

Opinion

MUSKOKA MOSAIC

Introducing Doris Thompson

BY PAULA BOON

Family is important to Doris Thompson.

She is proud of her three sons, seven grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. And then there is the extraordinary story of her other hard-earned family ties.

Born in the Cockney part of London in 1924, Thompson, along with a sister and two brothers, spent her first years at a residential home for children. "I thought my parents were dead," she says.

When the siblings were moved to different foster homes, Thompson managed to stay close to her favourite brother Charlie, who had been placed just a block away.

However, when they grew up, their lives took very different paths. During the war, Thompson met and married Joe Thompson, a Canadian soldier stationed nearby, and afterward moved to Canada. Charlie, in the meantime, emigrated to New Zealand. The two didn't see each other again for 52 years.

Once in Canada, Thompson focused on adjusting to her new surroundings and raising her family, which eventually included sons Ian, Brian and Ivan.

The Thompsons lived on the family farm in Melissa that had been left to Joe. "That first winter I didn't think was ever going to end," she says. "It was awful; there was so much snow."

When the blackflies and mosquitoes came in spring, Thompson, recalls, she wondered, "What kind of country have I come to?"

However, soon she came to love her new home. "The people were very kind to me," she says.

The family moved to Novar in 1953 after losing their home in a fire and then to Chaffey Township Road around 1960. "Our sons

got into sports, and we were on the road more than we were home," she explains.

Thompson and her husband were avid lacrosse fans, and their sons gave them much to cheer for. All three have since been inducted into the Huntsville Sports Hall of Fame, and the two who played professionally are in the Canadian Lacrosse Hall of Fame as well.

With her children grown, Thompson kept busy, working in various retail positions in downtown Huntsville, including Steadman's and Eaton's.

Then, Thompson's life began to change again. Beginning in the mid-'80s, she had a series of mini strokes and two heart attacks which landed her in the hospital for months. Joe's health began to fail as well.

In 1995, her nephew took her to New Zealand to see Charlie, which was an emotional reunion.

After Joe died in 2004, 12 days before the couple's 60th wedding anniversary, Thompson filled some of her time playing bingo, visiting with friends and going to Rama to play the slots, but her thoughts always returned to her past and questions about her family.

Rather than simply reminiscing, she decided to do something about it.

Fascinated by her son Ian's computer, Thompson bought her own at age 75. Soon she was tech-savvy enough to make personalized greeting cards for family and friends. "Last Christmas I made 40," she says.



Thompson found a website called Genes Reunited in England and entered information about her mother, but received no response. Several years later she went back and added her father's name, and within a few hours she got an e-mail from a niece she didn't know she had. "That's how I found my sister Joyce," she says.

Thompson discovered that her parents had not only lived, but had three more children, who they raised together. She contacted her sister, who initially "wasn't too keen" to learn that she had more siblings.

However, Thompson made a trip to England to visit Joyce. "When she answered the door, she said, 'Oh!' Apparently I was the spitting image of our mother. I've always wondered what my mother looked like," said Thompson.

Since then, Thompson has received a complete family background from her niece in England and also found a cousin she didn't previously know about in New Zealand.

She has also bought a scanner, scanned old photos and made albums for her sons and grandchildren. "It's something I wanted them to have," she says. "It's important to keep those family memories alive."

Thanks to Marjory Goodwin for suggesting that Doris Thompson be profiled. If there is someone you'd like to see in this space, please call Paula at 789-5541 or e-mail pboon@metrolandnorthmedia.com.

LETTERS

Newcomers to area make important contributions

I was amused to read a letter in last week's edition that claimed people couldn't understand Parry Sound-Muskoka unless they've lived here their entire lives.

What silliness. Our region is made up of a perfect mix of lifelong residents and folks who have made a conscious decision to move here, not only to enjoy the unique lifestyle that we have in Parry Sound-Muskoka, but to contribute to it as well.

As someone who chose Muskoka and Port Sydney as my home, I bring to our district a background and useful experience with national and

global leaders. Our G8 opportunity in 2010 will showcase our great strengths and introduce even more potential visitors.

I was quite surprised to see this isolationist perspective was highlighted during the very week that Parry Sound-Muskoka was part of an international invitation, benefitting countless businesses and industries in our riding. This is the sort of leadership of which I am very proud and which all of Parry Sound-Muskoka can appreciate.

Tony Clement, MP
Port Sydney

Timbits' soccer nets stolen

A set of soccer goalposts and nets from the U-4 Timbits program was stolen from the McCulley-Robertson complex last week.

Once again the Huntsville Soccer Club will incur unnecessary costs to replace the goalposts required for its program. In previous years goalposts at the soccer field at Lion's Lookout have been vandalized and the soccer club had to rush to replace them for the season. Now a set of nets has actually been stolen.

The new nets were introduced this year as an upgrade to the Timbits program and have proved popular with the players and coaches alike.

The nets measure 51"x38"x27" and are valued at approximately \$350.

Anyone with information should contact the soccer club at 783-3522 or the local OPP station.

Kenneth Donald
President,
Huntsville Soccer Club

Register for kids' triathlon today

For the 14th year in a row, Port Sydney will play host to the Muskoka Kids Triathlon (MKT).

Set to be held on Saturday, July 19, the event is being co-hosted by the Port Sydney Parks and Recreation department and the Town of Huntsville, with the sponsorship of numerous businesses and groups who assist financially or with in-kind donations. The MKT swim-bike-run fun challenge is open to kids both young and old (ages six to 96), with distances ranging from a 50-metre swim, a 3.1-kilometre bike and a 700-metre run for ages eight and under and up to a 400-metre swim, 12.4-kilometre bike and 3.2-kilometre run for the 15 years-of-age and over group.

The kids' tri is a long-standing triathlon, and Huntsville triathlete Jane Wolfe and Port Sydney resident Sharon Wallace are again co-organizing this event.

You can register online at www.muskokakidstri.com. The last day to register is this Saturday. Registration is limited to 270 entries and has filled up prior to the deadline for the past two years.

"For safety reasons and the physical layout of the transition area, the maximum number of participants that we can accommodate is 270," said Wallace. "We encourage everyone intending to participate in this year's kids' tri to register early to avoid disappointment. We expect to reach the maximum entries prior to July 12, and cannot accept any registrations once we

are full."

On July 11, there will be a bike check and race seminar at the Port Sydney beach at 7 p.m. Volunteer athletes will be on hand to explain to participants the rudiments of transition and what to expect during each leg of the race.

The Port Sydney Parks and Recreation is holding a triathlon training camp from July 7 to July 11 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. For more information or to register, contact the Huntsville Centennial Centre at 789-6421.

Lifejackets are permitted during the swim, but wet suits will not be allowed. Bike helmets are mandatory and must be fitted and worn correctly.

"Once again this year we will have a mandatory helmet check," said Wolfe. "We have been finding that in the past few years some of the participants have headed out on their bikes with ill-fitting helmets that would offer no protection if they were to fall off their bikes."

The cost to register this year is \$25 for youth and \$30 for those 19 years of age and over. There is an \$8 late fee after July 5. The price includes race entry, bike check, bathing cap, post-race barbecue, training seminar and a free t-shirt.

From 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. race course roads will be closed to traffic to ensure the safety of all participants, spectators and volunteers.

For information on becoming a sponsor or to volunteer, call Jane Wolfe at 789-8627 or Sharon Wallace at 787-0095.

MHP anniversary celebration an event not to miss

BY LAURA MACLEAN
HUNTSVILLE FORESTER

Muskoka Heritage Place (MHP) will be the place to be on Saturday, July 26 as the Golden Jubilee High Tea gets underway.

The event is being held to commemorate MHP's 50th anniversary and a slew of engaging activities have been planned for the entire community to participate in.

"Anytime something that belongs to the people can be supported through 50 years of changes in our society and is still active and supported, vibrant and relevant is a great deal," noted Teri Souter, executive director of MHP, on the calibre of the celebration for the historic site. "Our social and built heritage is built on our natural heritage. What we do here wouldn't be possible without the foundation and beauty of our natural heritage."

With gates opening at 10 a.m., the Golden

Jubilee High Tea will take place from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and there will be a free general admission for attendees.

To kick off the milestone, opening remarks will be made from Huntsville mayor Claude Doughty, Parry Sound-Muskoka MP Tony Clement and MPP Norm Miller. There will be the singing of O Canada and hand drumming by Shirley Hay. As well, there will be a First Nations blessing, a one-gun salute will be done by the Muskoka Militia, Poppa Jim's honey bee display, Maple Bluff Farms will be on site selling local maple products and the Muskoka Watershed Council will also be on hand. The Rotary Club of Huntsville are teaming up with the Friends of Muskoka Pioneer Village to announce 50 Trees for the Future, an initiative to help offset expected development pressures on the MHP site. In keeping with the natural theme, the museum's northern owls display will be available for viewing and those who attend can also "tie one on

with Craig the Fly-tie fisherman."

The event will also feature the launching of MHP's commemorative book, a moving pictures presentation and guitar and fiddle music provided by the Glen Reid Duo.

A highlight of the Golden Jubilee High Tea will be the chance to meet renowned local naturalist Bob Bowles, who will provide an information booth on Kids for Turtles as well as a display on butterfly gardens. Bowles will also distribute a total of 50 butterflies to attendees, which will be a part of a live butterfly release for the celebration.

Bowles is the regional co-ordinator for eastern Canada for the North American Butterfly Association.

According to an article he wrote for Lake Country Science and Nature, Bowles indicated that releasing butterflies is becoming a tradition at weddings, birthday parties, memorial tributes or testimonial gatherings. Landscape garden cen-

tres have realized they can increase their business by promoting butterflies and plants that butterflies visit for nectar. While packages are made up to sell for these occasions, Bowles stresses that a problem lies in the fact that with an increase in demand, tagged monarchs can be released in the fall well after the monarch have migrated from the area. The butterfly association also points out that monarchs purchased for release may have been shipped from California or are raised in captivity in unnatural conditions and don't have the migratory physiology to get them to Mexico for the winter.

"One of the things we hope to share with people is that if you're going to release butterflies, you need to know the correct environmentally-friendly and species-friendly way to do it," said Souter. "I think it will be exciting because it gives every person who is present a chance to have their thoughts and wishes come together with a spiritual singleness."



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