolts part of the fair long enough to see the animals, the side shows, and to ride the merry go round.

Money was a little short in those days, he recalls. "We'd only have about a dollar with us. Of course, admission back then was only about 15 cents. Hot dogs were a nickel."

His one brother finally started to take an interest in animals, and one year rode a horse, bareback, to the fair, along with it's colt. Both animals won first prize in their category.

As the years went by, Mr. Brillinger became involved in a gardening business on the 9th Line of Stouffville, producing roses, carnations, mums and snapdragons. He became too busy to be able to attend the Markham Fair, although his father was a judge at the fair for vegetables and flowers for several years.

In fact, there were always those people, Mr. Brillinger recalls, who would come to their gardens wanting to buy flowers to display at the Markham Fair. Mr. Brillinger's dad had to tell them that that was against the rules, that they had to grow their own to be legitimate.

Today, Harry Brillinger is 93 years old. He hasn't been to the fair in a long time, but still holds fond memories of the days when he and his brothers would head off by train for a great day of socializing and overall enjoyment.