

# Drysdale farm has become multi-generational industry

(From page 1)  
business.

Doug Sr. pointed out that fifty years ago, Reg Drysdale launched more than an industry. His dad started a lifestyle.

Like Christmas, it's a lifestyle that hinges on family. Doug Sr. and his wife Joan would be thrilled if, someday, grandchildren Douglas, John, Serena, Andrew, Jack, Kathleen and the soon-to-be born babe join the business.

As the family grows so does the business. Today,

Drysdale Christmas trees are sold across North America and the Caribbean. A load of Ballantrae-grown trees has just arrived in Hong Kong. In Japan, a Christmas tree sells for \$200. "It took a month to get them there," said Doug Sr.

It all started in 1927 when Reg Drysdale decided to do what no other had done. He'd tame a Christmas tree. Up until then, Christmas trees grew wild.

Reg Drysdale was the last person you'd expect to take a special interest in Christ-

mas. "My father was orphaned at 19. He had no brothers or sisters," said Doug Sr.

Just before his 20th birthday and with the help of a small inheritance, Reg Drysdale bought a small farm in Simcoe county.

In 1945, the Simcoe property sold and 50 acres was purchased in West Gwillimbury. Meanwhile, the experiments complete with the trial and error and of course, the fascination with the evergreen, continued.

In 1951, Reg Drysdale

made a major decision. He'd start the first commercial Christmas tree operation. But first, he had to find land suitable to the Christmas tree, a 117-acre farm west of Ballantrae fit the bill.

"We got our footing in Ballantrae," said Doug Sr. "It started here. My father was the first person to prune a Christmas tree. He also invented the tree baler."

The business has provided some long-term employment. As an example, since the beginning, Mel Emmerson of Rennie Transport has been trucking the trees for the Drysdals.

Others saw that Reg Drysdale was making a go of it. Soon Christmas tree farms sprang up all over southern Ontario.

Few would disagree: Reg Drysdale was the granddaddy of the Christmas tree.

In the mid-'50s when Doug Dry-

sdale was away at school studying conservation, his father founded the CIGAO. Reg held the position of secretary until 1986. Today, the association is led by Douglas Drysdale.

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The Drysdale farm, located on Durham Road 30 north of the Aurora Sideroad, offers trees of all sizes.

The "choose and cut" operation, is a going concern. It's open to the public from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekends in December.

This year, the Goodwood Lions will be on site, selling refreshments to raise funds for their charitable work, Doug Sr. added.

Over the past 50 years, thousands of families have visited Drysdale's farm. For the children, picking that "very special tree" is a thing to remember for always. "It makes me feel good to know that we give others treasured Christmas memories," said Doug Sr.

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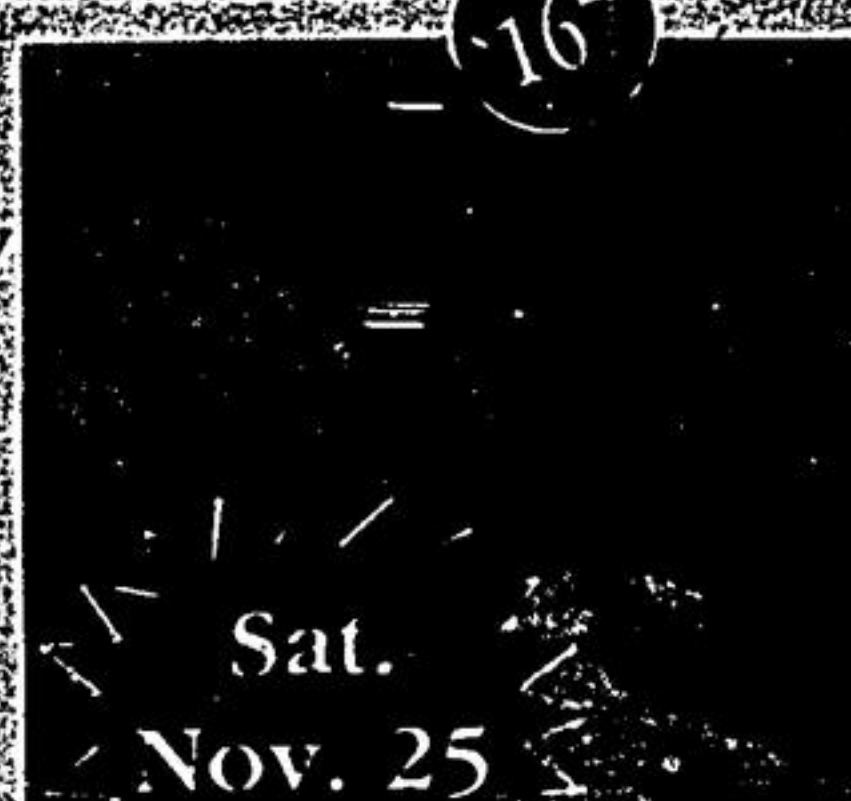
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Sun.  
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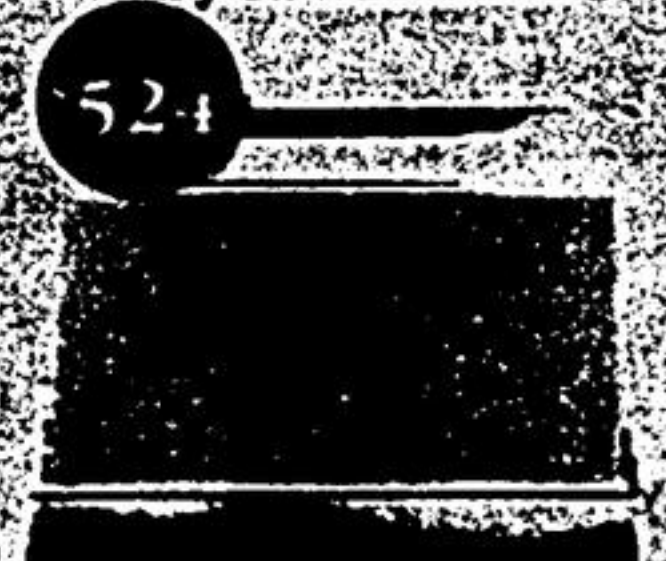
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