

# Heritage on the Hill

The Richmond Hill Historical Society, P.O. Box 61527, 9350 Yonge St., Richmond Hill, ON L4C 0C9  
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**March / April 2011**



## *Introducing Our New President*



I would like to introduce myself to the members of the The Richmond Hill Historical Society and our colleagues in the various community societies. As the new president of the RHHS, I thought it would be nice if you got to know me a little better.

My name is Andrea (nee Derry) Kulesh. My parents came to what was the Langstaff/Richvale area on Roosevelt Drive in 1955. I was a year old. The house behind us had ponies! I attended Charles Howitt P.S. up to Grade 7, Roselawn P.S. for Grade 8 and then to Langstaff H.S.

I moved away for 3 years and when I returned I moved to Richmond Hill "proper" on Sussex Avenue with my sister. I then returned to Toronto until 1980. During that time I finished a college program in Fashion & Business and ran my own clothing business for a few years. When I got married, my husband Tom and I moved back to the "Hill" on Roseview Avenue at the corner of Ruggles. Our home was snug and lovely - built in 1921 by Mr. Sanderson. We subsequently moved to our present home on Dunbarton Court and have just celebrated our 25<sup>th</sup> year here.

We have two children, Sasha and Mike, whom many of you have met as I have recruited them as "volunteers" for various RHHS functions!! Before they were born I worked in the city as a successful business manager in TV & Radio accounting. When the children were little my mother-in-law, Lynne Kulesh, was involved in a new Town

project at the newly established Heritage Centre. The Horticultural Society was planting a herb garden in the grounds. She put forth my name as a possible presenter for Town run programs and Maggie MacKenzie hired me for special programs at Christmas as a part time supervisor. I took to it like a fish to water and loved the house itself and the new challenges of establishing our first "museum" in Richmond Hill. I was able to incorporate my love for artifacts and my programming abilities to set up displays around the Town buildings. I decided to enter a post-graduate program with the Ontario Museum Association, earning a certificate in museum standards, display techniques, ethics in collections and all the tools required for working in a museum setting. It took 5 years but I came out with a certificate with honours. I really enjoyed the entire program. I made many new friends and learned a lot about the various types of museums.

I left the Heritage Centre after 7 years and began my career as a "Pioneer" (Historical Interpreter) at Black Creek Pioneer Village. I wear costume and have been the "seamstress" in Mackenzie House for several seasons. I work 8 months a year and that allows me time in the winter to help out with any displays or fundraising that the Society wishes to do. I also sat on the Town committee, Heritage Richmond Hill, for 4 years, helping to advise on our Town heritage

homes, buildings and land-scapes, finishing in 2010.

Over the years I have been involved in many community initiatives. I joined the RHHS seven years ago and have enjoyed the programming, fundraising and all the new directives that our Society has joined in on. I look forward to the future in this regard.

It is always a time of adjustment when the executive changes. Cheryl Butler, our now Past President, was able to set a course to bring our Society into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with an established annual bursary, updated electronic equipment to enhance our programs, and beginning the work on a new RHHS website that should be established in the next few months. Cheryl has done a tremendous job and our Society membership has been maintained for many years as a result of her efforts. Many Historical Societies are failing where we are evolving and are successful in our new endeavours. I hope to follow in her successful footsteps and to help her initiatives to blossom in the future.

I look forward to working with all of our other wonderful directors on the executive committee.

Your new President

*Andrea Kulesh*

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Photograph by Brenda Dillman

## Thank You, Cheryl

Cheryl Butler has been our hard-working and much appreciated President. After many long years of service, she decided to step down last year. At our February meeting Andrea Kulesh, our new President, paid tribute to Cheryl's many achievements. On behalf of the Society, Nancy Price presented Cheryl with a lovely floral arrangement. After the meeting we all shared in a cake to celebrate Cheryl's term as President and congratulate her on all that she has done for the Society.

## We're Thinking About You, Bob

Bob Blackburn is our Vice President. He invites the Board of Directors to have their monthly meetings at his office and pays the postage for our newsletter. He has been off work for some time now because of an accident. He is not expected to return to work for a couple of months yet. We want him to know that we wish him well and hope that he will soon be up and about.

## Appeal for Newsletter Contributions

We are always looking for contributions in the way of letters, articles, stories, photos, reports and anecdotes. The next edition will be the May/June issue. Do you have any reminiscences of Springtime in Richmond Hill - or elsewhere? Do you have pictures of the Spring Fair? Did you go on a Spring picnic or have a special Spring school event? Did you have any Spring traditions. The most common, but not popular, Spring custom is Spring Cleaning. Does that jog any memories? Please send any offerings to me at my e-mail address, which is on the front page, or write it down and give it to me at the next meeting. Please note that I reserve the right to edit or condense articles but I promise to be kind!  
Alison

### The Richmond Hill Historical Society Board of Directors 2011

<i>Past President :</i>	Cheryl Butler
<i>President:</i>	Andrea Kulesh
<i>Vice President:</i>	Bob Blackburn
<i>Secretary:</i>	Avonelle Monkman
<i>Treasurer:</i>	Laura McMullen
<i>Membership:</i>	Bert Hunt and Elva Hunt
<i>Programming:</i>	Kevin Dark
<i>Publicity:</i>	Linda Clark
<i>Director:</i>	Jeanne Hughes
<i>Director:</i>	Joyce Horner
<i>Newsletter Editor:</i>	Alison Hughes
<i>Social Convenors:</i>	Pearl Wilson and Donna Smith
<i>Heritage Richmond Hill Representatives:</i>	Cheryl Butler and Joyce Horner
<i>Heritage Centre Advisory Board Representative:</i>	Bert Hunt

## Easter Bunnies

Penny Parmenter

Penny, a long time member of our Historical Society (1970's), recalls her early days in Leaside when it was still considered country in the 1940's. Her pet rabbit, Polly, had little bunnies in time for Easter. A photographer from The Star came up to her home to photograph the event and the bunnies were taken to her school so all the primary classes could file into her classroom and see the babies. Penny's mother tied little yellow and mauve bows around their necks for the occasion.



THESE EIGHT little white bunnies are here in plenty of time for Easter. Shown with them is Penny Parmenter, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. G. T. Parmenter, Bessborough Drive, Leaside. Proud mother rabbit is shown alongside the basket of bunnies

## A Royal Luncheon

Penny Parmenter

The Richmond Hill United Church is having a "Royal Luncheon" on Saturday, April 30<sup>th</sup> at 1:00pm. This will be the day after the Royal Wedding. The complete luncheon, plus the Queen's presence, is \$15.00. Hats and gloves are optional. Part of the luncheon is of course "Chicken a la King". Tickets can be bought from Penny Parmenter - 905-883-3507. It will be a very entertaining afternoon.

## Are You Related to Harold Eric Wilson?

Richmond Hill Public Library recently received a request from a Dutch organization called WW2GO which is an abbreviation for Second World War on Groeree-Overflakkee. This is a heritage foundation for the preservation of all that belongs to the war years 1940-1945. They are searching for the relatives of the crew of the Boston AL737, OM-U which crashed near their island on December 6, 1942. One of the airmen was Warrant Officer First Class Harold Eric Wilson. Mr. Wilson was the son of Dr. John P. Wilson who practiced medicine in Richmond Hill between 1918 and 1962. His father died in 1969 and, according to his obituary, had a son named Fred living in Richmond Hill. Another son, Dr. W. John Wilson had been the Chief of Pediatrics at Scarborough Centenary Hospital.

If you have any information regarding Mr. Wilson, please contact:

Cameron Knight  
 Richmond Hill Public Library  
 1 Atkinson Street  
 Richmond Hill, ON L4C 0H5  
 Tel: (905) 884-9288 ext. 320  
 Fax: (905) 884-6544  
 E-mail: cknight@rhpl.ca

## Upcoming Events

### March Meeting

March 21, 2011

Milling about Ontario

Assist farmer P. J. Fitzgerald (a.k.a. John Warburton) as he threshes, winnows, and

grinds wheat into flour. Then, follow the industrialization of the province with the focus on local water-powered Grist Mills. Learn how they worked, where they were, and where they are.

John Warburton, UE, is a freelance historian who, among other things, has given performances at many venues across the Province as broom maker, farmer/rope maker and phrenologist

### April Meeting

April 18, 2011

Celebrate the forthcoming Royal Wedding of Prince William and Catherine Middleton. Enjoy an informative talk by Norman McMullen and Kevin Dark on previous Royal Weddings and a display of Royal Commemoratives from their extensive collection.

# *A Medley of Memories*

## *Roseview Avenue 1930 - 1943 - Part 1*

By Jim Monkman

*A Special Thank You:*

to Joyce and Keith Teetzel for correcting my errors in the spelling of surnames and for reminding me of incidents I had forgotten; and to Avonelle, for once again correcting my grammar and punctuation.

J. M.

### FORWARD

Once each week, for the past couple of years, Avonelle and I have been meeting Bernice and Bob Edmunds<sup>(1)</sup> for a noon or evening meal. Bob, Bernice and I were raised on Roseview Avenue. In 1956, when Avonelle moved to Richmond Hill to take a position as a teacher at the McConaghy Public School, she lived on Roseview for a while when she boarded at Bernice's parent's, Mr. & Mrs. Bert Cook. We have been friends for a long time.

I find that when two or more people, who have common memories of their younger days, are together the conversation generally is about their recollections of those times. One evening after such a discussion during dinner, Bob remarked how lucky we were to have been raised in such a secure friendly environment where doors were seldom locked, neighbours shared problems and pleasures and if a child needed help he or she could go to any house and get it.

Bob's comment stuck in my mind and as we drove home, I recalled that someone else who had grown up on Roseview had made a similar comment but I couldn't remember whom it had been. My mind must have worked on that problem overnight for the next morning I knew that I had read it! I went to our file of copies of *Heritage On The Hill* and found an article titled "My Recollections Of Roseview Avenue Richmond Hill 1939 to 1950" by Joyce (Wilde) Teetzel. It was an excellent article and I reread it. In the closing paragraphs, Joyce remarked that



Picture from: <http://old-photos.blogspot.com/2008/10/bb-gun.html>

many of the children with whom she had grown up had remained good friends throughout their lives and wished that today others might enjoy a similar pleasant and safe lifestyle.

I agreed with Joyce and Bob and thought that perhaps I should share some of my memories of those happy times.

### A MEDLEY OF MEMORIES

#### 1. Older Boys

My brother, George, was six years older than me.. His Roseview Avenue chums were Erle Cook and Bob Edmunds. John Tracy, son of Y.B. Tracy, the agent of the C.N.R., and Harold Reesor, who lived on Markham Road, usually joined them in their adventures.

I vividly recall one bright sunny day, when I was about five years of age, following George and Erle Cook as they strolled east on Roseview. They stopped at Bob Edmunds' home and Bob came out and joined them.

I thought they were going down to the creek but, where Lawrence Avenue is now, they turned south at a path that led across a vacant field to Markham Road. I stayed well back and they didn't notice that I was trailing after them until they had crossed Markham Road and stopped in the shade of a large tree beside Harold Reesor's home. Then, they noticed me waiting to cross the road. George immediately began shouting at me to go on home. I ignored his shouting and joined them beside the tree. George took me by the arm and told me that I couldn't stay with them that I had to go home. At this point, Bob spoke up and said " Oh let him stay with us, George. Jimmy will be O.K." On similar occasions, it was always Bob who said, "Let him stay".

During WWII, Bob joined the Air Force. Before he was assigned away from home, he gave me his air rifle, sometimes referred to as a BB gun. It was beautiful little rifle with a chrome

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## Our New WebSite



As our president, Andrea Kulesh, announced at the February meeting, the Richmond Hill Historical Society now has its own website which we hope to be fully functioning by mid April. The address is: [www.rhhs.ca](http://www.rhhs.ca). The website is being created for us by Greg Barrow whose web development company is at [www.tubbydesigns.com](http://www.tubbydesigns.com). His company is named after his grandfather, Tubby Barrow, otherwise known as Elgin Barrow who had an arena named after him.

For those of you who have a computer, please have a look at the website. There is a lot of information about our society there - and more will follow. Very soon you will even be able to access our newsletter on line.

We have received congratulations on "a wonderful website" from Andrea Izzo, the Communications coordinator at the Ontario Historical Society. She also thanked us for mentioning that we are an affiliated member of the OHS. So we are off to a good start.

## *A Medley of Memories*

*(Continued from page 4)*

barrel. Bob had looked after it and it was just like new. I never expected to own such a lovely gun.

The next summer a school mate asked me to lend it to him so he could take it with him when he went on holiday to a cottage for a couple of weeks. With some trepidation I agreed to lend it to him. On his return, he came to me very upset. When packing to return home, the rifle was included in a bundle of things on a roof rack on top of their car. When they arrived home, that bundle had slipped out and my rifle was lost and gone forever.

Accidents happen. It was difficult, but I forgave him.

### Other Boys

There were several boys in my age group. Keith Teetzel lived next door and Gordon Leece lived in the second house west of Keith.. Junior (Lorne Jr.) Sheardown lived beside Bob Edmunds.

Shortly after the start of WWII, the

Langstaff Jail Farm which was owned by the City of Toronto, was closed. The property was taken over by the Provincial Government and was converted to a residence for men who suffered from mental disabilities and required care. Patients and staff were moved from a facility in St. Thomas. Mr. Wilde and Mr. Houghton, two members of the staff, who came together with their families moved into homes on Roseview Avenue. Mr. & Mrs. Wilde moved into the house at the south east corner of Roseview and Lawrence. They had one daughter, Joyce<sup>(2)</sup>. Mr. and Mrs. Houghton moved into the house west of Bob Edmunds. They had one daughter, Nila<sup>(3)</sup>, and two sons, Carson and Eric. The boys were welcome additions to our gang and joined in all our activities.

Lloyd Grainger was a couple of years younger than us and lived in the last house beside the creek. It was near the top of a hill and was connected to the shipping room of the greenhouse by an inside stairway. Bruce Chamney lived on Church Street at the south west corner of Lorne

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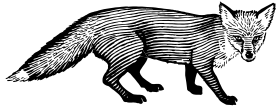
Avenue and Church Street and as the boys on Roseview were his nearest neighbours he was often with us.

The Agar family moved into the second house from Church Street on the North side of Roseview. They had two boys, Dale and Ray. By the time they arrived, we were older and involved with a variety of other leisure time activities and never got to know them.

### NOTES

1. Bernice Cook married Bob Edmunds
2. Joyce Wilde married Keith Teetzel
3. Nila Houghton married Erle Cook

(Part 2 of the article will be in the May/June issue.)



## Our Beginnings at Willow Grove Farmhouse

by Marie Thomson

Doug and I lived for two years in the Horner family's old farmhouse on Leslie Street. We had purchased the nearby and equally old Horner-Elliott farmhouse, and were working to make it livable. Land on the north side of Major Mackenzie Dr., east of Bayview was still being farmed, the original farm houses dotted about, each with their own long lane running between the fields of hay, corn and soybeans.

One day Doug dropped me off at our lane and I walked up to the house while he did errands. It was a sunny day and the lane was bordered with fruit trees that had self-seeded from the old orchards, along with the assorted shrubs and bushes of a typical farm hedgerow. Further on was a grove of willows; goldfinch darting about in the branches, then a little bridge over the creek and a bend in the lane. Only then could you see the house, surrounded by more trees and shrubs.

For me, when I first came to this house, it was instant love. It was peaceful, built and lived in by a peace-loving people. It spoke to me and I longed to live in it. The house had stood empty for a few years and animals had moved in. It needed a good dose of t.l.c. and I knew Doug and I were the ones to provide it.

On this day there were different animals here. Five young foxes watched me, looking like they wanted to run, but too curious to do so. Only the sound of birdsong could be heard in the quiet countryside and I stood in awe of their exquisite faces and bright eyes. One by one they started to leave, the largest one last, taking a few steps then turning back once again to look at me, ears pricked, eyes inquisitive.

The next time the foxes came there were just four. They were growing - beautiful, bushy long tails and sleek bodies glowing red-bronze in the sunlight. But developers were

ravaging the farmland, removing the topsoil, digging huge ditches for the sewers and waterlines and removing the trees. Bobcats and chainsaws took down the grove of willows. It was spring and the birds' nests and unhatched eggs spattered the ground, the adults flying about, calling in distress. The men bragged that they had taken down more than 100 trees that day.

But the foxes came back, eventually just three, then two. It was about four years since I first saw them and the two were with us for a while. Then just one, the largest and most inquisitive. Each time he passed through, he would stop and gaze at us - a silent "hello".

A large pond was built adjacent to our yard and for the fox it was a wonderful hunting ground. The mice and voles, disturbed by the development were easy to find. He would stand, back hunched, feet together, then jump straight up into the air and pounce, looking comical and graceful at the same time.








Once, he was tempted to take on a Canada Goose. The goose, who seriously outweighed the fox, kept eating, not at all threatened. Tail swaying, belly to the ground, the fox inched toward the bird, only to back off once again. When the fox was around, we stopped everything, we couldn't get enough of this beautiful, amusing creature.

One day we found him, lifeless and curled up under our porch where we had been sitting many times when he wandered by. It was as though he had come home to die and we buried him nearby, by the path he traveled. Often, when I walk there, I remember that elegant animal, survivor, overcoming everything we had done to his world. He was an inspiration and a friend who can never be forgotten.



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