

Fair organizers start 10-year plan

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“The potential for our future is huge. The delta between our current attendance and the bulging population of York Region is our opportunity for the taking.”

With these words, Lesley English, president of Markham Fair challenged her audience to adjust to change when she addressed a year-end banquet Saturday night.

“The prospect of our fair’s future is limited only by our own imagination and vision,” she continued. “If we can remove barriers and open minds, our future is limitless. We have a chance to grasp the opportunities that are sitting on our doorstep – if we want them.”

Then quoting from a testimonial by Charles Darwin she said: “It is not the strongest of the species that survive or the most intelligent but the one most adaptable to change.”

Her introduction was greeted by a standing ovation. On several occasions, her address was interrupted by applause.

After citing various trials and tasks facing the board and staff, the president told how directors were currently working through initial stages of a 10-year strategic site development plan that, when completed, will serve both current and future fair and community needs.

“The journey will not always be clear or painless,” she predicted, “but it will nonetheless be worthy.”

The ultimate quest? “An amazing fair with a future for all to enjoy and make it sustainable for another 169 years.”

Describing population growth in York Region, (more than 1 million) and Markham, (more than 300,000) as ‘explosive’, she said in many ways, the fair is at a crossroads between community growth and being true to its history of celebrating agriculture and its rural roots.

“I love this ‘patch of dirt,’” she said, “and I love all of you for loving it with me.”

In conclusion, after issuing thanks to her supporters, including her parents and family, Leslie



Roaming Around

with Jim Thomas

reserved her final words of appreciation to the 800 volunteers, most of whom were seated in the audience.

“Without your immense commitment, Markham Fair would not be the pride of this community and the envy of others. I’m awed by your selfless dedication and loyalty. Without you, the fair in all its magnificent glory would not be possible. You, the volunteers, are the key to

this amazing institution’s success. My thanks for making this involvement one of the most outstanding experiences of my life.”

Twenty-three past-presidents were in attendance, including Rogers Gardham, (1977) and Phil Redshaw, (2012). The first vice-president is Kelly Winnitoy. The second vice-president is Bryant Hulshof. Mr. Redshaw received his past-president’s pin from Ms. English. Homecraft president Cathy Edwards presented a past-president’s pin to her predecessor Elaine Rennie.

Kaitlin Francis of Cedar Grove, this year’s Fair ambassador, addressed the audience via video. She could not attend due to a previous engagement – showing her 4-H club Jersey calf at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair.

Eighty volunteers received long service awards: 55 years – Barry Little. Forty-five years – Bryan Armstrong. Forty years – Frank Hendy and Barbara Hoover. Thirty-five years – Carol DeGeer, Bryan Lee, Mary Mann, Pat Marshall, Don Mill-

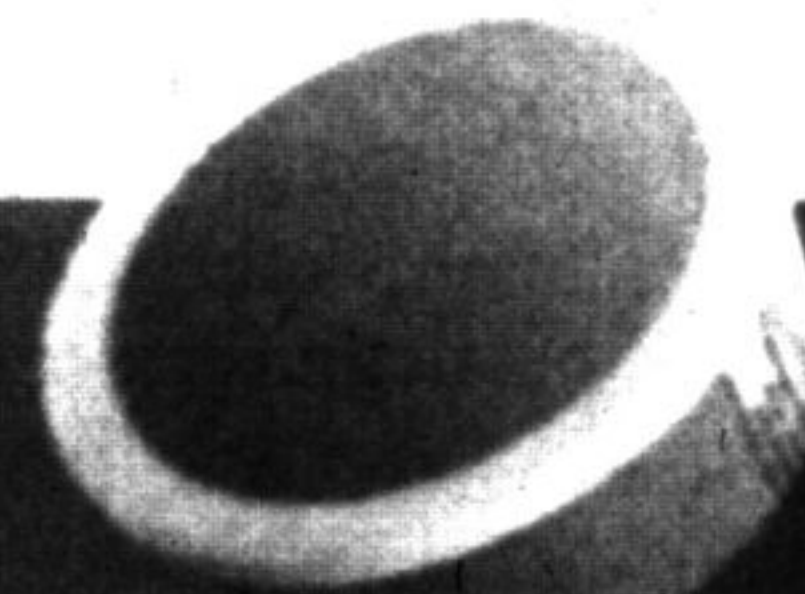
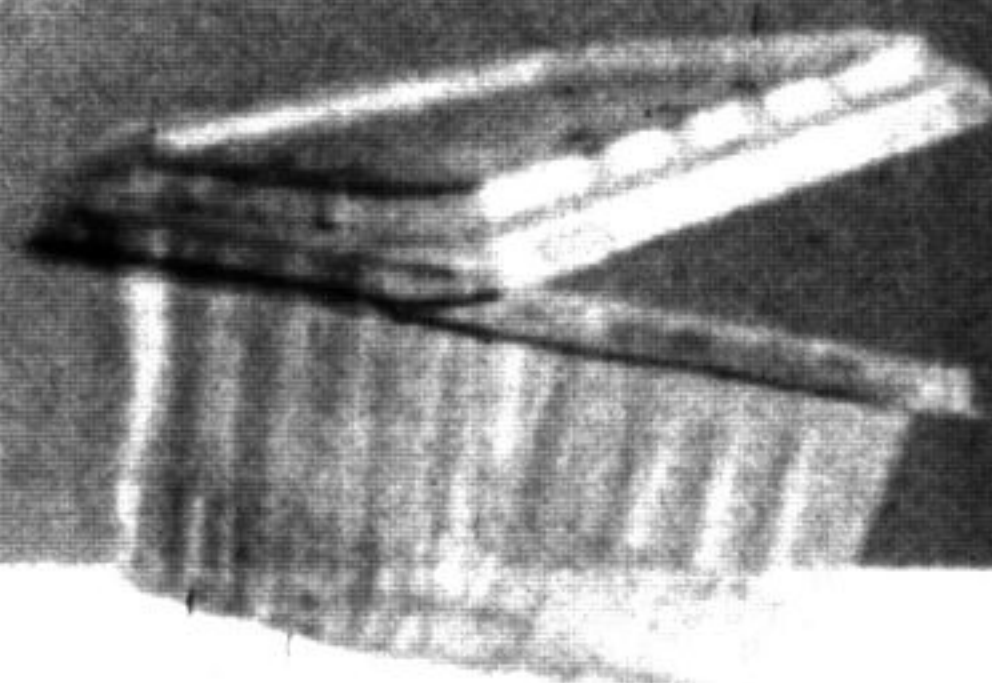
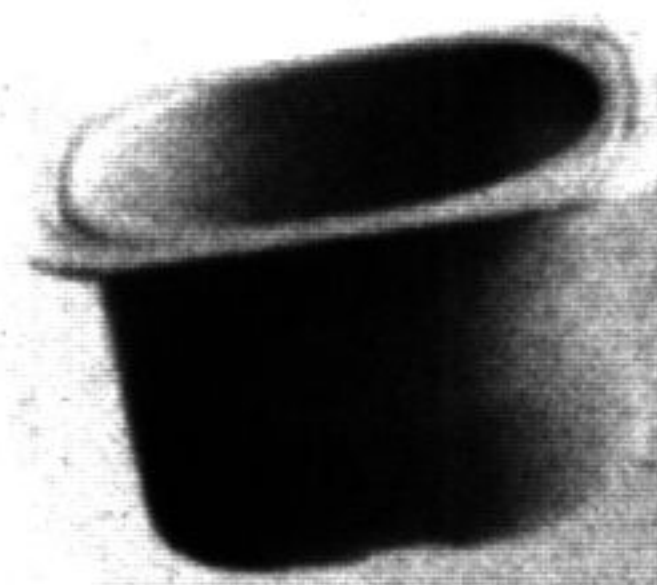
er, Steve Mowder and Pat Wheeler. Thirty years – Judy Bell, Jeff Brown, Joanne Cabrelli, Alexis Hope, John Wade, Dick Dare, Clarence DeGeer, Gilda Hurley, Blair Seeley, Doreen Mount, Tracy Pearce, Judy Resch, Carol Ann Cosburn, Blair White, Ethel Wilson, Brian Crozier and Rob Miller.

Don Miller, fair president in 1991, presented the 55-year award to Barry Little, fair president in 1983.

Don described how Mr. Little was initially an exhibitor of rabbits, then Jersey calves and later Jersey cows. His Jersey dairy herd was recognized as one of the finest in North America, Don said. His family were actively involved in 4-H calf clubs with daughter Kim (Empringham) later serving as fair president in 2003. “His grandchildren are involved now,” Don continued.

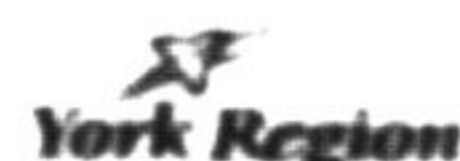
“It’s people like Barry who’ve kept Markham Fair going for 169 years,” Don concluded, “and through his encouragement of our youth, will keep it going for another 169.”

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