

McWhinnie's World



It Was 20 Years Ago Today...

By Jill McWhinnie

The Country Pastimes Craft Show, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary, began when Lynn Westaway, Diane Ward, Sondra Thompson and some friends decided to take a different approach to selling their work.

"A bunch of us were making crafts but it was difficult to sell our stuff because of the mark-up in retail stores, the entry fee and other expenses involved," said Lynn. "The idea behind our show was that there would be no entry fee."

Sondra Thompson, a former Lemonville resident, hosted the sale for the first five years. "Since there were about 25 of us, the show took up the whole house," recalled Lynn. "Some people have come to the show every year for 20 years. An added attraction is the lunch on Saturday in the Lemonville United Church put on by the Lemonville United Church Women."

Over the years trends in craft have changed, she said. "Twenty years ago large, one-of-a-kind items were popular. Nowadays customers tend to look for smaller items."

Each year the group comes up with new and unique items. "We have a pot luck dinner in the fall where we preview each member's stuff so we can avoid duplication," said Lynn. The dinner also gives the group a chance to socialize. "Fifty percent of what we do is social," said Lynn. "We're there to have fun."

The fun begins with the preparation of the Lemonville Community Centre where everyone helps to set up tables and display the crafts. Since the work is shared, not everyone has to stay for the whole time.

Sheila Shillum oversees the bookkeeping and cataloguing of the hundreds of items that are sold over the course of the weekend. After the expenses of the show are deducted the crafters receive proceeds from their sales.

For long-time member Bernice Felton, whose carrot marmalade is a staple at the show, crafting is a year round past time. "I see something I'd like to do and start making it."

At this year's sale, said Sheila Shillum, "We'll have some lovely all occasion gift cards based on original photographs, some glass jewellery items, peanut and chocolate brittle, hand-made fabric bags, specialty candles, and beautifully packaged baking, candy and preserves."

Some crafters support charities with the proceeds from their sales. "We have a group of ladies from Lindsay, Victoria's Quilts, who sell button dolls and a little book on quilting hints," Shelia noted. "They use the proceeds of sales to buy supplies to make quilts which they donate to cancer patients."

"One of our members will be singing during the show, accompanied by another member on the piano. And we believe Santa will be making a surprise visit to the show on Saturday afternoon!"

The show takes place the weekend of Nov. 27 at the Lemonville Community Centre. Hours are 1 to 8 p.m. Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday.

Rear-view Mirror



Acknowledging our Veterans

By Maurice Smith

Most recent world conflicts involving the Canadian armed forces have been fought using professional soldiers.

Today the majority of men and women in the military enrolled for the task and form their careers around the armed forces. They generally live with their families on or near a forces base. They struggle through the training period and to the end of their active duty before attempting to integrate back into what some of us call "normal society."

For Canadians who fought in the First and Second World Wars, this was not necessarily the case. During WW1 there were approximately 600,000 Canadian men who simply took leave from their family business or profession and volunteered to fight the enemies of freedom.

Many of these volunteers were 17, 18 or 19-year-old boys, from the towns, villages and farming communities around Ontario. Regional records show the community of Whitchurch-Stouffville contributed its fair share to the cause.

When they returned from the battlefields, most had matured and were now grown men. Instead of wanting to move back to the family farm, mill, store or service garage, they were looking to be out on their own, to marry and start a new life.

Having spent years in the service of their country, they had not been able to accumulate savings that would allow this to happen. To ease their transition, the Canadian government, through pressure from various sources, passed an Act of Parliament which offered them financial assistance for their re-entry into society.

The Act for WW1 veterans was called the Soldier Settlement Act. At the end of WWII a similar Act was passed, which was known as the Veterans' Land Act (1942).

The core component was the provision of financial assistance to any man who had served abroad with the Canadian Expeditionary Force. There was also similar provision for other servicemen; for example those who had immigrated to Canada from England but returned home to serve under the flag of that country.

Returning veterans, with financial assistance provided under the Act, were encouraged to purchase designated farm properties which were being held in the name of the Crown. Funds for livestock and equipment were also made available.

Approximately 60,000 applications were received and more than 43,000 were deemed suitable. By far the greatest number came from our western provinces, but some were servicemen returning to Ontario and the Whitchurch-Stouffville area.

A gentleman named Wilmot Vague returned to this area after serving overseas and, with the assistance of the Act, purchased a property in the vicinity of Stouffville Rd. and Highway 48. After living there for some time, Mr. Vague turned his home and property over to his brother Ross, who soon had it flourishing as a market garden.

When Ross died in 1962, he passed the property to his son, as did many farmers of the era. Like his father before him, the son worked and earned a living off the property until his passing in 1991. Today his widow still lives in the family home.

We sometimes question the need for assistance programs operated with our tax dollars. As this Remembrance Day approaches, however, I will reflect on this family and how successfully a long-forgotten assistance program aided them in their struggle.

Thanks to the members of that government which provided assistance to those young men, professional or otherwise, who returned to our country from the war-torn battlefields of the world.



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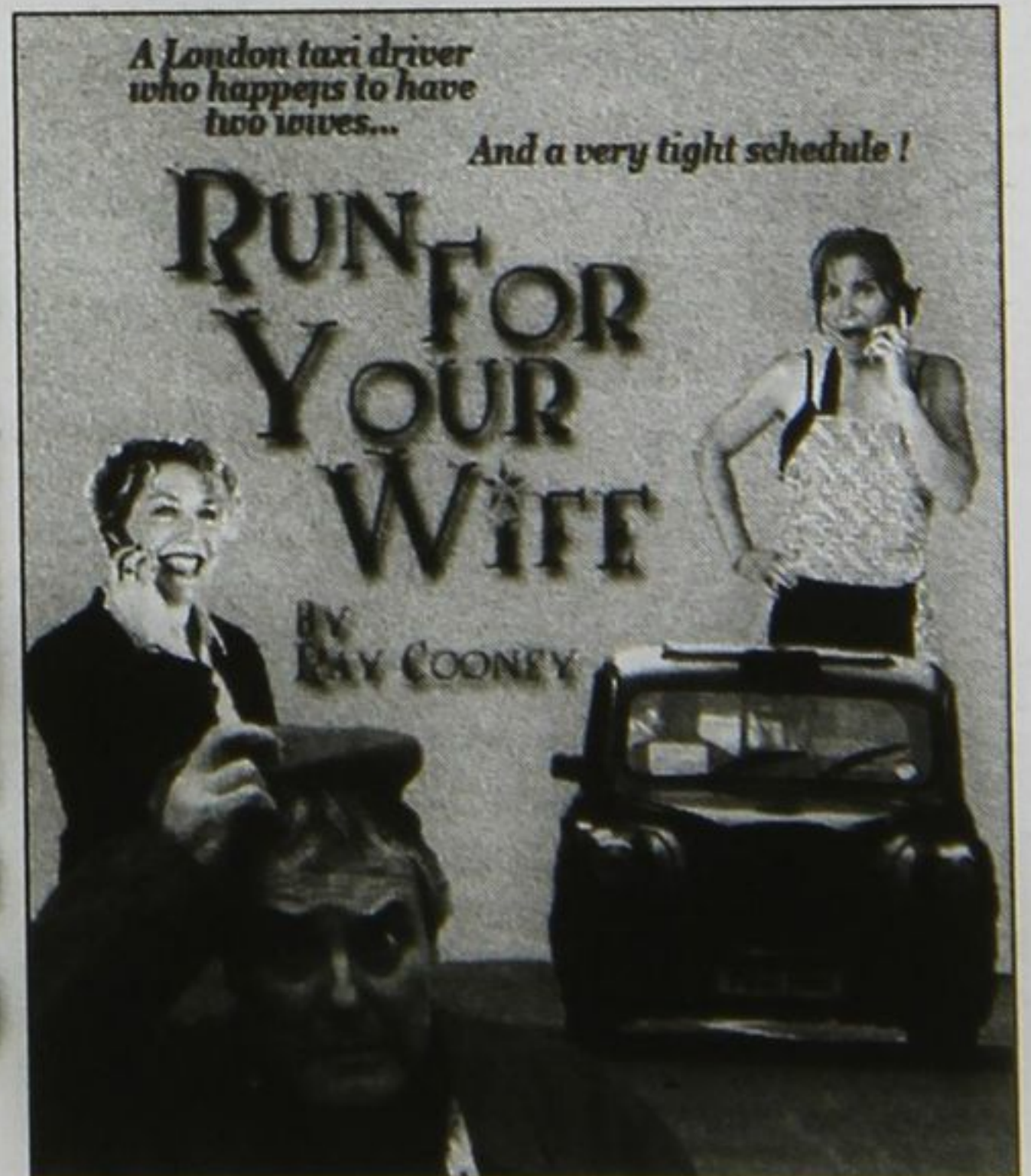
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