

## Retirement means he's still on call at Stouffville Co-op

By BRUCE STAPLEY

Ross Wideman has come in out of the cold. And at the age of 69, he's making a strong case for the idea of seniors continuing on in the work force in a limited capacity once they have outgrown the rigours of the daily grind.

The Altona resident, who drove an oil truck for the Stouffville Coop from 1952 until his 'retirement' three years ago, has been 'on call' ever since. And as it turns out, the call just keeps on coming.

"I guess I'm averaging around 20 hours a week since I retired," claims the fit looking gentleman with the contented approach towards life. "Some times, I'll work eight hours in one day, other times I'll work eight hours in a whole week."

His oil truck driving days, however, are over, as he is now doing strictly inside work. "I finally decided to retire from oil delivery because the pressure got too great. There were some long hours, and a lot of time spent out in the cold. I had to start worrying

about my health at my age."

Does he miss the old routine? "I kind of wished I hadn't stopped for a while there afterwards", he admits, having gotten used to the routine after so many years. "It was an ideal job for someone like me."

For Ross, driving the oil truck for the Coop meant he was able to have a certain amount of independence. He never minded the lone wolf aspect of the job, in fact he thrived on it.

"I work best alone," he claims. "I spent a lot of time on my Dad's farm alone hoeing and the like when I was younger. People like to chat sometimes, but I always felt I had a job to do."

Ross's relationship with his customers through the years has always had special meaning to the man who believes in old time service.

"People come to trust you through the years," he says. "I like to feel that the customers are my friends, and I've always known that it was the customer

who was paying my salary."

He has been equally comfortable through the years with his fellow employees at the Coop, a business which prides itself on its family type unity, and the fact that employees tend to stay around for a long time.

"Stability is a positive factor in a business," he maintains. "You learn to get along with people. I always bent over backwards to get along with my fellow employees."

As for his staying put for so long, Ross admits to not having a restless nature when it comes to seeking out other employment opportunities. "I don't care for a change. I'd have to be pretty upset to leave a job, and I was always happy to stay. I'm not a gambler."

In fact, he believed there were so many positive aspects to his job that it would have been almost impossible to match the benefits anywhere else. "I liked everything about the job. The fresh air, the exercise, and the independence."

Ross was born and raised on his father's farm in Dickson's Hill, on what is now the site of the hotel. He was employed on the farm until the age of 36. He married his wife Ivy in 1955, and bought the four-acre plot in Altona where they still live today. Ross and Ivy have four grown children and six grandchildren.

He credits his placid attitude, and his overall contentedness to a strong Christian faith. "The Lord's been good to me," he insists. A keen Bible student, he claims that his beliefs have made it possible for him to keep an even keel throughout the years.

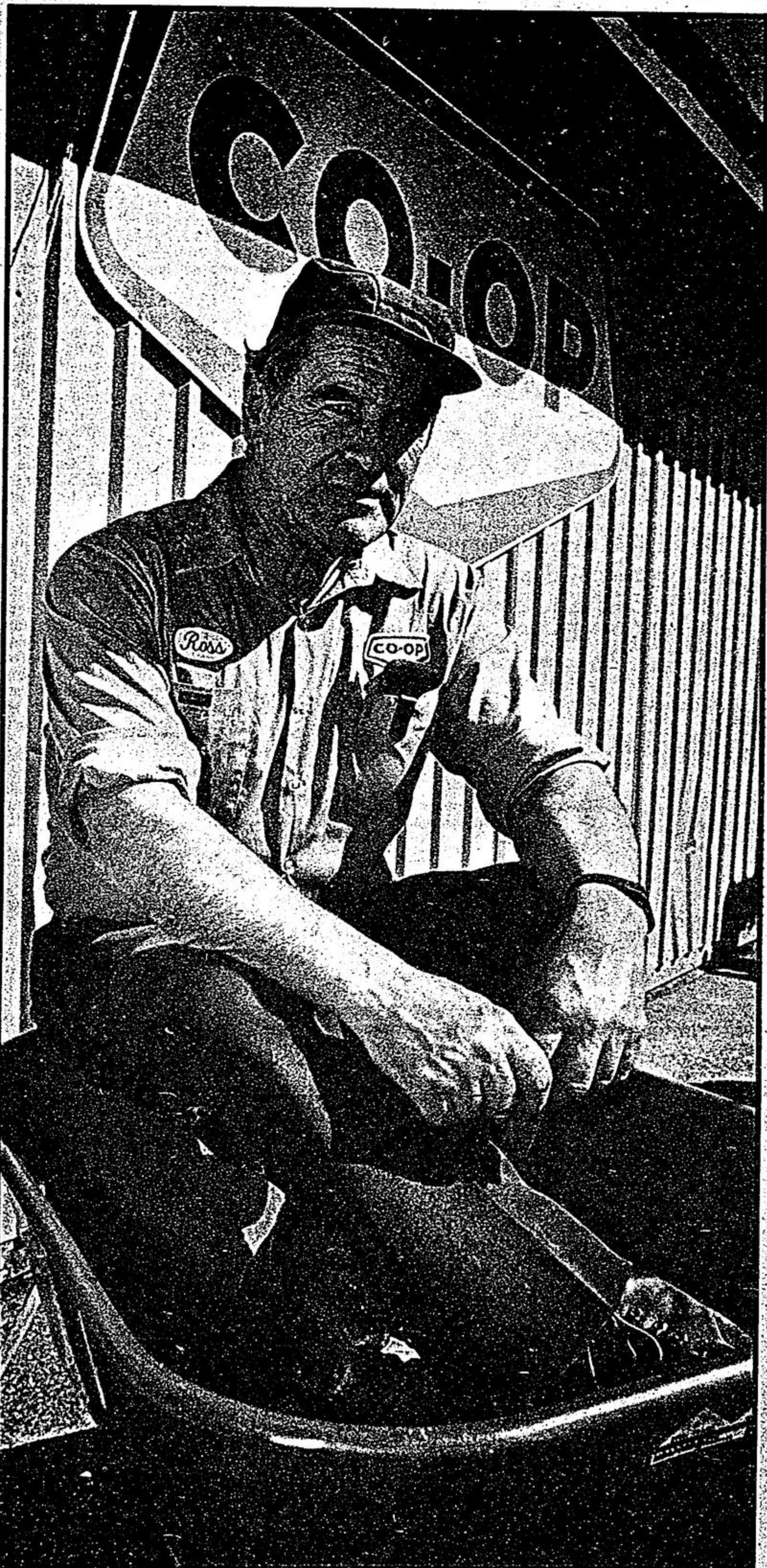
Ross remembers the early days, when he would make oil deliveries in the Coop's old International truck. "Top speed was about 40 miles per hour," he recalls. "It carried about 800 gallons, compared to today's trucks that will hold around 2,500."

And it was a pretty rugged routine back then. "You'd often find yourself working til 9 p.m. or whenever the job was done. I remember being on the job until past midnight one cold New Year's Eve." He was on call if a customer was to run dry of fuel oil in the middle of the night.

He claims the introduction of the 'degree day' system, whereby a card is kept for each customer's house which takes into account how cold the weather has been, went a long way towards eliminating the emergency fill ups at odd hours.

That, plus Ross's own intuitive sense of which houses went through more fuel oil under the various winter conditions.

As for how much longer he feels he will want to stay on as a part-time employee, Ross just shrugs and says he has no idea of what the future will bring.



Although he's retired, Ross Wideman is still on the job part time at the Stouffville Coop where he's been a familiar figure as an oil delivery truck driver since 1955. Ross says the part-time arrangement suits him just fine.

## Markham farmer takes eye-opener holiday in Africa

By BRUCE STAPLEY

For Harvey Brown, 20 years a beef farmer at the corner of 18th Ave. and Hwy. 48, a recent holiday in Africa was a bit of an eye-opener in terms of cattle maintaining methods employed by some of the herdsman.

One of the highlights of the game viewing expedition throughout Kenya for Harvey and his wife Nancy was a visit to a Malsi village which centred around the raising of cattle.

"The cattle were not being raised for the purpose of slaughtering them," Harvey explained. "They were used for dairy purposes, and the drawing of blood which, when mixed with the milk, made up a significant part of the diet of the villagers."

The cattle, Harvey claims, are an indication of the wealth of each family. The animals would be herded by day, as there were no fenced in areas as we have in Canada.

"At night, they would be brought inside the compound where the family dwellings were housed, for their protection. The cattle are never allowed to graze on their own like they are here because of the danger of their being attacked by lions and cheetahs."

The cattle, he noted, were a varied mixture of breeds, not pure bred like on the beef farms in

Canada. "They were mongrels, for the most part."

The holiday, which was promoted by the University of Guelph, where Harvey and Nancy both studied in the 1960s, afforded the Browns to visit five game camps altogether.

They were particularly impressed by the facility at the camp called "Treetops," named because of its elevated position, which allowed a clear view of the variety of animals which came to the camp's watering hole at night.

The 'safari' brought them in plain view of elephants, lions, cheetahs, wildebeasts, hippos, crocodiles, giraffes, warthogs, and a cross-section of birds. The trip included a visit to the home of Karen Blixen, who inspired the story line behind the movie 'Out of Africa.'

The holiday served as an educational experience for the Browns, as well as providing the opportunity to greatly enhance their photograph collection.

"I was surprised to discover that agriculture is the number one economic factor over there, followed by tourism," says Harvey. "I was also surprised by the exceptional quality of the food, and the service, in the restaurants, even at the game camps."

The trip was a retirement present of sorts for Harvey, who has decided to scale down his commitment to beef farming somewhat.

## Busy life for Uxbridge's Ollie Wilson



Ollie Wilson still finds time to relax, and is always ready with a smile, despite operating a major auction business north of Uxbridge. She's also the pianist for her church's choir.

Ollie Wilson is the first to admit that she has her hands full as far as her life's involvements are concerned.

The owner-operator of Wilson's Auctions Ltd., two miles north of Uxbridge on Durham Road 1, presides over a business that has been growing steadily ever since she and her late husband Lloyd started it up in 1958.

And with five children, four of them teenagers living at home, helping run the family dairy business, Ollie claims she doesn't get much time to sit back and contemplate her very existence.

But she's the last to complain. Contentedness virtually radiates from her voice, and her pleasant nature makes her a most engaging individual to meet.

"I just love it," she says of the auction business that specializes in holstein auctions and estate sales. "I think it's great. You get to meet a lot of people, and it's a fun business."

Ollie doesn't consider herself a one woman band, by any means, despite her ability to look after family and business affairs that require some astute time management on occasion. "I'm dependent on others" she insists. "I'm not an independent type."

She has managed to surround herself with knowledgeable, competent individuals whose contribution to the running of the auction operation is immeasurable. Her full time auctioneer is Neil Bacon, and operations manager Jim Huffman heads up a full-time staff of three.

She has access to experts in various

fields, who are available for specific duties, such as the man who comes all the way from the Ottawa area to help out at cattle sales. Ollie also has a specialist who comes in to do pedigrees on cattle being sold, and a full-time cattle clipper.

"I also have people who go around to the farms to select cattle for the sales, looking for quality stock," she maintains.

This was the area that husband Lloyd used to specialize in, and it has taken a while to bring back that end of the business. "Cattle sales are almost back to where they were when Lloyd was out beating the path to line up business."

The business is run out of the sale barn the Wilsons built in 1979. "Before we had the barn, we would conduct the sales on the property of the farmers, or on the sites of the estates," Ollie says. "But we found that farmers in particular wanted the sales done somewhere else, not on their property. It has worked out much better this way."

Cattle sales are held at the rate of one a month, on average. Furniture and estate sales are more regular, usually running twice a week, and often consisting of goods from several consignees.

"The big sales are advertised about a month and a half ahead," Ollie states. "It takes a lot of organization. Furniture must be picked up and transported."

She makes a point of being there on sale days, and says she's on the site, at

least for a while, most other days. And while most sales are somewhat routine, there are noteworthy exceptions.

The estate sale of the antique collection of Markham's John Kerr last fall brought buyers from all over Ontario, and saw prices as high as \$8,000 paid for a Quebec armoire.

"In the fall of 1979, we had a cow go for \$60,000," says Ollie. "We often see prize animals go for ten, fifteen or even twenty-five thousand dollars."

A recent purchase saw a calf bought for a man in Calgary, with the calf being flown directly to the western city in preparation for the Cattle Show held there this month.

Cattle auctioned from the barn have also gone to New York, Pennsylvania and Utah, among other places. The biggest cattle sale ever held there, claims Ollie, saw 200 head go on the auction block.

As for the furniture and estate sales, she maintains there is always someone who wants to sell some property. "We have people calling almost every day, with 5 or 10 items they want to have sold."

Ollie claims she's still learning the business, even after almost 30 years. "I'm still learning. I guess you are always learning."

Despite her commitment to business and family, Ollie finds time to attend the Uxbridge Baptist Church, where she plays piano for the choir.