

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

# The bicycle chief: spokes on screen

*Wheels are in motion for local collectors antique bicycles to get big screen time*

NOREEN O'LEARY  
CORRESPONDENT

In just a matter of months, Bob Marshall has gone from an antique bicycle collector to a Hollywood prop provider.

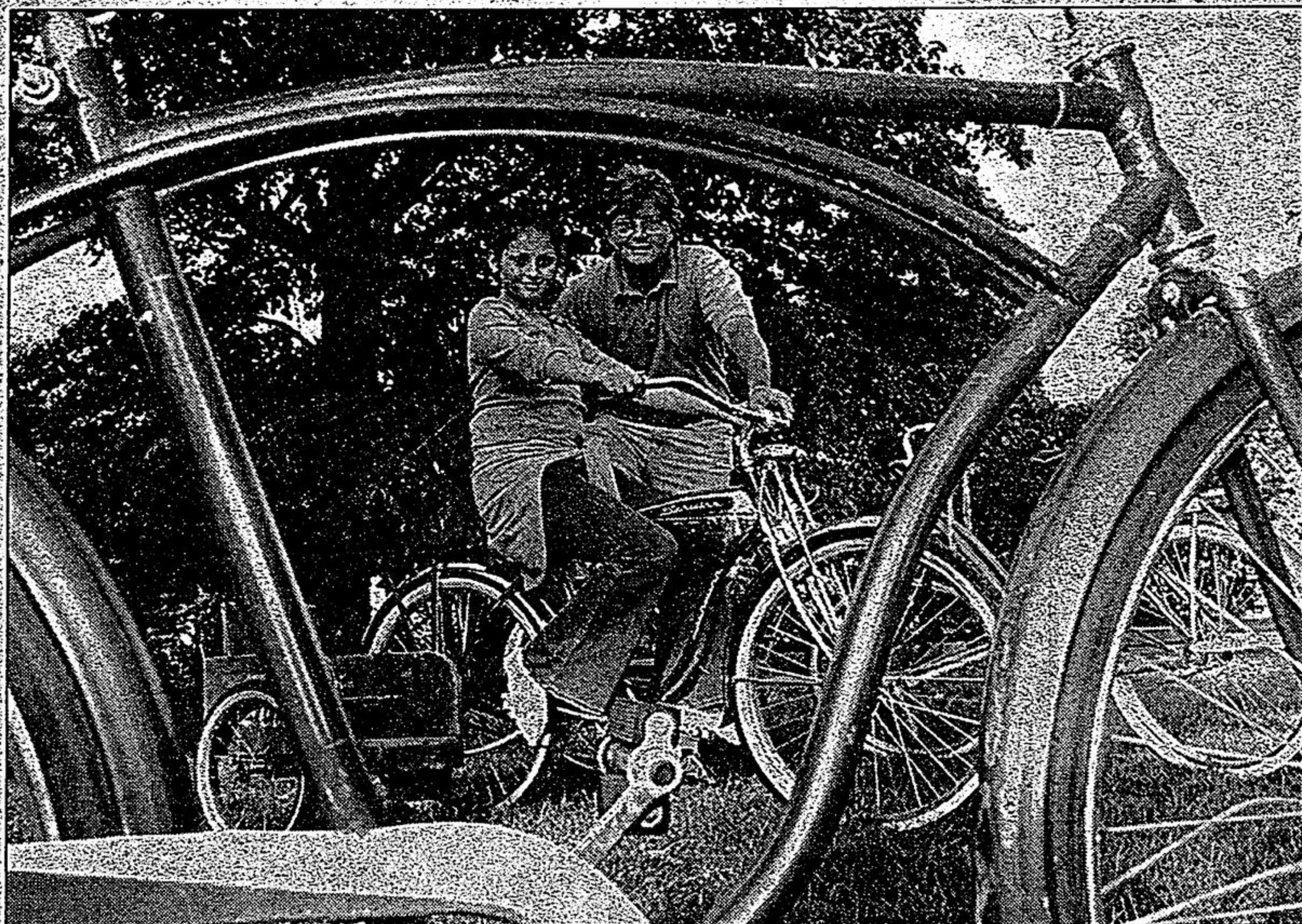
Marshall, who owns about 130 antique bicycles dating from 1895 to 1970s, keeps his collection stored in the garage, shed and basement of his home. Samples from his collection can be seen in the new movie *Simon Birch*, set in the 1950s, and loosely based on the John Irving novel *A Prayer for Owen Meany*.

The Markham resident was approached by the film's production crew after being referred by Silent Sports, a Toronto bicycle shop.

The crew borrowed Marshall's bikes for three months while they filmed around Toronto, Northern Ontario, and Nova Scotia. Six of his 1950s bikes are used throughout the film — one quite prominently.

Although Marshall has been an avid bike collector for three years, he's not exactly sure what sparked his interest.

"I just bought a bike one day, took it apart, restored it, and got the bug from there," he said.



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Elisa Marshall, 12, rides a 1952 Schwinn Cruiser Classic which her father Bob rented to be used in the movie *Simon Birch*. In the foreground is the frame of a 1959 Road King bicycle. Visible at right is a 1956 J.C. Higgins. Bob Marshall of Markham has about 130 antique bicycles in his collection.

Marshall keeps his collection updated by buying bikes, parts, and accessories from flea markets and off the Internet.

Although most of his bikes are purchased from across North America, he does have some from

as far away as Holland.

"If you can find the original, that's the best way to keep them, rather than mucking around with them," he said.

Although his collection is strictly a hobby, Marshall does sell and

rent bicycles to interested people. Some stores even use his bikes as part of window displays, or as decoration pieces.

His most valuable bicycle is his 1950s Balloon Tire bike, which could be worth as much as \$1500.

"This is because baby boomers are looking for the kind of bike they once rode," Marshall said. "It's that retro desire that everybody has."

Marshall said that every year of bicycles has its own interesting features, whether it be wooden wheels or balloon tires.

His favourite bike is his 1937 CCM Flyte, made entirely of original parts, which he keeps on display inside his house. According to Marshall, it is the most valuable CCM bicycle ever built.

Marshall's wife, Janice, and his two daughters ride many of the bikes that have accumulated around their home.

"Bob researches every bike he owns," said Janice. "He'll explain everything from seats to accessories to us."

The Marshall family rides with members of the Antique Bicycle Collectors Club, an organization with about 20 members from across Ontario and Quebec. "There are very few bike collectors," Marshall said. "Unfortunately, we're a fragmented group."

Janice said her husband's collection tends to keep him very busy. "He's the perfect husband, he stays in the garage," she joked. "He spends hours restoring, polishing and accessorizing bikes."

Marshall has recently started registering with production companies, and anticipates his bikes will appear in more films. However, he said he will most likely lend his bikes rather than sell them as props, as many of the bicycles have become too special to part with.

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## Musical benefit to aid Rwandan children

BY MIKE ADLER  
STAFF WRITER

Beautiful music in a Markham church this weekend can bring some beautiful results for orphaned children in Rwanda.

Feelings of reconciliation and hope are found today in Rwanda, devastated by an all-out ethnic genocide and civil war just a few years ago, said Shyma Gilbert, a local teacher who visited the Central African country last month.

Gilbert's Canadian charity, Hope for Rwanda's Children Fund, is having the Friday night concert at St. Patrick's Catholic Church on Hwy. 7, to raise money that will ensure schooling for orphans of the genocide.

"I think there is far more reason for hope than for despair in

Rwanda," Gilbert said this week. "There is a tremendous amount of growth happening."

Her group, which started as a response to the massacres in 1994, sponsors education for 100 young Rwandans, paying for fees, books and other expenses.

The 7:30 p.m. Markham concert — free, with a donation suggested — will be of classical and sacred music by Handel, Bach, Mozart, Chopin and others, sung by Monica Ling Lin, a soprano soloist from Welland. Members of the Rwandan community are also expected to attend, said Gilbert, who first went to Rwanda in 1988 to develop teaching materials.

More information on the concert or a larger benefit event in Toronto Sept. 26 is available at 416-690-9375.

## MLT stages *Love Letters*

Have you ever read a letter from the past and wondered what might have been?

In Markham Little Theatre's first offering of the 1998-'99 season, *Love Letters* by A.R. Gurney, Andrew Makepeace Ladd III and Melissa Gardner share a past as traced through their lifelong correspondence.

They meet in second grade, and are bound together through their letters and through the emotions they do not understand.

*Love Letters* will run from Sept. 23 to 26 at Markham Theatre. Call 305-7469 for ticket information.

MLT's second play is *Nunsense II: The Second Coming*, to be at Markham Theatre Nov. 11 to 14.