

# A Community Remembers ...

## Helping others a way of life for Don Acton

"Only when you drink from the river of silence, shall you indeed sing. And when you have reached the mountain top, you shall begin to climb."

These words were spoken by Wanda Stride, pastor of Lemonville United Church, during a service of celebration for Donald B. Acton on June 30 at the O'Neill Funeral Home. Mr. Acton went to be with his Lord June 26, at Sunnybrook Veterans Hospital, Toronto. He was 84.

Mr. Acton suffered from ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease, an illness causing nerve cells to degenerate and voluntary muscles to become immobile, while leaving the senses unimpaired. Mr. Acton met these challenges with humour, courage and dignity.

Born in Ottawa, Donald Acton served as a lieutenant in the Canadian Army from 1943 to the end of World War II. Helping others was a way of life. This form of outreach was welcomed at St. James United Church, Ottawa;

Birchmount United Church, Agincourt; Lemonville United Church, Whitchurch-Stouffville and Zion United Church, Canarvon.

Similarly, his work through Lions International including clubs in Minden, Ballantrae and Stouffville was acknowledged by several awards including the Helen Keller Fellowship and a Life Membership in the Lions Foundation of Canada. He was a charter member of the Ballantrae and District Lions Club. A Lions' service was held at the O'Neill parlour June 29.

Tom Winters, Stouffville club past-

president, described the deceased as "an individual continually looking for ways to make the organization stronger. He would take on any task," he said, "and often went looking for more." John Byrne of the Fenelon Falls and District Lions Club also spoke.

Mr. Acton designed and constructed a new sign for Camp Kirk, a children's summer playground. It will be erected on site in the next few weeks. In recognition of his work at both Camp Big Canoe and Camp Kirk, he was recently the recipient of a prestigious Camp Kirk award and made a Camp Kirk Fellow.

In addition to his church and service

club involvements, Mr. Acton was an avid builder, repairman, golfer and gardener. He constructed the family cottage at Boshkung Lake. In touching on his life journey, Wanda Stride described how his interests continually intertwined with the hopes and dreams of others.

"But more importantly," she said, "you will remember how you were touched by Don, and that will be his legacy; that will be our greatest comfort - that everyone is part of this intricately woven network."

Besides his wife, the former Marian Eleanor Thompson of Aurora and now of Stouffville, are two sons, David and Bill, Toronto; a daughter, Brenda Storr, Victoria, British Columbia; one sister, Evelyn MacDonald of Montreal and one brother, Robert of London. Mr. Acton was predeceased by a sister, Eileen Sweet. He also leaves six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.



## Skilled quilter raised thousands for Third World missions

She was a quilt-maker without equal.

For Melba Steckley, in later years, this was her life. She went to be with her Lord June 18. Had she lived another month, she would have been 102.

Melba's quilt-making skills came to the fore when

one of her creations sold for \$5,000 at an auction hosted by the Mennonite Central Committee at Black Creek Pioneer Village. Two others brought in \$4,000 and \$2,000 respectively. She donated all proceeds to Third World missions. In addition, Melba's quilts continually won red and blue ribbons at Markham Fair.

Born at Clarence Centre, New York, the former Melba Martin grew up on the family farm near Buffalo. In her teen years, she attended Messiah College in Pennsylvania. It was here she met and developed a close friendship with the late Mabel (Cober) Steckley of Gormley.

When Mabel Cober and Levi Steckley were married, Melba served as Mabel's maid-of-honour. Later, when Mabel died in a tragic car crash, Melba and Levi were wed. The year was 1962.

Through this union, Melba inherited six children, Bruce, Alma, Margaret, Reatha, Carole and Mary. She loved them as if they were her own and they, in turn,

showed their stepmom the same endearing affection.

Melba and Levi also lived at Gormley. Mr. Steckley predeceased Melba in 1973.

It was during Melba's early working years she gained the respect of well-to-do residents, serving as a house-keeper and nanny in several upscale homes.

One such employer honoured her dedication by taking her, with his family, to Nassau every winter. He also presented her with a new Buick every year, so much did he appreciate her help.

Melba drove one of these cars across the United States to California. She retained her driver's license until age 93. Following her husband's passing, Melba moved to Parkview Apartments and later Parkview Home.

In July, 2004, Melba marked her 100th birthday with a gathering of friends and relatives at Heise Hill Brethren in Christ Church. Many extended family members attended including several from the United States and overseas.

At a service of celebration June 22, also at Heise Hill, Melba was described as "an elegant lady with a twinkle in her eye and a gentle sense of humour". Rev. Harvey Sider of Stouffville delivered the message. Personal tributes were paid by Lester Martin, Mary Green and Alma McTaggart.

Heise Hill pastor Paul Penelton offered the opening prayer and a reading from Scripture. Interment was made in the adjoining cemetery. Pall-bearers were Joe, John and Kate Steckley; Donald and John McFadden and Lester Martin





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