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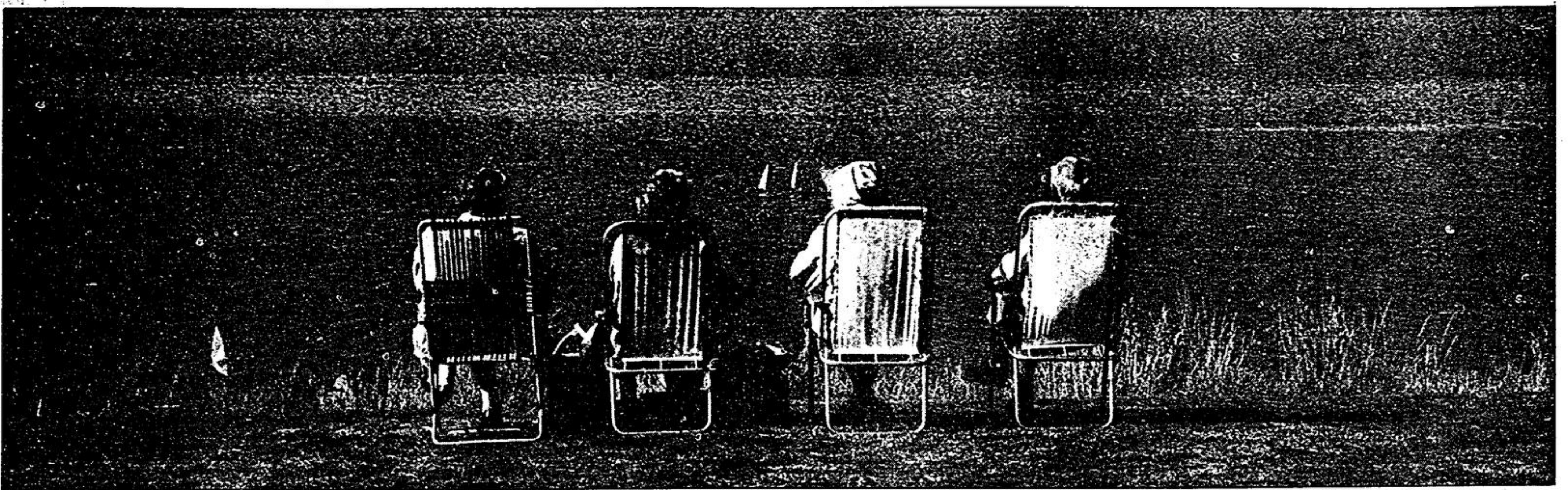
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Third Section

Wednesday, June 28, 1989



# POSTCARDS FROM CANADA

Photography more than a job for Stouffville's David Street

SNAP! SNAP! By KATE GILDERDALE

IMAGINE MEETING KAREN KAIN, Wayne Gretzky, Gordon Lightfoot and Peter Ustinov and getting paid for it. Imagine having a job you love so much, you can't switch off, even on holiday.

That's the pleasant fate of freelance photographer David Street, who moved to Stouffville from Toronto a year ago last May with his wife Maggie and sons Thomas and Alexander. David's passion for photography was originally sparked by a part-time job he landed when he left high school in his native England.

"I started working for a small news service in Tunbridge Wells, Kent, called the West Kent News Service," he recalls. As well as offering portraits, advertising work and wedding photography, the company also supplied photographs to many of Britain's national daily newspapers.

"I was 17. I had absolutely no experience of photography, but I got the job on Wednesday, started on Thursday and on Friday I had to take a photograph that appeared in five national newspapers on Saturday," he says with a grin, adding that the company had no option but to use him.

"The guy who hired me was ill and a story had to be photographed; I was the only person available." From that moment on "I was totally hooked," he says, "as soon as I started, I realized that this was what I really wanted to do. It was a wonderful form of communication." It was also a radical departure from his planned career in farming.

Six months after joining the news service, he moved on to a small advertising agency in the same area, where he stayed for about a year. When the agency closed down, "I was left out in the cold at the age of 19, and decided it was time for a move. There were full-page ads on the back of the *Sunday Times* that said 'Try Canada'."

He took their advice, applied at Canada House in London and four months later he arrived in Toronto. "At 5:25 on the evening of November 10, 1966, I stepped from a 707 on to good old Canadian tarmac. I came here without a job and with \$125 in my pocket and I didn't know a soul."

Undaunted by such trifles, he landed a job within a week. "I started working at Toronto Camera in their delivery room." He went on to work for the fledgling *Toronto Life* magazine; "I was about the youngest staff photographer on any publication." Later he was to do a retrospective for their 20th anniversary issue.

His job at *Toronto Life* lasted almost a year, "then I went freelance. I've never had a proper job since," he observes cheerfully. His work has appeared in a host of publications, including *Canadian Magazine*, *Star Weekly*, *The Globe and Mail* and *Weekend Magazine*.

By 1974, "I decided I'd had it," he recalls. "My parents were pulling me back to England, I wasn't really doing anything here. I'd had my fun and worked hard; it was time to make a move, so I decided to go back."

"Before I went, I wanted to see Canada," explains David. He went across the country in a mini van, working on a series of stories and photographs focusing on horses and came back with material for a book, which was later published as *Horses: A Working Tradition*.

"That was my first book, published in 1976. At that time, I was introduced to Toller Cranston. A publicity company was doing a book on him and commissioned me to do the photography for it." By then, thoughts of returning to England had been abandoned.

"After these two books came out, I decided I wanted to do another personality book and I did one on female impersonator Craig Russell." That was followed by a book about the Cabot Trail in Cape Breton, for which he did both the photography and the text and from there he started on what is probably his best-known work; *Karen Kain, Lady of Dance*.

A person who enjoys other people, he regards the challenge of getting his subjects to relax in front of the camera and be themselves as one of the pleasures of his job. "I start off by making sure people are on my side."

Last year, on a holiday in England, he took a modest total of five rolls of film with him. "Then I started to go out for walks in the country in the morning. By the end of the trip I'd taken 55," he says with a rueful grin.

Freelance photographer David Street (right) has built his reputation on portraits, books and feature photos like these. A beach in Kent (above), actor Peter Ustinov (below right) and a rodeo bucking bronco (below) illustrate his versatility.



Photo/TOM FEILER

