

Since 1977 **FARM** **VIEW**

A newspaper with something for everyone | February 2024 | Volume 47 #02

Inside this issue:

**The Story of
Doug
Drysdale;
Christmas
Tree Grower
and Forester**

**Getting Saucy
with
Shawn Bell**

**Loree Llamas
on the Run**

**Coverage
of the
Ontario
Agricultural
Conference**

**Grey Ag
Services
Winter
Webinars
Announced**



**Shawn Bell poses in
amongst a crop of hot
pepper plants grown in
Wasaga Beach, ON**

**Complimentary copy for
the FARM household**

AGcalendar

Farm View's Ag Calendar is free to non-profit agricultural groups, up to a maximum of 40 words. All others are invoiced at \$25 per month. Please note the format of the listings below and submit your item by mail or email, in a similar fashion. Submission deadline is the 14th of the month for the following month's issue.

February 7th & 8th: The National Poultry Show

The National Poultry Show has grown to be one of North America's premier poultry trade shows, bringing together the best in the poultry industry with the latest in poultry technology, innovations, and education. It is being held at The Agriplex at Western Fair District, 845 Florence St. London ON. Visit www.nationalpoultryshow.com for more information.

February 8th: CFFO, Simcoe County District AGM

The Simcoe County District Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario is holding its Annual General Meeting on Thursday, February 8th at the Pinewood Chapel, 9058 5th Line, Angus. The meeting starts at 10:00 AM. The featured guest speaker is Ian Cubitt on the topic of "Farm Succession Planning." Refreshments and lunch are included for members. For more info, contact President Ted Van Den Hurk (705) 428-5537.

February 12th & 13th: Northern Ont. Ag Conference

This year's theme is "Cultivating Connections & Celebrating Sustainability," reflecting our commitment to forging vital links within the agricultural community and nurturing a sustainable future. This exciting event is being held at Science North, Sudbury ON. For more information visit www.nofia-agri.com/northern-ontario-ag-conference

February 14th: News and Advertising Deadline

The advertising and news deadline for the **March** issue of Farm View is **Wednesday, February 14th**.

February 15th: Agricultural Land Rental Tender Process Closes

MTM Conservation Association will grant a non-exclusive land use agreement to successful tenderer for each property subject to terms and conditions. Five-year term commencing April 1, 2024. For further information and to submit tenders, please contact: info@mtmconservation.org.

February 21st & 22nd: Ontario Fruit & Vegetable Convention 2024

The Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Convention (OFVC) is an annual 2-day gathering of horticultural crop producers involved in the production of fruits and vegetables. The convention is being held at the Niagara Falls Convention Centre, Niagara Falls, ON. Visit www.ofvc.ca for complete details.

February 21st: Southwestern Ontario Pork Conference

Mark your calendars and plan to attend the 60th annual Southwestern Ontario Pork Conference on Wednesday, February 21, 2024, at the University of Guelph, Ridgetown Campus. Registration opened December 1, 2023. Conference information and registration can be viewed at <http://www.ridgetown.com/swopc>. Registration includes all the day's activities plus a delicious pork dinner!

For more information and sponsorship opportunities call 1 866 222 9682 or email lelgie@uoguelph.ca

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Ontario Agricultural Conference

If you build it, will they come?

By Cathy Hamill-Hill

Pollinators and beneficial insects are important to the well known Howe Family Farms that is located near London, Ontario. One member of the Howe Family, Kevin, was a key speaker in the Ontario Agriculture Conference's session #12, "If you Build it, Will they Come?"

The Howe Family has been farming for 5 generations. The farm currently grows 80 acres of watermelons and 210 acres of pumpkins and 25 acres of strawberries as key crops. The land used for crops is in the "Tobacco Belt" meaning it's a sandy silt-loam soil structure.

Howe explained that the decision was made eight years ago to look into different ways of pest control. "We worked with Dr. Susan Chan during her PhD studies with the University of Guelph with her focus on squash bees," he explained adding that "we (Howe Family) were interested because for our watermelon crop, we relied very heavily on the honeybees. We typically use around 2 beehives per acre so it can cost us well over \$400 an acre just for pollination services."

Howe Family Farm's markets include major retailers, including Loblaw's and Costco, that expect guarantees of specific high quality. For watermelons, there cannot be significant "hollow spaces" within the fruit once it is broken open. A leading reason, according to Howe, of this hollow issue occurring with watermelons is inadequate pollination.

"We have to guarantee that fruit is properly filled and fully formed. The best way to do this is proper pollination," he said.

Dr. Susan Chan's squash bee studies showed that the squash bees prefer to pollinate watermelons, squash and pumpkins. Howe added, "Honeybees don't like pollinating watermelon flowers and will bypass them for other options."

The helpful squash bees were encouraged to set up home at Howe Family Farm's watermelon fields with the planting of floral strips within the watermelon fields. The flowers planted were chosen to be flowering the same time as the watermelon plants.

Another pollinator encouraged to live at this farm is the "leaf cutting bee." This type of bee is "local and doesn't roam as far from the nest as the honeybee," Howe explained.

At the Howe Family Farm, there are two farm markets and in front of the markets it was decided to plant large gardens of "flowers for pollinators." These flowers also worked to pull in a lot of new customers as they were eye catching.

The strawberry crop at Howe Family Farms include acres "that grow under tunnels in a tabletop system," Howe explained adding that "we have to guarantee quality, the strawberry has a short life as it is."

Insecticide sprays are not good options for pest control for many reasons including the fact that the sprays can damage the beneficial insects. One of the enemies of strawberry production is a pest called "Tarnished Plant Bug" which is a small beetle that pierces through the strawberry flower into the berry. This damage mismarks the berry and/or leaves the end woody plus it can reduce the size of the berry. To combat the Tarnished Plant Bug, the Howe Family Farm are working on a trial involving no sprays. They have planted "grass underneath all the tabletops (of strawberries) to keep the humidity more controlled, weed pressure down, and to attract the Tarnished Plant Bug. The hope is that the Bug will choose to live in the grass provided so it will naturally be removed as a pest from the strawberries.

Dr. Jason Gibbs is an Associate Professor for the University of Manitoba. He has extensive experience in apple production. He was a second speaker at this session.

Dr. Gibbs said studies have proven that perennial floral strips have seen increased crop yield and production. "Insects benefit agriculture," he said.

"Floral strips adjacent to Manitoba crop fields attracted beneficial insects shortly after its establishment," Dr. Gibbs said adding, "floral strips increase ground nest density of insects."

"Plant more floral strips and the beneficial insects will come," he advised.

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OPINION

Advocating for Clear Communication in Ontario Agriculture

By Mackenna Roth, Marketing and Communications Coordinator for the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario

As a farmer deeply rooted in the fertile soils of Southwestern Ontario, I have witnessed firsthand the challenges that miscommunication poses to our industry. The intricate dance between the land, the weather, and our efforts requires a delicate balance, and when the lines of communication falter, the consequences are felt far beyond the fields. It's time for us, as Christian farmers, to stand up for Ontario agriculture and earnestly communicate the tireless work we put into nurturing the land that sustains us all.

Miscommunication in agriculture can take many forms, from misconceptions about farming practices to the misinterpretation of the challenges we face. The disconnect between urban consumers and rural producers has widened over the years, leading to a growing divide in understanding. It's essential that we bridge this gap, offering transparency and insight into the daily struggles and triumphs of farming life.

One of the pressing issues we face is the lack of awareness surrounding modern farming practices. As technology evolves and agriculture becomes more advanced, it is crucial to communicate the reasons behind these changes. As farmers, we must educate the public, dispelling myths and fostering a greater

appreciation for the innovations that enable us to produce more efficiently and sustainably.

Furthermore, miscommunication often results in a skewed perception of the challenges we confront. The unpredictable nature of weather, volatile market prices, and the constant threat of pests and diseases create a volatile environment for farmers. When these difficulties are not communicated effectively, the public may fail to grasp the resilience and determination required to overcome them. By sharing our stories of perseverance, we can instill a greater understanding of the dedication and hard work that characterize Ontario agriculture.

Advocating for Ontario agriculture also entails acknowledging the positive impact farmers have on the environment. Sustainable farming practices, conservation efforts, and the responsible use of resources are integral components of our commitment to stewardship. It is our responsibility to communicate these efforts, showcasing the ways in which we prioritize the health of the land for future generations. By doing so, we can cultivate a sense of shared responsibility for the environment and foster a deeper connection between consumers and the agricultural

community.

In an era dominated by social media and instant information, we have a powerful tool at our disposal to communicate our message. As Christian farmers, we need to leverage these platforms to share our experiences, provide insights into our daily lives, and showcase the passion that drives us to feed our communities. By humanizing the face of agriculture, we can break down stereotypes and build meaningful connections with consumers who are increasingly disconnected from the source of their food.

In conclusion, the challenge of miscommunication in Ontario agriculture is a hurdle we must overcome collectively. By standing up for our industry and actively engaging in transparent communication, we can foster a greater understanding of the complexities and realities of farming. It is time to bridge the gap, dispel misconceptions, and showcase the unwavering commitment of Ontario farmers to providing sustenance for all. Only through open dialogue and shared appreciation can we ensure the resilience and prosperity of our agricultural communities for generations to come.

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The Farm View is delivered to these business between the 25th and 29th of each month and copies are available while supplies last. If you would like the Farm View mailed directly to your home, one year subscriptions can be purchased for \$49.00. Contact Roslyn at 705-722-0138, by mail 8 Luella Blvd Minesing, ON L9X 0W7 or email farmview@on.aibn.com.

Ag Snapshot

Doug Drysdale, pictured at right, shares his life story with Glen Ritchie from his home in Midland, ON. Read about Doug's career from being a Simcoe County Forester to a Christmas Tree Grower and passing a successful business along to his family on pages 12 & 13.



On the Cover



Shawn Bell, creator of Doc Bells Hot Sauce Co., is pictured in his greenhouse. Read his story on page 11.—Photo by Amanda Sochan of Amanda Sochan Photography

Editor's note: Last month's cover photo of Feeding the Human Spirit award winner, John Drummond, was taken by Don Beaulieu.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Farm View invites letters to the editor. They should be fewer than 300 words and deal with a single topic affecting farmers. All letters must be signed, including your full name, address and daytime phone number. All letters are subject to editing for brevity. Please no phone calls.

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In memory of Jill Beischer

Farm View attempts to present a forum for varying points of view from the agricultural community. Editorial opinions are freely expressed by individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the executives or directors of the federations unless specifically noted.

"Burn down your cities and leave our farms, and your cities will spring up again as if by magic, but destroy our farms and the grass will grow in the streets."

W.J. Bryan

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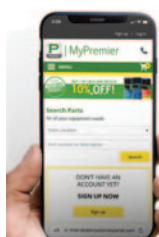
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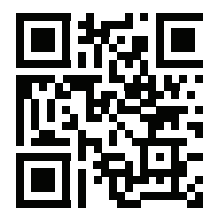


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Seven ways to reduce Mental Health stigma



By Leah Emms
OFA Member Services Rep.
1-866-660-5511
Leah.Emms@ofa.on.ca

As I draft this article today, not only is it the coldest day we have experienced this winter, but it is also “Blue Monday.” Did you know that the term “Blue Monday” was a marketing effort in the UK to get people to travel? It is typically the third Monday in January. Winter can be depressing for many people. The let down from the holiday season, realizing that you spent too much on gifts, overindulged on food and drinks, dull and gloomy days with no sunshine, and farm related issues that maybe

didn’t go as planned in 2023. If you are feeling down, sad, or unusually grumpy there are trained professionals ready and willing to listen and provide support for your mental wellness journey. Agriculture Wellness Ontario offers mental health education as well as counselling services. Phone lines are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. 1-866-867-6255. Their website has information on services and educational sessions available at no cost to the farmers and their household members www.agriculturewellnessontario.ca

- Let’s end the stigma and get the support people need. Here’s seven ways to reduce the stigma according to the Centre for Addiction & Mental Health (CAMH).
1. Know the facts. Educate yourself about mental illness including substance use disorders.
 2. Be aware of your attitudes and behaviour. Examine your own judgmental thinking, reinforced by upbringing and society.
 3. Choose your words carefully. The way we speak can affect the attitudes of others.

4. Educate others. Pass on facts and positive attitudes; challenge myths and stereotypes.
5. Focus on the positive. Mental illness, including addictions, are only part of anyone’s larger picture.
6. Support people. Treat everyone with dignity and respect; offer support and encouragement.
7. Include everyone. It’s against the law to deny jobs or services to anyone with these health issues.

The good news is that daylight time is increasing in a noticeable way now that we are into the end of January, early February. January 31st will have 9 hours & 51 minutes of daylight. The same amount of daylight we enjoyed on November 11th. Daylight saving time begins on March 10th.

Municipal transportation and Stormwater management plans continue to be developed without consideration or consultation with the agricultural community. We need your assistance flagging municipal issues that directly impact farming operations before decisions and by-laws are passed by councils. Your local Federations of Agriculture work hard to stay on top of emerging issues and submitting comments on behalf of the local agricultural sector. If you have knowledge of proposals that require input, please let your county federation directors, OFA Zone Director Paul Maurice or me know.

Coming soon are a couple of workshops/events that may be of interest to you.

- **OFA Financial Literacy & Farm Succession Planning Roadshow presented by Farm Life.** An OFA member benefit partner. **Feb 20th 9am-noon.** Royal Stouffville Golf Course. Hwy 48 Whitchurch-Stouffville. Registration can be completed via Eventbrite on the OFA website. <https://ofa.on.ca/ofa-financial-literacy-and-farm-succession-planning-road-show-2024/>
- **East Central Farm Show: March 6 & 7,** Lindsay Fairgrounds
- **Agknowledge Forum** hosted by Nottawasaga Futures: **March 22,** Alliston – Gibson Centre.

As we are approaching February 14th soon, I thought it would be fun to provide readers with a few quotes about hugs.

- “Hugs are the universal medicine.” – unknown
 - “I have learned that there is more power in a good strong hug than in a thousand meaningful words.” – Ann Hood
 - “The best gift you can give is a hug: one size fits all and no one ever minds if you return it.” – Marge Piercy
- Happy Valentine’s Day!



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Ontario Agricultural Conference

Swing beam barns of Ontario By Cathy Hamill-Hill

Ontario Agricultural Conference certainly had an original session with Session #15, “Swing Beam Barns of Ontario.” Presented by Hugh Fraser, a semi retired agricultural engineer from the Niagara area with a love for old barns.

Fraser grew up on a dairy farm and said he knows he’s been in over 1,000 barns and counting in his lifetime. His passion is “swing beam barns.”

Swing beam barns are barns built in North America between 1810-1860. Fraser has personally studied 150 of these types of barns and has authored a book titled “Swing Beam Barns of Niagara.” The Swing Beam barn was usually built by Mennonites or United Empire Loyalists that came to Canada from New Jersey, New York or Pennsylvania, USA. Some of these barns were also built by English immigrants in the 1830’s.

Swing beam barns were built only in North America because the main component of the barn, the “swing beam” had to be made out of a huge tree. Trees were just not big enough in Europe. There were huge trees in the early 1800’s in Canada. Swing beams were usually, according to Fraser, between 27 to 46 feet in length.

The swing beam has absolutely no “swing” to it. It was anchored down only at each end and the beam went the width of the whole and was usually about 7 feet off the floor. The name “swing beam” Fraser defines, based on his own barn observations, is because of the activity that could go on below that beam. The swing beam was high enough that it allowed for a wagon to be pulled in by a team of horses and the horses could “swing” out after being unhitched under that beam to leave the barn. Often, farmers would flail, meaning hit sheaves of wheat to separate the grain seed from the stalk with a piece of leather tied to a stick and the motion was “swinging” the flail. Thirdly, Fraser found out that horses would be used to either stomp with their feet or pull a rolling mechanism in a “swinging” motion under the beam as another way to separate the grain seed from the stalk in sheaves

of wheat. The purpose of the swing beam barn was to house the “gold.” The “gold” in early 1800’s was wheat. “Wheat was sold for cash when nearly everything else was bartered. Wheat was a cash crop,” Fraser explained adding that “the swing beam barns had granaries to store the grain and many were locked. Farmers did not lock their houses but they locked the granary as that held the “gold.” Wheat was also a critical crop because after the creation of wheat flour, having wheat meant the household would not go hungry.

There is no way now to build a swing beam barn, “Huge trees to construct swing beam barns are all gone,” Fraser said explaining that life in early 1800’s was completely different than today. “Skies were black with smoke with the cutting and burning trees all over Upper Canada. Trees were the enemy, the pioneers wanted them gone. Also, there was obligation to be kept to clear the trees to get land,” he said.

“Climbing a tall tree in the early 1800’s in the Niagara area, meant seeing many swing beam barns being constructed all at once,” he said. In 1810-1840, the population in Upper Canada tripled, going from 150,000 people in 1810 to 450,000 in 1840, according to the Census.

Swing beams were usually made out of three types of wood. The most common was softwood, mostly white pine. Hardwood were used also and mostly ash, oak, walnut and black cherry. The wood used was either on the farm or next door as there would be so much involved for having to transport such massive trees back in that time.

“Purchasing the farm next door was often done for the trees it had because trees were so important to the farmer then for building and for burning for heat,” Fraser explained.

The history that is found in the old swing beam barns is incredible, Fraser reported. He says that finding mathematic equations on the granary both in dollars and shillings has been found because in the 1950’s, they were both used in Upper Canada. He has also found many “symbols” in the

old barns including a “diamond crown” shape which he believe is partially religious and partially for fire protection. Having “good luck” symbols like rosettes in the barn is common because the absolute fear of the farmer in those days was “a barn fire because there was no insurance” and that barn contained “gold.”

Swing beam barns are still out there, Fraser says he is now working on a second book. He says this kind of barn has often got a “new” roof put on it, from the original gable roof to the gambrel roof which gave the farm more loft space for hay and straw and space for a track to move hay and straw. Further, these old barns are often surrounded by bigger outbuildings so are hard to see.

There is a big project that Fraser, as President of the Ontario Barn Preservation (OBP) is working on. This OBP project is “creating an online tool for barn owners to record their barns forever in the virtual world. We want to create a legacy for your old barn.”

Ontario Barn Preservation can be found at www.ontariobarnpreservation.com

The Ontario Barn Preservation is dedicated to preserving heritage barns. They are a not-for-profit organization. Heritage barns are not only beautiful pieces of architecture and craftsmanship, they contribute to the rural landscape and as they disappear Ontario’s landscape is permanently changed. Ontario Barn Preservation provides resources, advice, connections, events, and services to preserve our barns.

The Ontario Barn Preservation are always in need of support for the organization. Whether you have time to volunteer, or money to donate. Please consider getting involved!

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Soul Sisters Celebrations The Spiritual Connection of a Smile

Smiling, often considered a universal language, holds significance in spirituality. After reading the poem titled "A Smile" I thought I would touch base on the important correlation between a smile and spiritual wellbeing this month. Although February is often known as the month to celebrate love, it is important to celebrate connection, many of which begin with a smile. This poem was written by anonymous, published by J.G. Ferguson in 1960 book The Joy of Words.

A Smile

A smile costs nothing, but gives much-
It takes but a moment, but the memory of it usually lasts forever.
None are so rich that can get along without it-
And none are so poor but that can be made rich by it.
It enriches those who receive,
without making poor those who give-
It creates sunshine in the home,
Fosters good will in business,
And is the best antidote for trouble-
And yet it cannot be begged, borrowed, or stolen,
for it is of no value
Unless it is given away.
Some people are too busy to give you a smile-
Give them one of yours-
For the good Lord knows that no one needs a smile so badly
As he or she who has no more smiles left to give.

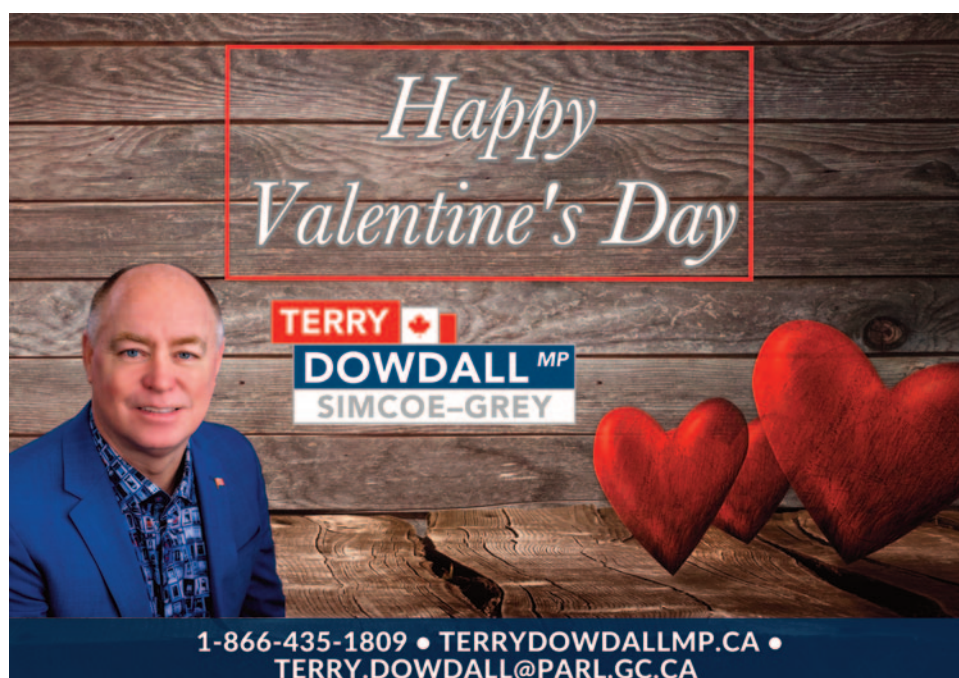
This poem was published in 1960 and has stood the test of time as a smile is a non-verbal communication that conveys warmth, kindness, and joy. It is a universal language that exceeds spoken words, allowing individuals to connect. The act of smiling is not confined to any specific religious or spiritual practice; rather, it serves as a common thread that binds diverse communities together. Regardless of cultural differences, the simple act of sharing a smile fosters a sense of unity and interconnectedness among individuals.

Spirituality, often associated with the pursuit of inner peace and fulfillment, finds a natural ally in the act of smiling. Many spiritual traditions emphasize the importance of cultivating joy and gratitude to connect with a higher power or divine source. A genuine smile extends beyond the physical expression of happiness; it reflects an inner state of contentment and spiritual well-being. Spiritual leaders and philosophers across different traditions have highlighted the transformative power of a sincere smile. The act of smiling triggers the release of endorphins, commonly known as "feel-good" hormones, contributing to an overall sense of happiness and relaxation. In the context of spirituality, this physiological response aligns with the concept of achieving inner harmony and spiritual enlightenment.


The link between a smile and spirituality is powerful and timeless. Let the universal language of smiles serve as a conduit for fostering inner joy, connecting with individuals, and tapping into the spiritual dimensions of human existence. As the Dalai Lama aptly stated, "A simple smile. That's the start of opening your heart and being compassionate to others."

Keep smiling!

In Gratitude, The Soul Sisters
Reverend Erin Wilson and Reverend Kelly Blakely
Soulsisterscelebrations@gmail.com

*Happy
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From Flagstop to Footnote: The Cherry Story

Never heard of the York Region of Chesley? How about its later name, Cherry? Not many have. In a lifetime the community went from flagstop to footnote.

The location of railways and their stations shaped the destinies of communities all over Ontario, even giving birth to new settlements. Such was the case with the hamlet of Cherry.

In 1872, the Northern Railway (later the Grand Trunk) built a small flag station and siding amidst the rolling farmlands two kilometers east of Bathurst Street and three kilometers west of Yonge Street. This represented a boon for area farmers, allowing grain and other produce to be shipped to Toronto. These

buildings were joined in 1896 by a section tool house, which was a shed where work crews stored equipment used to repair and maintain the line.

A little hamlet took root around the station, known as Chesley in honour of William Chesley, the English engineer responsible for building the Northern Railway.

Chesley, the village, was never more than a flyspeck of a community. Besides the station and its outbuildings, there was a store with a post office, a blacksmith, a few other craftsmen, and a handful of homes all huddled near the tracks. About 100 people called Chesley home.

In 1915, the flagstop's name was changed to Cherry to prevent confusion with another station named Chesley on the Gran Trunk's Owen Sound line. The community, naturally, adopted the new name as well.

Regardless of the name it fell under, the community was sleepy and tranquil, the kind of place where not much of note ever occurs. There were, however, two

events that brought momentary attention to it.

The first to occur was a sudden and unexpectedly heavy snowfall on March 7, 1896. This blizzard blocked the railway between King and Aurora, trapping a freight train and two passenger trains near Chesley. For hours passengers fretted. Would they need to head out on foot through snowdrifts? Would crews come to their rescue? In the end, they huddled in the cars for almost five hours until the tracks were cleared, and the train could proceed. "There were several passengers aboard each train who, as might be expected, did not enjoy their detention much," The Aurora Banner reported March 13, 1896.

Whereas this event was an inconvenience at worst, the next to befall the hamlet was tragic.

Three decades after the epic snowstorm, in 1925, railway workers discovered a badly decomposed body of a man hanging from a tree in a grove behind the siding. The body remained undiscovered for weeks, perhaps months because by this time the station and siding were no longer in use. Papers found on the corpse identified the suicide victim as William Albert Looker, a 66-year-old resident of Toronto. How, or why he came to kill himself in this backwater community was, and remains to this day, a mystery.

By the time of Looker's death Cherry was in a deep decline from which there would be no recovery. Its station had been decommissioned, the store closed, the fire in the smith's forge cooled.

Nothing is left today to hint at the existence of this modest agricultural community. It has long since been swallowed up by Aurora.

Village stories

by Andrew Hind



Cherry, formerly Chesley, was a small hamlet centered around a railway siding and built on agricultural foundations.

Agricultural Anecdotes from Farmer Tim

I recently bought an old Buck pocket knife for \$5 at an antique mall. There is nothing special about it, but it's solid, well made and it fits well in my hand.

I have lots of pocket knives at home, but something drew me to this worn set of old blades. Looking closely at the steel I could see how the point of one blade had been broken and rehoned - the maker's markings long filed away from use and abuse. The blades may be worn, but they are sharp as razors with lots of life left in them. This knife will serve me well.

I'm drawn to things that tell a story. Perhaps this old knife was carried in the pocket of a farmer like me? Maybe it cut the twine from bales, whittled a toy for a child or stripped some wire to repair an old tractor?

I may never know the tales it could tell of its past life, but I carry it with pride knowing that I will add to its forgotten stories.

"If an old dude ever gives you advice while peeling an apple with a pocket knife and eating the pieces right off the blade, you should probably take it."

~ Simon Holland

Farmer Tim farms in Southern Ontario and has been sharing his stories through social media for many years.

Tim is quoted saying

"All farmers need to get their stories out there and have fun while they do it!"

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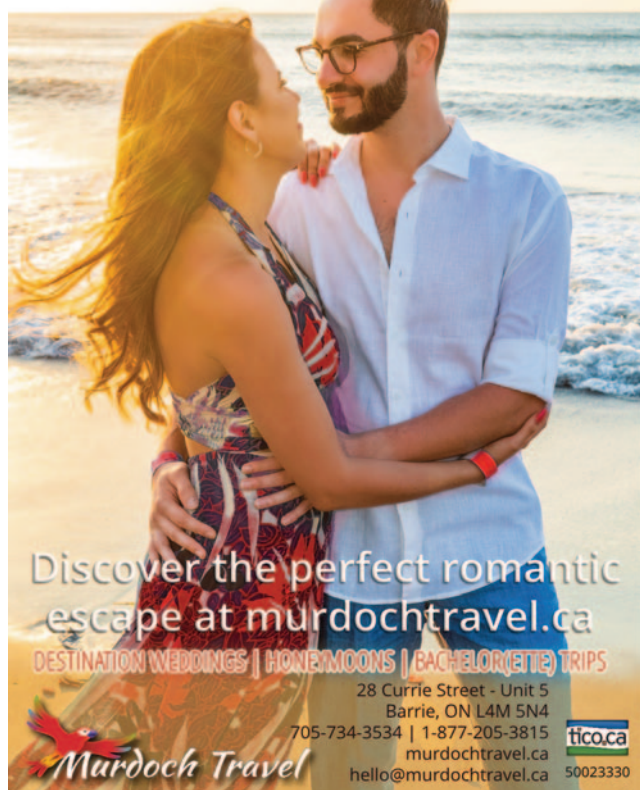
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
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A 6 month road trip to remember, part 2 of 3

[part 3 will be my trip home from Florida in the Spring]

Story and photo by John Beischer

At my last writing I recounted my ten week travels from Ontario to the British Columbia coast. My hair raising journey to Southern California on the scenic coastal highway 1 through the States of Washington, Oregon and California's red wood forests.

Upon reaching the multitude of highways, byways, free-ways, parkways, expressways and off ramps in Los Angeles, I decided not to visit the iconic beaches of Malibu and the streets of Hollywood and the movie studios and so much more. My GPS was out of commission and I simply wanted to begin my East bound trip into the cowboy states. I needed a brake job after spending 15 days travelling in the mountains and a blown fuse knocked out my GPS and the air conditioning! LA would have to wait for a future road trip. And I will certainly consider it in the near future.

From here I traveled through Arizona, New Mexico and Texas without air conditioning. The old 4/60 served me well; 4 windows down at 60 miles per hour cooled the cab nicely. In early November I arrived at Galveston Island [Texas] on the Gulf of Mexico coast. Here I found a wonderful KOA campground right on the beach and I stayed here for several days to enjoy the warm temperature and beautiful coastal scenery. See the photo attached showing the elevated Kabin, a hallmark of the KOA brand.



Pictured above, KOA Kabin elevated in Galveston Island, Texas.

When I returned home in December, I was often asked what were the best [most memorable] parts of my trip. Galveston was at the top of my list. Followed closely by Palm Springs in California where warm spring waters flowed into the numerous spas and swimming pools at this KOA campground in the heart of Hollywood's elitist destination town.

But what about Canada? Nothing can compare with the scenic wonder of Banff and Lake Louise in Alberta. The incredibly well engineered highways through the Rocky Mountains in British Columbia will remain in my memory forever. Mostly scary when the transports are pushing your driving skills beyond your limits on the 6 mile [and 6 degree down-

ward grade] only to begin a similar climb up on the other side. Repeat as necessary! Etc.!

I left Texas in early November and continued eastward to my destination in Florida. I crossed the state line into Louisiana where I had planned to visit New Orleans for several days. Unfortunately I realized that in order to maintain my timetable to arrive in Orlando on the 15th, I would need to adjust my schedule. With 3 more Southern US states to cross I needed to plan accordingly. I took 2 days to cross each of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama states. I camped at Lake Charles in Louisiana, Biloxi Mississippi, and Mobile Alabama. These campgrounds were excellent.

Highway travel: after ten weeks on the road, I ascertained that ALL of the highways I travelled both in Canada and the USA, were either under construction, or in desperate need of being 'under' construction. Either of which made for difficult travel for driving an RV. I suspect that during the covid years both our countries neglected highway construction and infrastructure maintenance which has resulted in what is now seen as a catch up period trying to make up for lost time. I wish them well.

I arrived in Florida. My first stop was to visit and have dinner with friends in the Panama Beach area. A wonderful meal and a relaxing stay at the local Holiday Inn. Very expensive but a welcome respite from my journey.

The next day I pulled out onto Highway #98 [highly recommended] and proceeded south for hundreds of miles along the coast of Gulf of Mexico. This was a beautiful drive through quaint towns and villages where bridges crossed numerous inlets along the coast. That evening I camped at the town of Perry about 50 miles inland. This town and many others were hard hit by the COVID closures of 2020 and 2021, evident by the boarded up businesses along Main Street.

The next morning I drove straight through to my time share apartment in Orlando where I planned to rest after having logged nearly 10,000 km in ten weeks. At this time some RV repairs were made and then I put the RV into long term storage at Fort Lauderdale. A short time later I boarded an Air Canada flight home for Christmas with family and friends.

Part 3 of this travelogue will outline my trip home from Florida next month, a journey that will see me winter as a snowbird in Florida for about 6 weeks at time share resorts and then a few weeks of camping on route home for an eta of April 1st. Thanks for your interest.

Follow fire safety guidelines while travelling

By Dennis Gannon

With the winter weather here, many are thinking about getting away or have already planned some time away. While we in Ontario have some rules and regulations regarding smoke alarms and fire detection systems, many other jurisdictions do not. If you are heading out for some needed relaxation here are some tips for you to consider when getting into hotels, motels, resorts or vacation rentals.

Look for a hotel / motel that has hardwired smoke alarms and an automatic fire sprinkler system in each guest room. If you or any of your group have any physical disabilities, ask for a room on a lower level of the building. When you check in, ask the front desk what the fire alarm sounds like. Some alarm systems have two distinct sounds. When you enter your room, review the escape plan posted in your room. Usually they are posted on the back of the door. Take the time to find the exits and count the number of doors between your room and the exit. Make sure the exits are unlocked. If they are locked, report it to the front desk immediately. Keep your room key and your cell phone beside your bed and take it with you if the alarm sounds and you need to exit the room. If the alarm sounds, listen for instructions if you are

in a large building. Most large hotels will provide instructions as to whether to stay or leave. In smaller buildings leave immediately when hearing the alarm sound. When leaving, close all doors behind you and use the stairs. Never use elevators during a fire. If you must escape through smoke, get low and go under the smoke to the nearest exit.

Follow these simple guidelines and enjoy your time away.



Stay fire-safe when you travel.

Choose a hotel protected by both smoke alarms and fire sprinklers.

Hottest little crop in our area

Story by Don Beaulieu.
Photographs courtesy of the Bell Family.

Some fortunate folk follow their heart and find success. Shawn Bell of Wasaga Beach followed his taste buds.

In an unexpected turn of events almost two decades ago, Bell was introduced to an amazing hot sauce made by a Trinidadian friend who invited him for dinner, a “crazy-amazing” curry-goat dish. Not only was the main dish exceptional, his friend also had a home-made Trinidadian hot sauce which “was mind-blowingly hot, but I loved the flavour” explains Bell. It was the flavour combination that piqued his interest and excited his palate. Hot sauces were not as popular then as they are now, so this was indeed a rarity. Bell was inspired to create a hot sauce with a unique flavour profile.

Patience, the first ingredient

Two years and seven batches of sauce later, he came up with his first original sauce he calls Sweet Heat. This sauce suited his “more tame” palate at the time. Sweet Heat is meant to give one a hit of heat but “goes away very quickly”. He continued making this sauce for a few years. His experimentation began with eight different hot peppers he could find at a local grocery store. He worked on the recipe, getting down to four peppers; Scotch bonnet, Thai chili, Hungarian yellow and jalapeño. He tried with seeds, without seeds.

The final recipe for Sweet Heat featuring Scotch bonnet was extremely popular with family; “They were pretty much addicted to it” he says. It kept him busy, making 6 litres at a time.

Research, trials and tribulations

With some simple ingenuity applied to growing peppers alongside his deck in Wasaga Beach, with a sand base to wick away moisture, Bell had success. He was able to create the perfect climate for growing very hot peppers in his back yard. Quite a feat for someone trying to “grow peppers off the south end of Georgian Bay, outdoors”. He admits his success was against a few odds.

It was Bell’s penchant for perfection and determination for success that lead to the name Doc Bells. He and his family joked that he spent more time “messing with” hot sauce recipes and cultivation than most doctors spend in medical school.

He connected with a fellow in Cambridge, Ontario “Pepper Steve” who was

growing varieties of peppers that were hard to come by. Bell learned a lot about growing peppers in our Ontario climate. Soil mixture was crucial. He started with a seven-part soil mixture as suggested allowing for aeration, root growth, nutrition and so on. He was told he was “too far north” for growing peppers. This encouraged Bell to experiment with soil mixtures. He got it down to five parts, to three parts and down to two parts of soil mixture with some added bits like worm castings. It was a combination of research and practical application that saw him get to the premium constituents, keeping it all as natural as possible.



Luck and adversity

“Everything all came together at once” he says, with pepper plants as tall as his eyes and 55 pounds of peppers from 145 square feet of greenhouse.

Health caused him to take a break basically for a year, but he was able to freeze seventy pounds of peppers to get things going again when he was able. Done correctly, peppers “keep their constitution” when frozen says Bell. This year, he ran out of freezer space. This led to the creation of



Shawn Bell is seen here flanked by his sons Rylhan and Xavier at the 2023 Royal Agricultural Fair in Toronto. Bell’s wife Amanda sacrificed her appearance to take the picture.

his Pineapple Punk hot sauce as he had 20 pounds of fresh peppers to use up. He had also connected with a farm who grows crimson hot red peppers. These are considered a mild hot pepper and are a major part of Pineapple Punk.

At least one of his sauces has included his own dried basil flower. Bell may not be an overall chef, but he’s fluent in adjusting, adding and taking away ingredients to finesse a sauce to his wants.

Winning at prestigious show

Doc Bell’s was a part of the Champions Showcase at the 2023 Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in Toronto. He had 5 top ten placings with 8 of his hot sauces. He gained this spot in the Championship Showcase due to his hot sauces exceptional standings the year before.

Bell’s sons, ages 12 and 8 are involved with the business, helping plant and pick peppers. He took care to make sure his sons were acquainted physiologically with peppers to assure they would be accustomed to and not have negative reactions to hot peppers.

To accommodate growing enough peppers of his own, Bell has established a couple of green houses on a farm in Mulmur Township. He has gone fully organic. The new greenhouses resulted in him contending with different moisture content and required some techniques to be adjusted. He changed from plastic pots to fabric pots... ever learning and ever improving his product; it is the way of Doc Bells.

You can find Doc Bell’s website at <https://www.docbellshotsauce.ca>.



In this picture we see Xavier (left) & Rylhan with a harvest of Trinidad 7-pot, Naga Morich, Chocolate Habanero, Fatalli & Prik Chee Faa peppers.

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The Story of Doug Drysdale; Christmas Tree Grower and Simcoe County Forester

By Glen Ritchie

Doug Drysdale 1932-L Interviewed at his residence at Tiffin Place in Midland, Ontario, Dec 15, 2023.

According to Family Search.org, Doug Drysdale is my 4th cousin, once removed. In other words to describe my relationship to Doug, he is a descendant from my 3x grt grandfather OLD JOHN Ritchie's brother, OLD BILL Ritchie. OLD BILL Ritchie's oldest daughter, Mary Ritchie (1834-1921) married James Drysdale (1831-1901). James son, David Drysdale (1861-1926) married Elizabeth "Bessie" Elrick (1875-1926) and they had only one child, Howard Reginald Drysdale (1907-1994).

Doug is the son of Howard Reginald Drysdale (1907-1994) and Marjory Mae Moriarty (1908-1976). His family was from the west end of Toronto near Bathurst and Wilson now called Downsview. Doug's grandfather, David Drysdale (1861-1926) married Elizabeth "Bessie" Elrick and farmed the N1/2 of Lot 7, Concession 6, Flos Township, Simcoe County. Before Doug's grandfather owned this farm, Doug's great grandfather, James Drysdale owned the N 1/2 lots 1, 2 and 3 of Concession 7. James had a large family and divided up many lots to give to his children. The Ken Ritchie, Alvin Greenlaw and Herman Lalonde sugar bushes were once owned by James Drysdale that lined the south side of Concession 8, east of Hwy 27. Herman's son, Tim is the only syrup producer left operating. David Drysdale's received part of lot 3 as an inheritance. He bought the farm on L7, C6 (see above) had the Grand Trunk Railroad running through it. Doug's father, Reg Drysdale, was born on this farm in a little white house. He could never understand why he had this little house and all of his uncles and cousins that occupied the 7th concession of Flos Township, had very large two story brick farm houses. Doug explained that when his dad had farmed, the beef herd had to be moved across the tracks to get to the pastures and many cows and dogs were killed from trains that ran along this rail line at its height of existence. Up to 17 trains a day used this line, transporting goods and services before the roads were built. When his dad was

orphaned, his uncles thought he wasn't cut out to be a farmer and ended up taking charge of his affairs and then ended up auctioning the equipment off as well as the farm land. Doug mentioned that his dad didn't seem to not mind him not choosing a career in farming.

Doug's dad, Howard REGINALD Drysdale, went as far as grade twelve in Elmvale and wanted to further his education. He had to take the train into Barrie, Ont. to attend grade 13. He boarded in Barrie at times during the winter months, not having to travel by train back and forth back to where he was living. After achieving his grade 13, he attended the MacDonald School in Toronto to become a teacher. At the age of 19 in 1926, he taught in a one room school on the Base Line and 10th concession of Flos. His placement at the Base Line School coincided with the opening of the Provincial Tree Nursery in Midhurst, also in 1926. Reg took an interest in forestry and contacted the superintendent of this tree nursery to have his one room school students visit. The nursery had an over-supply of pine tree saplings and gave each student, a thousand saplings. Realizing the situation, the parents were told that the kids can do what every they wanted with these trees. He took his inheritance and decided to purchase two pieces of property to plant these trees. He purchased the N1/2 of L1, C7, Flos in 1926 & 1927, and planted these trees on about 20 acres on one of the parcels of land. This is directly across the road from Ritchie Forest Products once owned by Robert 'Bob' Ritchie. The maple sugar bushes operated by Ken Ritchie, Wally Greenlaw and Tim Lalonde are also on this road. In the preceding years, Reg also purchased land near Phelpston, Ont. His father also had used his inheritance to buy new cars every other year. He figured it would draw the attention of the ladies. While attending what was then called, 'Normal' school, in Barrie, his classmate, Marjory Moriarty, turned out to be his future bride. Doug explained that his dad and mom were never really serious about each other in school. Doug described her as a very popular girl that could play piano. She came up to

Flos Township to teach at Ushers School which was located on the 8th concession of Flos and the 5th sideroad which later became Ushers Sideroad. She taught there for two years around 1928 & 1929. She then moved to Barrie and taught at Cundles Street for the next two years. The both of them would eventually meet up and talk about teaching. Ushers School was the next concession to the north of Doug's father's family farm. Doug's parents were married in August of 1931 and Doug was born in 1932. Doug's parents moved to York Township, just west of Toronto to teach the same year Doug was born. Reg had taken summer school courses for two years to become a shop teacher. When Doug became of school age, his father thought it wasn't a good idea to have his son in the same school where he taught. He transferred to a school in Toronto. This was during the depression years and Doug's father thought that due to a lack of money to pay shop teachers, his position as a shop teacher was in jeopardy. He would scrounge pieces of lumber from just about anything including cedar rail fences to provide material for his students. Reg Drysdale taught for 47 years.

Doug's mother, Marjory Moriarty, came from the north of Bradford area called Coulsons Hill. Through Doug's mother's family, John Coulson owned a farm and donated land for two churches and a cemetery. He built a hotel on this site around the 1920's. This site was used by travellers coming from Toronto going north. This livery stable provided accommodations for the travellers and the teams of horses. Doug would spend summers at his grandfather Coulson's farm as a young boy.

Doug's mother's family (Moriarty) had numerous girls in her immediate family. When Doug was at his grandfather's farm in his teenage years, these girls would pick him up and off they went to dances in the Bradford area. Doug didn't care where they were going because he was in his glory being in the company of all of these girls.

Continued on page 13...



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The Story of Doug Drysdale; Christmas Tree Grower and Simcoe County Forester

By Glen Ritchie

Story continued from page 12.

One of his mother's cousin's, Connie Moriarty, married an Elmvale dairy farmer. Don and Connie MacLean's prefix was Condon Holsteins. Doug tells the story about his great grandfather, Patrick Moriarty (1820-1879) of when the Catholic Church allowed mixed marriages for about a ten year period during the mid-1800's. The condition was that the Protestant males had to convert in order to marry the Catholic females. Doug's great grandmother, Agnes Coulson (1820-1886) family were Presbyterians. These Coulson daughters would attend church with their mother in their horse drawn carriage. His great grandfather didn't think this was proper having the mother drive the carriage to church so he became a Presbyterian and he drove the carriage of these Coulson women to church. Doug joked about the fact that his great grandfather's brothers were all Catholic and you better not say anything bad about the Catholics!

During WWII, there was gas rationing and there was a severe shortage of Christmas trees in Toronto. The tops of pine trees would be sent to Toronto from a pulp and paper mill north of North Bay, Ont. Reg believed that there was a market for commercially produced Christmas trees and bought property near Cookstown in 1945 and started planted pine seedlings. This was the beginnings of the Drysdale Tree Farms. It took about 5 to 6 years to grow a mature Christmas tree. While planting these trees, a bulldozer broke through the bush, much to the surprise of Doug's father. The Highway Department ended up taking 12 acres off his tree farm in around 1946 and it ended up being part of the Hwy 400. Reg had paid \$400.00 for this 50 acre parcel and was paid \$400.00 for the land that the Highway took. At first, Reg only considered this tree growing business a hobby. A few years later he became very keen in the business of growing trees commercially and he sought out information on how to grow and care for them. There was another grower in New York State that also was growing Christmas trees. Together, they would exchange letters and make phone calls to discuss techniques on growing Christmas trees. This person was a professor, Joshua Cope, at Cornell University. Reginald Drysdale was nominated by Don Bell, Warden of Simcoe County, around the mid 1970's for the Simcoe County Agriculture Hall of Fame. His nomination was declined but ended up being inducted into the Ontario Agriculture Hall of Fame in 1997 for his contribution to pioneering the Christmas trees industry. Reg was very active for organising the Christmas Tree Association. He had sought out growers that were in contact with the different levels of government seeking information on where to buy seedlings and how to grow them. Reg saw a lot of potential in this growing industry and sought out interested growers seeking information. The Association of Christmas Tree growers began around the early 1950's. There was no information on when or how to prune them. Doug remembers when he was in high school pruning trees with just a hand held clipper, grass clippers and knives.

Doug was about 13 when he started to help his father on their Essa Township farm. At the age of 19 in 1951, Doug enrolled into the Forestry Program at the University of Toronto. Doug convinced his father to purchase 117 acres of what he described as a "hard scrabble farm" in Whitechurch-Stouffville, owned by Howard Pegg. This farm had cattle on it and an undependable crop growing on it. They decided to plant Scotch pine trees and turn it into a Christ-

mas Tree Farm. It was around 1960, The Drysdale's had heard about cut-your-own Christmas Tree farms in the United States. Doug approached a neighbour and fellow Christmas tree grower, Keith Horton, about starting a cut-your-own Christmas Tree operation that would be opened to the general public. This particular location turned out to be spectacular. These two businesses created 'quite a few traffic jams' and the police were not impressed during Christmas time. In 1968, Doug purchased another 26 acres near the existing site fronting the St. John's Sideroad to grow more trees. While expanding the tree growing operation, it was only a hobby for Doug and his dad.

The first crop was progressing along well and a vegetable grower from the Bradford Marsh knocked on their door asking his father if he would be interested in providing about 1000 Christmas trees to a 'Krogers' grocery store in Cincinnati, Ohio? Peter Vertike provide vegetables to this Kroger chain and they had heard that there were Christmas tree growers in Ontario and would Peter find out if they were interested in shipping trees to them. Krogers initially wanted 1,000 trees but they only were able to ship about 800 trees. They sold so well that Kroger's wanted 10,000 trees the following year. Doug and his father Reg realized that they could not possibly supply the requested 10,000 trees Krogers wanted and this is when Doug explains that at the age of 19 and while in University he became involved in rounding up the trees for Peter VanTike from the growers that had joined the Association his father had founded. Christmas trees were shipped beginning the end of October. The first trees shipped to Krogers were not baled. They were just thrown into the back of trucks. Later, Reg would invent a baling machine to wrap up the trees. One of the early machines was a boat winch with a truck tire rim with bearings from a roller skate.

Reg was the treasure for the Christmas Tree Growers Association for 37 years. He never wanted to be the president of this Association nor was he. He felt that if remained as secretary, he would keep this association alive of about 100 members.

Realizing that Reg was already inducted into the Ontario Agriculture Hall of Fame in 1997, Simcoe County followed suit after rejecting Warden, Don Bell's initial nomination of him back in the 1980's and he was finally inducted into the Simcoe County Agricultural Hall of Fame.

Before graduating from University, Doug's job was mapping the line of sight and the height of the land for the Plant-

ing and Development Department of the University involving the watersheds in Simcoe County for the Conservation Authority. Each township in Simcoe County had to supply a detailed study of the watersheds that emptied into the rivers, creeks and other bodies of water.

Doug married his high school sweetheart, Joan Clifton, of Toronto on Valentine's Day in 1953. They raised their family in Don Mills and relocated to live full time at their family home on the Drysdale Tree Farms in 1980. Doug and Joan had celebrated 67 years of marriage together. They raised three children, Douglas, Donna and Diane. Sadly, Joan passed away in July of 2020.

Doug worked for the Simcoe County Lands and Forests starting in 1957. He held two degrees in Forestry. He was Chief of the Timber Branch. He also held the position of General Manager of Tree Improvement for the Forest Management Tree Institute. He bought property best suited for growing trees and at its height the business owned 1200 acres and it's been downsized to about 800 acres. Doug had spent 33 years with the forestry branch.

In 2012 after owning the Christmas Tree Farm on Durham Rd 30 for 62 years, it was time to close the Whitechurch-Stouffville operation. Doug said it was a hard decision to make. After all, Doug and his father were now two generations of tree growers. The Drysdale family donated this 136 acre property to the York Regional Forest. The land is adjacent to the Hollidge Tract Accessible Trail on Hwy 48 and it is a nature trail her enthusiasts.

The business that the Drysdale's started has been named the best Christmas tree farm twice by the National Christmas Tree Growers Association. The farm has also been named the best Christmas tree grower in Ontario quite a few times.

Doug mentioned a few Flos families that help him prune trees in the Phelpston area. These included the McGill's, Elrick's, Craddock's, Mike Fallon and the Marley boys. Doug recalls a lad named Frank Craddock who had worked for him. He was the only person that could pick up a cut tree and shack it by the stump. Doug tells the story of this Frank Craddock from Phelpston who became a police cadet and became a motorcycle policeman.

The property where the Drysdale Tree Farm now operates is about 400 acres and Doug's son, Douglas and his kids operate the business as of this day in 2024. Doug is in his 92nd year and still enjoys his independence of driving his car back and forth to his son's tree farm business near Egbert.



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Finding & returning the AWOL Loree llamas

Annette Sandberg has 20 years search and rescue volunteer experience but searching for llamas was a first.

On Friday, November 10, the gate at the llama farm near Victoria Corners was accidentally left open, and the three llamas that lived there, Lluca, Todd, and Lewis, escaped and headed towards Loree, near the Blue Mountains, only about three kilometers away.

As the Search Coordinator for this incident, I will explain as simple as I can how it was put together.

First and foremost, safety for all is a priority for not only the return of the llamas unharmed but also for people and other animals such as dogs and livestock.

Since the llamas were sighted the first couple of days in Loree Forest, including travelling on the popular Bruce Trail, I called the Town of the Blue Mountains to discuss closure of that area. If you've never been there, I can tell you it's filled with hikers and their leashed/unleashed dogs on any given day. A busy area like this can cause the llamas high stress which can result in them moving further away. Also, an encounter with a llama and dog can turn out deadly for the dog and risky for the owner. The TBM's and Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) agreed and the area was closed for safety.

Nancy, a local tracker, set up cameras and followed the llamas tracks. With that and other sightings on individual days, we were able to form a grid section of their travels.

I could then place community volunteers in their cars on the perimeter to check for sightings and to keep the interior calm and quiet for the Llamas to be found and returned.

On the videos, we could see that the llamas had crossed over early in the morning looking for the perfect grazing field. Being surrounded by apple orchards and streams also provided all of the elements for survival. The biggest threat were the coyotes in the area seeing them as prey. The greatest defence for the llamas was for them to stay together as it was unlikely that even a pack of coyotes would attempt an attack. Llamas have a powerful kick that can take down even the strongest of coyotes.

Each day that the llamas weren't retrieved, we had to start the process of finding them all over again. The owner used a helicopter initially. The Drone Team was used throughout but on bad weather days, they couldn't fly. We lost one drone due to high winds. Professional trackers walked the trails looking for the llamas, one went out even in rainy miserable weather. Owners of local properties called in sightings as well. Daily, volunteers would come to help and the community support was amazing.

But just because you see the llamas doesn't mean you



Here we see tracker Nancy Kay in her car going over strategies with Annette Sandberg during the llama search and rescue operation.

have secured them. Professional cowboys and their well-trained horses were hired to wrangle them in. When all conditions aligned, they brought the three back home, although on two separate days. Tuesday, the 14th, we were able to get within a couple of feet of them but they started to run. With speeds up to 40 km/hr, they prove to be impossible to catch.

On Thursday the 16th, two were corralled at a nearby farm on the 2nd line. Initially, all three were caught, but Lewis, the most untamed one, crawled under the fencing and ran off. To lure him back, we took recordings of the other two, Todd and Lluca, and played them on a loop. On Sunday, November 19, Lewis was seen wandering down the road and into a fenced in apple orchard on the 10th line where OPP con-



In the above photographs we see Lewis successfully roped by a professional cowboy. The picture of the two llamas are Lluca and Todd after capture, waiting for Lewis; and finally, Lewis at home in a safe paddock.

tacted the owner to lock the gate. The next morning, the Markdale cowboys came in with their well-trained horses and wrangled Lewis without harm and put him in the trailer and headed for home.

This is a simplified version of OPS (operations) and event, but there was nothing simple about it. It took a community effort for 10 days and everyone is to be commended for a safe and happy return of the Loree llamas Lewis, Todd, and Lluca.





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Farms needed to keep rural Ontario's social fabric alive

By Brian Crews, Director, Ontario Federation of Agriculture

At first glance, most people might find it hard to believe that a City of Toronto firefighter can also be an Ontario dairy farmer. After all, the demands of serving as a first responder in Canada's largest city are pretty far removed from life in rural Ontario and working with livestock as part of a multi-generational family business.

And yet, that's me. I've been a Toronto firefighter for more than 30 years – working 24-hour shifts – while also farming in Northumberland County east of Toronto together with my parents, Carl and Helena, my wife Cyndi Down, and our son Andrew, who is the ninth generation on our family's farm.

It was during the pandemic that a fellow farmer in our area approached me about becoming involved with our local Northumberland Federation of Agriculture. There are many issues facing farmers in Ontario today, from urban encroachment and land use planning challenges to business transition and ensuring agriculture can offer the next generation of farmers a sustainable future.

They're prevalent in our area for sure and with my retirement from the fire service no longer that far away, they also directly impact my family, our farm and our future – so I took the suggestion and joined the organization as a Northumberland County director.

I quickly learned a lot about agricultural advocacy and how important it is for farmers to both be informed about the issues that impact their businesses and have their voice be in front of decision-makers.

This led me to the decision last fall to put my name forward for a position on the board of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA). Thanks to a successful election, I now represent the farmers of Lennox and Addington, Hastings, Northumberland and Prince Edward as their provincial director with OFA.

My family's long-reaching farming roots make me particularly passionate about preserving agricultural land, ensuring it continues to be farmed and keeping it from being fragmented into increasingly smaller parcels.

It's not just about maintaining that ability to produce our own food, fuel, and fibre close

to home, however.

It's also about keeping our rural Ontario communities and their social fabric alive. With every farm that disappears, it becomes harder for local businesses like farm equipment suppliers, veterinary clinics and even coffee shops to keep their doors open. And as the population gradually declines, so does the availability of schools, medical services and community social supports.

As part of a multi-generational family farm, I also feel strongly about business succession planning and about being able to maintain a competitive and successful agriculture industry that can offer an attractive and economically sustainable future to the next generation of farmers like our son.

The dramatic increase in the price of land coupled with the threat of urban sprawl can make the decision to give up the family farm a financially attractive option, particularly for younger generations who are faced with an increasingly high cost of living and a desire for more work life balance than their parents or grandparents were able to have as farmers.

Transition is a complex topic for any family business, but it's particularly tough for farmers. The emotional ties that bind us to our land are strong because for us, our farms are more than just a business. They're also our homes and where generations of our forebears have also lived and worked.

I'm looking forward to spending the next three years as part of the board of an organization who tackles tough topics like these on a daily basis. And I'm particularly keen to encourage more of my fellow farmers to take a more active role in this organization too – just reading the county newsletter or attending a local meeting are good places to start.

We need organizations like the OFA to advocate for farmers and to ensure our voice is being heard by the people making decisions and enacting policies that will impact our businesses and our families.

Our voice is only as strong as our own involvement in our industry and in our organizations.

Hot baked taco dip

Story and photo by Roslyn Watkins



This is a quick and easy super satisfying appetizer perfect for the upcoming Super Bowl or Family Day. Top it any way you want, avocados, shredded lettuce, jalapeno, salsa...

Ingredients

cooking spray
454 g cooked ground beef
1 can 540 ml black beans, drained and rinsed
1 green bell pepper, chopped
1 package taco seasoning mix
1 tomato, chopped
1 bunch green onions, chopped
2 tablespoons hot taco sauce, or more to taste
2 cups sour cream
1 cup shredded sharp Cheddar cheese
350 g package tortilla chips, or more as needed

Directions

· Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C).
· Spray a 9x13-inch casserole dish with cooking spray.
· Stir black beans, bell pepper and taco seasoning into ground beef. Spread ground beef mixture into prepared casserole dish.
· Sprinkle tomato and green onions over ground beef mixture; top with taco sauce.
· Spread sour cream over taco sauce layer and top with Cheddar cheese.
· Bake in the preheated oven until cheese is melted and bubbling, 10 to 20 minutes.
· Serve with tortilla chips.

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After The Chores: Brownie moves in

By Cathy Hamill-Hill



Brownie is the answer to calming my jealousy. Like everyone else in goats today, I want boer (rhymes with four) goats too.

Selling a mature buck for \$1,000 is not unusual for a boer meanwhile, my mature LaMancha buck sold for \$400. While \$400 is still good, that extra \$600 is way better. Boers, from what I am hearing don't jump out of pens, have sweet personalities, grow incredibly fast and have "squishy" adorable kids with ease. I am told that I have to hold a "squishy" boer kid to understand what that means. I felt so left out to the point of jealousy as I had not a drop of boer goat blood in the barn.

My farm Friend was widowed and reached her 80th birthday. Her only child worried non-stop about his Mom with her arthritic knee. The child imagined his Mom lying outside frozen with a broken hip one winter day beside the barn. Plus, her child wants her to travel with his family and we all know with livestock that there is not much travelling time between chores twice a day. Friend has been battling "should I sell out all my goats?" for close to three years meanwhile, she was building a herd of part Boers. I had always been on the side of "chores are so good for you as exercise is critical for being healthy so keep your goats!" But this time this Friend declared that the dispersal was happening in 4 weeks or less.

I was doing chores the next morning after talking to Friend and realized this meant "Boers (at least part) for sale!" The next step was to go be a snoop and see if these goats were "healthy" meaning I was looking for signs of CL as in infectious abscesses. I invited myself over to see the herd- and was met with bright eyed, floppy eared, colorful, heavy set well cared for goats. I did my thorough snoop and ended up setting up a sales plan for eight, five adult does and three young doe kids.

Friend was especially fond of one brown kid. The kid looks like someone practiced painting her and never finished. This kid is chestnut brown with light grey spots, has a wide

white blaze down her face, one white and one grey ear, half a white tail and white rings around three of her legs. This kid loves people as she grew up with Friend's 8 year old city born granddaughter visiting her nearly every weekend.

The new herd was not in the pen a full minute before the brown kid popped out between the gate's bars and went touring in the barn. Every step I took, I had this kid behind me. I asked Friend what the kid's name was and found out she was officially named by the 8 year old. This granddaughter is widely travelled so I was thinking I would do good to be able to pronounce this exotic name. I was told the kid's name is..... Brownie.

I debated my wisdom in getting this new herd a few weeks later. Sweetie and I were in a frustrated place to start that night as we had off-farm work that day and a meeting that evening. Brownie likes to sneak some grain from the sheep before they get into the pen. She is good to come out of the pen when I call her name. Her kid goat friend, a black kid has none of Brownie's social skills was now standing in the sheep pen screeching to get back in with the herd. The fact the sheep were pushing her around the pen was not helping. I couldn't catch the black kid and I decided I had to ask Sweetie for yet another rescue. We tried every way we could think of to catch this kid- and the next thing I knew I was seeing the barn floor close up. I had been knocked completely over by the ram. I told Sweetie that we were not going to risk getting hurt so the kid would have to stay in the pen for the night. I got myself off the barn floor, checked there was no severe pain and everything moved as it should so I thanked God for sparing me yet again from broken bones. I had chores almost finished that evening when that black kid was back with Brownie in the goat pen, she had figured out how to get back in the pen by herself.

Brownie and her goat friends are not like the goats I have here as they are so food driven. The first chore time I rushed in the barn expecting to find one of them, caught and upside down judging by all the screaming. It turns out this group yells for food, every single chore time. Brownie and her black kid friend meet me right at the door as they are just so eager for meal time.

Brownie is certainly brightening up these dark, winter days because it is impossible to see that mixed up coloured little face and not see happiness. Brownie I hope will have some new "squishy" boer type kids to play with come June, they will be half LaMancha but I'm hoping that some boer genes will come through too.



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Forage Focus: Quality hay wanted for export

By Cathy Hamill-Hill

A group of hay producers formed the Ontario Hay and Forage Co-operative, Inc. (OHFC). According to OHFC President Fitz Trauttmansdorff, the purpose was “to develop and serve overseas markets with high quality, purpose grown double-compacted hay. Our aim is to increase returns for producers who are currently producing high quality hay.”

Exporting Hay was part of the The Value of Hay as a Cash Crop session of the recent Forage Focus, a series of webinars available online.

It has taken years for the OHFC to develop markets for Timothy and pure Alfalfa hay and now, most recently there is a market for mixed hay too.

The most critical part of export hay is “quality.” Trauttmansdorff repeated many times that the markets only accept hay that is of high quality and the first part of hay quality is always being dry. One surprise rainfall can take down the quality of the very best hay. Now, he says there is something “that can take out the risk factor” in producing hay: the hay dryer.

“People serious about growing hay and selling it to be exported need to have access to a hay dryer. Now there are very good hay dryers out there for the big square bales,” he explained.

Big square bales are what the export markets work with. This bale style allows for packing onto trucks and then later into containers for shipping.

There is not just a good demand, “There

is a HUGE worldwide demand for good hay. It is somewhere between 10-12 billion US dollars a year,” Trauttmansdorff said explaining that markets have grown to be depended on to supply entire farming operations with hay to markets that include China, Japan and the Gulf Region. The main suppliers of this hay are the USA, France, Spain, Argentina and Canada. Before the conflict between Russia, Ukraine was also an exporter of hay.

“The whole Gulf Region buys hay to supply feed for all livestock that is cattle, dairy (cattle), sheep, goats and horses simply because they do not have the water or land to grow hay so they make the decision to buy hay from other hay producers in the world,” Trauttmansdorff said.

Average hay that is stored outside will not make export quality. “Hay must be stored inside and it must be stored off the ground,” he said adding that very high quality has also a standard for colour, cleanliness and nutrient content.

The OHFC has taken the time to formulate a Guide on how to grow hay for this export market. This can be found for free, online at: <https://onforagenetwork.ca/ontario-hay-forage-co-operative-inc/resources/>

Currently, the price being paid is 16 cents per pound. This payment is for bales that are delivered to the warehouse located at Alma, Ontario which is near Elora. There are options available to get hay to this location.


For more information contact Ontario at www.onforagenetwork.ca

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Grey County Agricultural Services presents the Winter Course Program 2024

Understanding your Financials and Cost Accounting

Presented by: Paul Oehm of Business Profit (www.businessprofit.ca)
Thursday February 1st, 2024, 1:30 - 3:00 pm at Grey Ag Services, also livestreamed.

What Did We Learn in 2023? What Should We Do in 2024?

Presented by: Deb Campbell, Agronomist at Agronomy Advantage and Carrie Davenport, Agronomist at Georgian View Ag Services Ltd.
Wednesday February 7th, 2024, 1:30 - 4:30 pm at Grey Ag Services, also livestreamed.

Figuring Out Frost Seeding

Presented by: Christine O'Reilly, Forage & Grazing Specialist at OMAFRA
Wednesday February 7th, 2024, 7:00 - 8:00 pm on Zoom.

How to Onboard New Employees

Presented by: Viktoria Schuler of the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council
Thursday February 8th, 2024, 12:00 - 1:15 pm on Zoom

Tile Drainage

Presented by: Sid Vander Veen of R.J. Burnside & Associates Ltd., Mel Luymes of Land Improvement Contractors of ON, Byron Bothwell of Bluewater Drainage, and Keith Reid of ALUS Grey Bruce.

Friday February 9th, 2024, 10:00 am - 3:00 pm. Held at Jeff Curry's shed in the Owen Sound area.

Setting Calves up for Success: Building Quality Along the Cow-Calf, Backgrounding, and Feedlot Continuum

Presented by: Megan Van Schaik & James Byrne, both Beef Specialists at OMAFRA, and Bert Tupling, owner of Tupling Farms.
Wednesday February 14th, 2024, 10:00 am - 5:00 pm. Morning at Grey Ag Services, afternoon at Tupling Farms.

Fair is not Equal: Strategies and Challenges of Passing on the Farm

Presented by: Robert W. Scriven, Partner, Bennett Grant LLP.
Thursday February 15th, 2024, 1:30 - 3:30 pm at Grey Ag Services.

Horse Health Night: Dentistry & Vaccinations

Presented by: Dr. Tee Fox and Dr. Marika Van Schaik of Markdale Veterinary Services.
Tuesday February 20th, 2024, 7:00 - 9:00 pm at Grey Ag Services, also livestreamed.

Grassland Bird Conservation on Farms

Presented by: Zoe Lebrun-Southcott, Dr Andrew Campmozzi and Hanna Kirchmeir, all of Bird Ecology and

Conservation Ontario
Saturday February 24th, 2024, 1:30 - 3:30 pm at Grey Ag Services.

The Fourth Crop: Winter Canola, Winter Barley & Edible Beans

Presented by: Megan Moran of OMAFRA, and producers Stuart Wright & Adrian Op't Hoog.
Tuesday February 27th, 2024, 1:00 - 3:00 pm at Grey Ag Services, also livestreamed.

Variability of Corn Nitrogen Response Across the Soil Landscape

Presented by: Ben Rosser of OMAFRA, Jonathan Zettler an Agronomist at Fieldwalker Agronomy, and Caleb Niemeyer from Woodrill Ltd.
Thursday February 29th, 2024, 1:00 - 2:00 pm on Zoom.

QuickBooks Tips

Presented by: Erich Weber of OMAFRA.
Friday March 1st, 2024, 1:00 - 3:30 pm at Grey Ag Services.

AgMaps: Mapping Your Farm

Presented by: Bob Steiss of OMAFRA.
Tuesday March 5th, 2024, 1:00 - 3:00 pm at Grey Ag Services, also livestreamed.

Economics of Choosing When to Market Lambs

Presented by: Delma Kennedy, Sheep Specialist at OMAFRA.

Tuesday March 19th, 2024, 7:00 - 9:00 pm at Grey Ag Services, also livestreamed.

Horse Nutrition Night: Feeding the Senior Horse

Presented by: Jessica McCoag, Equine Nutrition Consultant, Purina.
Wednesday March 20th, 2024, 7:00 - 9:00 pm at Grey Ag Services, also livestreamed.

Seed Saving & Starting

Presented by: the Grey County Master Gardeners.
Thursday March 21st, 2024, 7:00 - 9:00 pm at Grey Ag Services.

Climate Resilient Property Planning

Presented by: Ivan Chan of Eden in Season.
Tuesday March 26th, 2024, 7:00 - 9:00 pm at Grey Ag Services.

Courses are offered in various formats (in-person, virtually or hybrid), so be sure to take note of where you will be attending from.

The address for Grey Ag Services is 206 Toronto St. S, Markdale ON, this is the location of most in-person courses.

More details can be found at <https://www.greyagservices.ca/courses-webinars>

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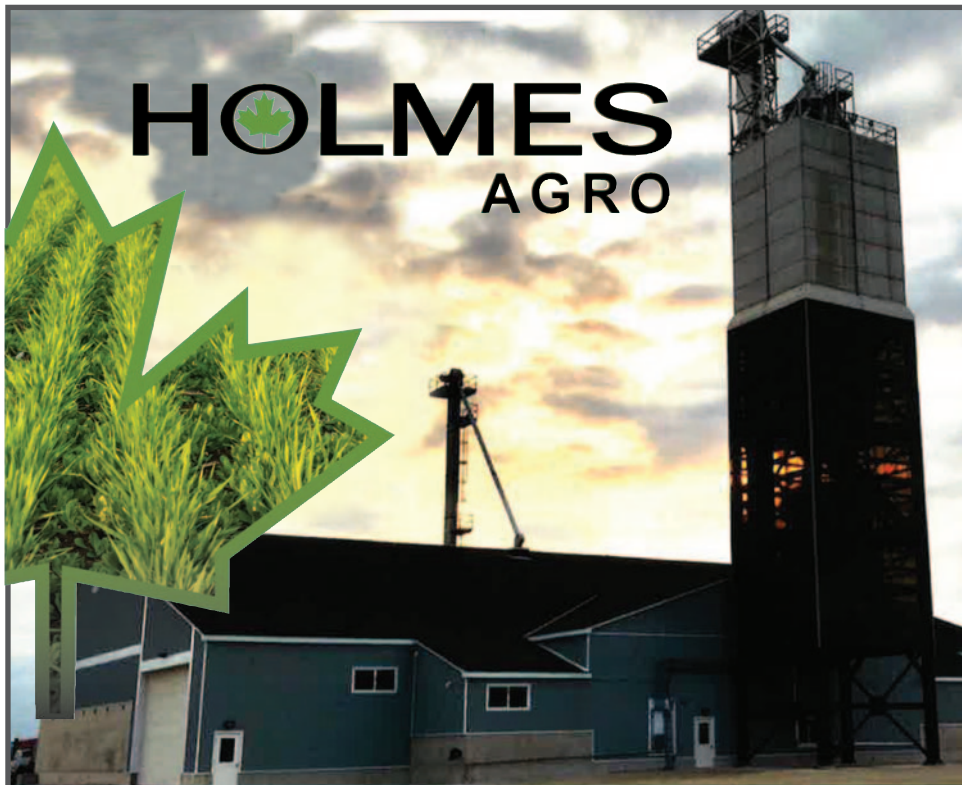
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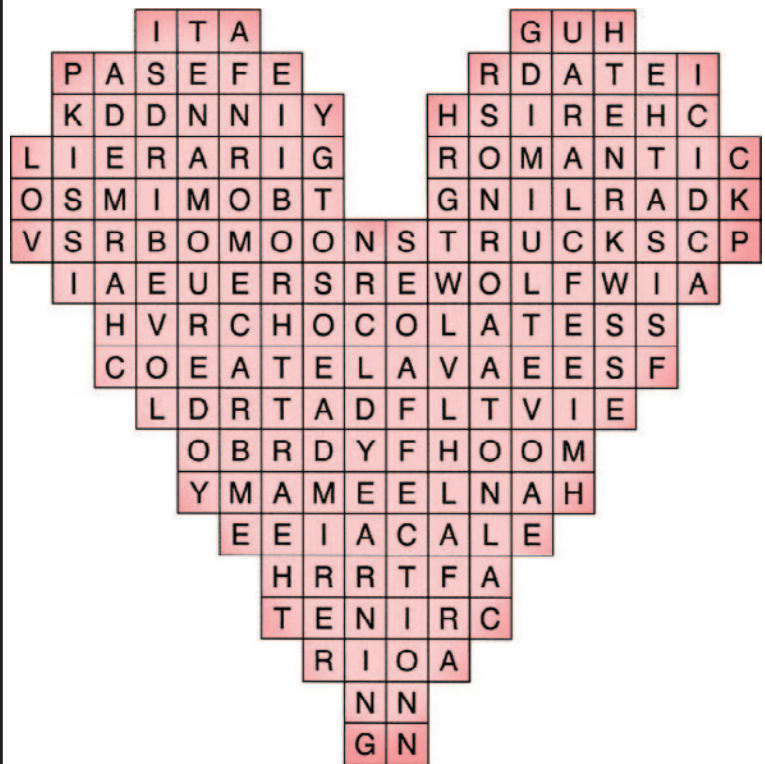
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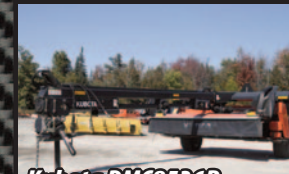
Kubota B2301
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Kubota L6060HSTCC
hours ua: 2041.2, 4wd, cab, diesel, 12x16.9 fronts, 16.9x24 rears, 540 rpm, mid mount pto, grill guard, 2 remotes, kubota l4485 front mount snowblower, Unit is located in Erin **\$43,200**



Kubota M9540DT
hours ua: 1850.8, 4wd, cab/heat/air, 12.4r24 fronts, 18.4r30 rears, 540 rpm, 2 remotes, front grill guard, m36 loader, self leveling, manual q/a 82" bucket, Unit is located in Erin. **\$72,000**



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hours ua: 531.1, 4wd, diesel, cab/heat/air, 540 rpm, 2 sets of remotes, 360/70r20 front tires, front fenders, 440/80r30 rear tires, radio, metal pless agh830-13 blade, unit is located in Erin **\$63,900**



Case IH5120
hours ua: 5783, 2wd, cab heat air 11.00x16 front tires, 18.4x38 rear tires, 540 rpm, two sets of remotes, 16x16 semo power shift, bar axle, Unit is located in Erin **\$33,900**



Kubota M7060
hours showing: 547, 4wd, 12 speed transmission, rops, left hand hydraulic shuttle, 360/70r20 fronts, 420/85r30 rears, cast centers, la1154 ldr, 7' bucket, 3 pth, front grill guard. (Erin) **\$57,900**



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