

These tall tales true; Elgin honor roll grows

When Lorne Spicer and Arthur McCormick, of Shedden, start to tell you tall tales, keep a straight face because their tall tales are true.

When the two men received the most recent Ontario Forestry Association's Honor Roll of trees, they were more than a little upset that, of the more than 100 trees listed, only one was from Elgin County.

LISTS TREES

The honor roll lists Ontario trees that, because of their height, girth or branch spread, are rated as the largest of their kind.

"There was only one on before, we got five more on now and we figure there are 15 more that should go on," Mr. Spicer said.

Other Elgin County residents have reported three additional trees, bringing to nine the total now on the list.

Among Mr. Spicer and Mr. McCormick's finds is a silver maple tree — 107 feet tall, with a spread of 79 feet and a trunk girth of 21 feet, 10 inches.

BIGGEST MAPLE

The silver maple, in a farmer's field at RR 4, Iona Station, is the biggest maple of any kind in Ontario, Mr. Spicer says.

Mr. Spicer says the tree is relatively young, only about 150 to 200 years old.

"They're a fast-growing tree", he said.

The two men began their search only a few years ago, and Mr. Spicer says "We just enjoy trees."

Members and friends of the Ontario Forestry Association took part in a recent tree tour of Elgin.

Coming from as far away as Toronto, tree lovers toured the county from Shedden and Iona Station to Port Stanley to admire large trees native to the county.



BIG SEED — Pine trees reproduce with pinecones for seeds and the size of this cone, from a Ponderosa pine off Lake Road in Dunwich, is a

good indication of the size of the tree it comes from. Holding the cone is Lorne Spicer, of Shedden.

These two Shedden residents have a very interesting hobby. At the November 1985 meeting of the Shedden W I, Mr. Spicer showed slides of many of these large trees and of many other scenes in our area. The meeting was convened by the agricultural convenor Beth Vicary.

(More pictures on the next page.)

St. Thomas Times Journal
June 11, 1984
B. Vicary
Shedden Tweedsmuir
History

Mr. Spicer and Mr. McCormick spend many hours searching for large trees in Southwold Township. They had the officials measure a Scotch pine at the front of St. 1st lot 17 SNEBR (owned by Donald Vicary) but it wasn't quite large enough to set a record. More story and a picture on previous page.

Shedden Women's Institute

E. Vicary



MAGNIFICENT COTTONWOOD — Not a small man, Arthur McCormick appears midget-like beside a 97-foot tall eastern cot-

tonwood. The tree, with a girth close to 27 feet, stands alone in a cultivated field at RR, St. Thomas.



DWARFED BY TREE — Dwarfed by the enormous trunk of silver maple tree, Lorne Spicer, front, and Ar-

thur McCormick, of Shedden, pose in front of the tree at RR 4, Iona Station.



DEB PROTHERO/OUR COMMUNITY PRESS

LIFETIME DEVOTEE: Lorne Spicer, centre, is the proud recipient of Kettle Creek Conservation Authority's conservation stewardship award, presented last week at the KCCA's 30th annual dinner. Here he is congratulated by KCCA '95 chairman Gord Campbell, left, and David Marr, chairperson, award nomination committee. Spicer has devoted his lifetime to environmental projects and as Marr said, "KCCA appreciates the great strides he has made to increase public awareness of the natural treasures of the Kettle Creek watershed and Elgin County."

Spicer receives conservation tribute

GLANWORTH - Lorne Spicer was presented the Kettle Creek Conservation Authority's (KCCA) 10th annual Conservation Stewardship Award at its 30th annual meeting here t Wednesday.

Spicer, a lifelong naturalist and 515 species birder is involved in several environmental projects. He may be best known for his work with the Heritage Tree committee in St. Thomas, West Elgin and soon to be in East Elgin. In a pagetwo OCP interview, Spicer credited "walks in the bush with grandparents" and a renewed acquaintance with Arthur McCormick at Pearce Williams with steering him toward things natural. School kids and nursing home residents alike across Elgin have benefitted from his volunteer visits with slide presentations of travel, nature, flowers and birds.

Recently St. Thomas was assisted by Spicer in the setup of the storm water management pond and artificial wetland between St. Joseph's High School and the Doug Tarry Complex. David Marr, nomination chairperson, said the KCCA appreciates the "great strides he has made to increase public awareness of the natural treasures of the Kettle Creek watershed and Elgin County."

KCCA's first elected chairperson ('66) said, "the business of the authority then and now is spreading the word to people about conservation."

SHEDDEN W. I.

Dora McArthur - Curator

Apr. 1996

One man's love of trees at the roots of special books

Carefully kept notes helped in the collection of maps to the heritage plants. There are more than 200 trees that can be visited.

By Christine Dirks
Freelance Writer

Arthur McCormick is 90. He says his treeing days are almost over.

During the past 30 years, the retired farmer has travelled countless kilometres in Elgin County and St. Thomas by car and foot looking at trees.

Though he has always been a tree lover, it was his introduction to Ontario's Honor Roll Trees program that rekindled the Shedden man's interest and confirmed his suspicions.

"There aren't many of the really big trees around any more."

Still, Arthur McCormick found some impressive ones, among them a silver maple with a circumference of more than 7.2 metres (24 feet), now on the Honor Roll and considered to be the largest silver maple in the province.

In addition, he developed an appreciation for the range of tree species in the area.

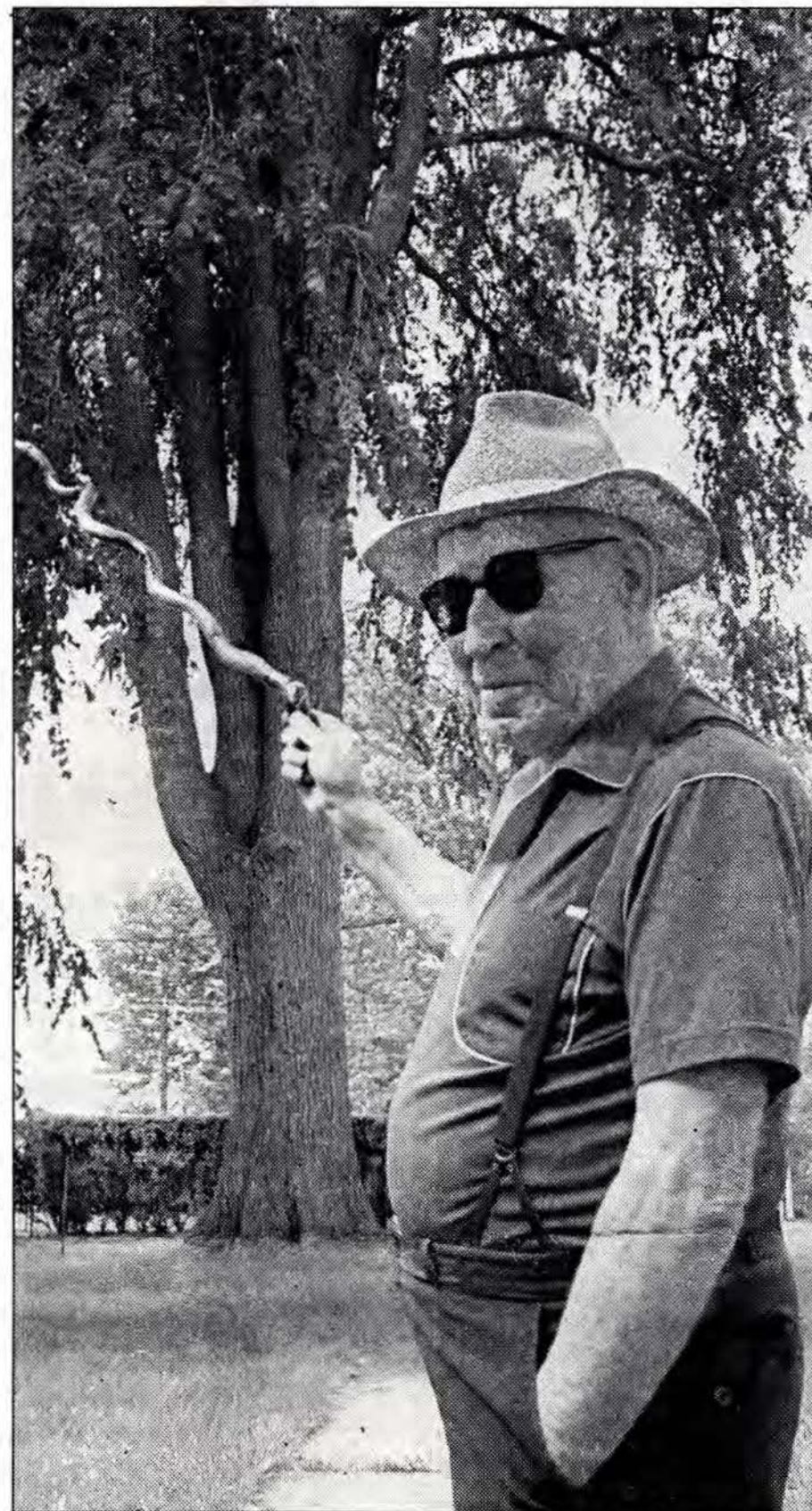
NOTES: Whenever he spotted a good example, McCormick would make a note of the location (often by farm name), tree type and estimated age, on bits of paper, matchbooks — whatever was handy. At home, the notes were tucked into drawers and cupboards.

He had no idea they'd be the basis of an impressive volunteer public education program on heritage trees.

Lorne Spicer, also a Shedden resident, who operates a mobile feed mill, had photographed trees for years — often focusing on the ones that "you can't help but look at." Spicer's slide show was popular with local clubs. One day, while doing business with McCormick, the conversation turned to trees. The two soon began treeing together.

On one of their excursions, Spicer located an unusually large eastern cottonwood, measuring more than nine metres (30 feet) around and standing 28.5 metres (95 feet) tall. It's also on the Honor Roll.

In 1990 Spicer and McCormick, with retired St. Thomas parks super-



BILL IRONSIDE / The London Free Press

Ninety-year-old Arthur McCormick of Shedden shows off a large American Elm on Orchard Street in Shedden. The tree could be at least 150 years old.

In 1990 Spicer and McCormick, with retired St. Thomas parks superintendents Marshall Field and Frank Lattanzio, formed a heritage tree committee.

The committee then verified all the information, secured permission from owners to ensure the trees were accessible to the public, and labeled the 219 trees using a small metal sign with a "spring" nail system which expands as the tree grows.

But there was still something missing says Spicer.

"We had them labeled but we needed to get the public to them. A map seemed a good idea."

RESEARCHERS: Field and Lattanzio suggested Spicer and McCormick meet with parks employee Catharine Spratley, who also had "a thing for trees" and had researched the history, folklore and medicinal aspects of many species.

Spratley suggested a combination map and brochure, then volunteered her design and writing services to create it.

She was intrigued on hearing of McCormick's "tree notes." One day Spratley and Spicer visited McCormick at his home.

The timing was fortuitous says Spratley. "Arthur was cleaning house. He had a pile of things for burning, including his notes. There were hundreds of them."

Spratley asked if she could save them as they'd help with the research. McCormick, was surprised.

"I'd done it for myself. I didn't think anyone else would want them. I was finished with them."

Spratley says that without those notes, and Spicer's documents, producing the maps would have been an arduous task.

"They had done an amazing

Ninety-year-old Arthur McCormick of Shedden shows off a large American Elm on Orchard Street in Shedden. The tree could be at least 150 years old. It's included in a special book of maps that lead to the many heritage trees in St. Thomas and West Elgin.

amount of work."

Lorne Spicer says he'd have "an awful time" picking a favorite tree.

He likens it to choosing a favorite child. "We've got six kids and 10 grandchildren. You look at them for their unique characteristics."

HUMANS: This mental leap from tree form to human form is not uncommon writes Michael Perlman in *The Power of Trees: The Reforesting of the Soul*.

Perlman says there is a "simultaneous sense of intimacy and difference between human and tree life."

Aside from their ecological and esthetic value, Perlman believes trees possess a psychological value with root, branch, limb, leaf and shadow providing "multitudinous metaphoric analogies."

He thinks the status we accord trees stems from our recognition of their "upright stature."

Yet, for all our documenting and analyzing, Perlman feels our connection with trees borders on the inexplicable.

He writes: "Trees matter to us in more ways than we realize."

Special Places is published on alternate Saturdays. If you have comments or suggestions, please contact London and Region editor Richard Hoffman at 667-4524 or fax 667-4528.

THE MAPS

► Copies of *A Guide to Heritage Trees in St. Thomas* (69 trees) and *A Guide to Heritage Trees in West Elgin* (150 trees) are available from the Heritage Tree Committee, St. Thomas parks and recreation department, Box 520, City Hall, St. Thomas, N5P 3V7, or phone (519) 631-9990.

► Publications are funded by Canada Trust Friends of the Environment and the St. Thomas Field Naturalist Club.

► A third map on East Elgin is planned for 1998 as are postcards of outstanding trees such as a 350 year-old red oak in Yarmouth Township.

1997

Don't McArthur - Editor
Shedden WI
Tweedsmuir History
1998

COMMUNITY

ROSY'S HELPER:

Lydia Killins, 93, of Shedden is a keen supporter of the proposed Southwold Keystone Complex. She parlays her hobbies of crocheting, quilting and refurbishing orphaned dolls into fundraisers. Dolls, an afghan and quilt will be auctioned at on June 13 during the opening ceremonies of Rosy Rhubarb Days. The ceremonies take place at 7 p.m. on the lawn of the Old Schoolhouse Restaurant. (Contributed)



50th Anniversary



Don and Chris Firby

In honour of Don and Chris Firby, their family will be hosting an Open House at the Lawrence Station Hall on Feb. 14 from 1-4 p.m. Best wishes only, please.

1998

Dora McArthur - Curator
Shedden WI
Tweedsmuir History
1998



MASON 60 YEARS — E. S. (Ed.) Down of Shedden was honored at Warren Lodge, 120, Fingal, when he was presented with a pin in recognition of his having completed 60 years in Masonry. Mr. Down continues quite active in the order still serving as treasurer of Warren Lodge. Prior to the presentation, Mr. Down, along with

Wilfred Silcox and Ted Hagerty, 50-year members, were feted at a banquet in Knox Presbyterian Church, Fingal. Looking at the pin are, (left to right) Mr. Down, Mr. Hagerty, Mr. Silcox, Rt.-Wor. Bruce McCall of Embro, guest speaker; Rt.-Wor. Bruce McLean of Melbourne, district deputy, and Glen Trace, who made the presentation.

SHEDDEN WOMEN'S INSTITUTE
TWEEDSMUIR HISTORY
Dora McArthur - Curator
March 1990

DR. CONNIE ROBINSON

Is pleased to announce the
opening of her

FAMILY PRACTICE

at the

D.A. MONTEITH CENTRE

in Shedden

on March 4th, 1991

For appointment please call **764-2245**

Monday thru Friday 9-12



Dr. Connie Robinson -Mar.4,1991

SHEDDEN WOMEN'S Institute

Tweedsmuir History
Dora McArthur Curator
May, 1991

*"Too many people sit back and exist and let
life pass them by... I'm not going to do that"*

FEB. 21, 1996

ve sneakers, will make rural calls

HAVE



SHEDDEN W. I.
Dora McArthur -
Curator
Apr. 1996

Rural doctor/marathoner Connie Robinson walks a fine line in
her basement workout room.

ST. THOMAS — Connie Robinson runs more than her practise in Shedden.

Dr. Robinson, 37, set up in Shedden five years ago after a few years as a 'locum tenens' or fill-in doctor here. Although the vistas are different and she sees more walk-in traffic due to farm accidents, she said the two situations are alike.

"I don't think there is a really big difference between there and in town," she said. One difference is that farmers are "more seasonal," meaning they come in during the winter to get treatment for non-emergency medical problems.

When asked if being a rural doctor poses problems, Robinson said some patients had an adjustment period.

"I get the older farmer that's a bit hesitant," she said. "Oh, I've never been to a female doctor before" is a common remark, but they get over the awkwardness quickly. "The old farmers have been very adaptable to change," she said of her patients, many former clients of retired Doc Monteith's. "They've probably been the least opposed to the change."

Although her practice is almost 50% men and women, Robinson said many young women come to her because they are more comfortable dealing with a woman.

But she doesn't want her gender to be a factor when it comes to why patients choose her.

"I prefer people coming to me because of their faith in me, not because I'm female. I went into medicine to be a doctor, not a female doctor."

But there are differences, she said. "There are things that will always be a maternal instinct," she said, adding, though, that her husband Cam (a stock broker) has been a big help around the house. "I don't want to work 12, 13, 14 hour days," she said, although she appreciates those doctors that log long days. Robinson prefers to find some balance between work and home, something many of her male colleagues have forsaken.

"I like what I do but there are many other things I like to do. Life is so short and there's a ton of things I want to do. Maybe you can't have it all, but you can come pretty darn close."

Though Robinson has given up emergency duty because of her busy practice and to spend more time with her family, she still has hospital privileges, conducts a family planning clinic once a month at the Health Unit and is on call one night every two weeks.

Her motivation to become a doctor came from an unrealized dream of her father's, sometime Our Community Press historical writer and retired high school teacher/principal Wayne Paddon.

"My dad had always wanted to be a doctor," she said. She also had a "terrific family doctor" in Dr. Andy Clarke.

Robinson has more on the go than mending broken bones. The mother of three (Jordan, 7, Jessica, 6, and Meghan, 3) has qualified to run in the 100th Boston Marathon this year with a time of 3:43 at the Toronto Marathon, October, her sixth marathon. She first competed in Detroit in '88. She has also competed in the Columbus Marathon, the Bay to Breakers 15km in San Fran (with 80,000 other runners), a 30k run in Hamilton, many local 12km and others. Races she would like to run include the Big Sur in Carmel, Calif., and the New York and Chicago marathons.

"What I like about (entering) marathons is that it's a good reason to travel to these places," she said.

The Lynhurst School, Southwold P.S., Parkside Collegiate and University of Western Ontario alumni said a UWO anatomy teacher who would often talk about his running experiences, including the Boston Marathon, motivated her to step up her running.

"I thought that was really neat and that inspired me," Robinson said. "I thought 'I want to run the Boston.'"

She averages 45 miles a week on the road, time she cherishes.

"It just started out as my time for me, time for myself," she said. "I didn't start running because it was good for me."

Running becomes a good-for-you addiction, said Robinson, with most runners experiencing a natural high.

"You know you're hooked when you don't get out for a run for a couple of days and you're chomping at the bit to get out there."

Robinson also participates in interval training at UWO, weighs trains, mountain bikes and golfs. She's a member of St. Thomas Striders, coaches kids' soccer and refinishes furniture.

Duncan Watterworth caught wind that his neighbor was to be interviewed and offered this story:

When Robinson first took up mountain biking last spring, she was a tad overzealous, going over her handlebars on her first outing. Undaunted, she bought a new bike, this time with foot straps on the pedals, and the next time out found herself having an unexpected bath when she couldn't get her feet out of the pedals while crossing Kettle Creek.

"Having a sense of humor is very important," Robinson smiled when learning Watterworth had shared that anecdote.

"She's a person who goes for the gusto in a very determined way," Watterworth said. He added that Robinson has "an awful lot of determination" to run six days a week and his wife, Barb, is running now.

Robinson's newest endeavor is orthotics, custom-made shoe insoles that help correct lower extremity problems for runners and people — like factory workers — who stand all day. "I have been wearing orthotics in my running shoes for the past four, five years for knee pain. They have totally taken care of the problem," she said.

Robinson makes the insoles, a polyurethane compound inside an EVA insole, and sells them to her patients and others out of her office.

"They don't help everybody," she said, "but they're a better alternative than medicine." To her knowledge, no one else deals in orthotics in Elgin.

Robinson called her mother, Lois, "a great role model" and her greatest inspiration. After raising three

Continued from page 2

kids (Robinson has two brothers, Bob, 40, of Vancouver and John, of Hamilton), Lois worked in offices of former Conservative politicians John Wise, Ron McNeil, Ken Monteith.

This is how Robinson summarizes how she approaches life:

"I work hard and I play hard. I have a great time."

Robinson borrowed from Nike. "Just do it, the Nike phrase," said, "a wonderful phrase. I accomplish a lot in my day instead of wasting time worrying about it. Many people sit back and exist, let life pass them by and I'm going to do that...life is too short and there is too much I want to

SHELDEN W. I.
Dora McArthur -
Curator
Apr. 1996

Continued on page 7

Profile

D. A. MONTEITH M.D.

Shedden Ontario

David A. Monteith was born in London, Ontario in 1911. He attended The University of Western Ontario, graduating from Medical School in 1937. After a one-year internship at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto, Dr. Monteith went to Bermuda where he worked for one year in Queen Charlotte Hospital.

Returning to Canada, the Doctor set up practice in Camlachie and later in Forest, both locations in Lambton County.

Dr. Monteith started his practice in Shedden in 1946, and it has been the good fortune of Elgin County residents that he has remained in this area for these forty years.

David Monteith and Maribelle Jones of Dunwich Township, a Registered Nurse, were married in October 1939. They have two sons and a daughter. Dale and Judy farm the home farms. Gary farms on the Gore Road with his wife, Bernice, and their two daughters and a son. For many years the Monteith Hereford cattle were a familiar sight at local fairs and at The Royal Winter Fair, and have taken many blue ribbons.

Dr. Monteith has always had a keen interest in politics, having run for the Conservative nomination in Elgin riding in 1958, and has run as an independent in two elections. 'Doc' has had many a chuckle from replies to letters he has written to certain ministers at Queen's Park. It is always interesting (and enlightening) during an election year to get Doc's slant on the issues.

Dr. Monteith has been a trustee on The Elgin County Board of Education since its inception in 1969, serving as Chairman of the Board from November 1981 to December 1982. Prior to 1969 he was a trustee on The Central Elgin District High School Board for 14 years. During his tenure with the Board, he has served on numerous committees. Of special note is his many years of service on The Advisory Committee for Vocational Courses, and his input and guidance on that Committee has contributed greatly to classroom learning for the students of Elgin County.

WE SALUTE YOU DOC!

Our counsellor, our confidant, our physician,

Our Friend



David Monteith poses with some of the cattle he keeps on his farm outside Shedden.

Ed Heal of The Free Press

Doc's life is full and that's no bull

Greg van Moorsel
The Free Press

SHEDDEN — Head bowed in the afternoon, arms propped against a pasture fence, the elderly man reads the hand-written poem aloud, interrupted only by the snorting of a nearby bull.

*the farmer keeps them all alive
who gives a damn if he survives?*

physician, Dr. David (Doc) Monteith, does — it's why he wrote his poem. Any time the country doctor and gentleman farmer has something important to say, he puts it in verse — perfect metre and rhyme scheme, and you. He once wrote Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson a poem. Mike even replied, in a poem of course.

Nobody's going to read a four-page letter," said Monteith, Southwold Township's only doctor and a practitioner in Shedden since 1946. But put yourself in the other guy's shoes. After I read the first two lines of a poem, it kind of tles in and the guy says: 'Hey, I want to finish s.'"

It's that putting himself "in the other guy's shoes" — not the stories about bringing babies to the world on back country roads or being paid in produce or pigs — that makes Monteith intriguing.

The farmer is, the 75-year-old doctor has stood in other people's shoes so often it's hard to tell which pair is his own.

At home on his beef farm, Monteith reminds me of Grandpa Walton of television's The Waltons. He might even be mistaken for some of the

rural patients he sees at St. Thomas-Elgin General Hospital or in his makeshift office in the lunch room of Shedden's fire hall, two kilometres down the road.

"Ever see a turkey like that?" Monteith asked with a grin, gesturing at a scrawny bird making fast tracks in the cluttered farm yard. "I don't know what kind it is exactly. The vet, he doesn't know either."

The tour of his cattle barn and farm yard over. Monteith ambles up to a pasture fence to scratch the nose of an affectionate Hereford bull named Blister. He said it was "just natural" for him to take up farming when he decided to become a rural doctor.

"This way you get to know a little about the guy you're dealing with. You get to understand his problems, what he likes and dislikes."

*For those who think his crops are free,
Put seed in soil and wait and see ...*

The son of a desk sergeant for the London police department, Monteith worked a few summers as a constable to help pay his way through medical school at the University of Western Ontario. He graduated in 1937, interned in Toronto and worked in Bermuda before settling down in Forest. In 1946, he moved to Shedden.

Four generations of Southwold residents have since known Doc as their physician. No one gets an appointment to see Monteith, "my patients just get in line and take their turn" but he still makes house calls and assists in operations.

Others know Monteith, who has one son and a daughter, as their school board trustee. He's been on the Elgin County board of education

since 1969 and served 14 years before that on the Central Elgin High School board of education.

Monteith also has dabbled in provincial politics. He ran unsuccessfully as an independent Elgin riding in the 1958 provincial byelection after losing the Conservative nomination.

Ronald McNeil, who is still the riding's MP. Monteith still insists it was 10. Monteith made another unsuccessful bid for the nomination in 1959 and stood for election as an independent in 1967.

"It was a good education." Back in Shedden, just a stone's throw from the village's only traffic light, there's a large sign designating the site as the future home of the D. A. Monteith Medical Centre. Monteith frowns at the mention of that honor.

"My attitude is that you serve your community and forget about the damned plaques and stuff. You get more recognition from keeping my mouth shut than if I say anything. That way, pretty soon someone's going to ask what I'm up to."

Some people don't have to ask. Take a few unnamed bureaucrats at Queen's Park, for example. Monteith once fired off a letter to the special minister in Toronto and was told to reply that he was "a little off base." He's signed all his letters to that ministry as "a little off base."

"You've probably met a weirdo today, son. One who's a bit different."

*So in conclusion let me say
Ignoring farmers as today
When hunger strikes you'll sorry be
No sympathy you'll get from me.*



A farmer am I, day to day,
My life I live, the Safety Way.
A roll-bar on my tractor be
And steel-toed shoes are best for me.

My children know the answer's NO
When they ask on the tractor go.
All shields are checked every day,
I would not have it another way.

Machinery when it does go awry,
The first thing that is done by I
Is shut it off and wait a bit
Till the movement is out of it.

Drawbar I use when I hook up
It's not much use when front wheels' up.
I know the roll-bar is still there
What good are four wheels in the air?

A tractor I can handle well
I would be as stupid as ...
To try and run it up a hill
Whose angle is right to have a spill.

There's lots of silos on the land
Silent, dangerous, they do stand.
If we use common sense and care,
We need not be dead in there.

A subtle thing is coming 'bout,
That no one yet has made a shout
With automation gaining ground,
More non-conditioned farmers around.

Now backs, joints and muscles strained
Will give the farmer lots of pain.
A better man he has become,
Without condition, he is done.

The cattle that are on the farm
Won't do the farmer that much harm
If handled in a gentle way
And he respects them in all ways.

If he gets rough and temper lose
As for myself, I would then choose
To get myself out of the way
And let him be the chief that day.

As for the porkers on the farm,
Good judgement, care — there is no harm
But get impatient with a boar
You might not be there anymore!

A bull creates a sudden fear.
Pay him respect from far and near,
But cow with calf give a wide berth
Or you could be flat on the earth.

So, in conclusion, might I say:
Stop, Think and Act in logical way.
Farm accidents will then go down,
And undertakers can then leave town.

D. A. Monteith
Elgin County
Farm Safety Council

SHEDDEN WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

Dora McArthur - Curator
January 1990

SHEDDEN WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

Dora McArthur - Curator
January 1990

Agricultural medicine

Providing medical treatment for farm illnesses

By Bobbi Eberle

Athletes have their sports medical clinics, alcoholics their detoxification centres, and the well-heeled overweight can avail themselves of fat farms. But what about medical treatment specifically tailored to the needs of farmers?

A rural Ontario doctor has been asking that question for three decades now, but to date the idea of agricultural medicine for the province's food producers has not even reached the drawing board stage.

Dr. David Monteith, beef farmer and proprietor of the D.A. Monteith Medical Centre in the community of Shedden, first championed the cause of agricultural medicine back in 1957. Some thirty years later, he's no closer to seeing such clinics established in his home province, but he points to the University of Saskatchewan's fledgling centre for agricultural medicine as proof of the soundness of his idea.

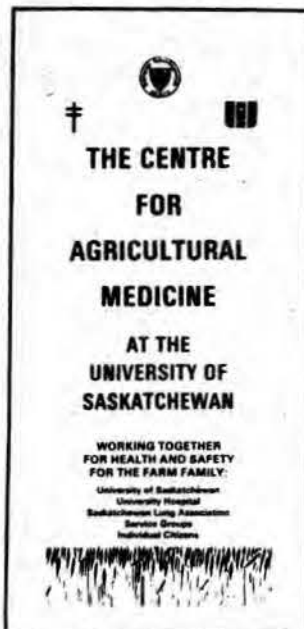
The way the good doctor views it, if megabucks can be spent on curing the complaints of the nation's athletes, surely some money and attention could be paid toward easing the many physical ills peculiar to the farming community.

"In farming you depend on your food, and athletics you depend on your entertainment," says the doctor in justifying the concept of agricultural medicine.

Monteith has been tending the ailments of his rural patients since he set up shop in Elgin County back in 1946. As a farmer himself, he is uniquely equipped to recognize the physical ailments that crop up from the business of farming. Employing a Sherlock Holmes-like process of educated deduction, Monteith can link a sore knee to the way a dairy farmer loads milk cans, trace bursitis of the shoulder to the feeding of pigs, or attribute leg cramps and stiff necks to plowing time. He can show a patient with an artificial hip how to prevent tractor vibration, chastise a farmer for removing equipment guards, or warn of the special hazards at silo-filling time.

This is what agricultural medicine is all about — prescribing the prevention along with the treatment. As Monteith sees it, it doesn't do much good simply to tell a farmer to "go home and take it easy."

Saskatchewan farmers have had treatment since



Dora McArthur-
Curator
January 1990
SHEDDEN WOMEN'S INSTITUTE



1986, when the Centre for Agricultural Medicine was established as a division of the University of Saskatchewan's department of medicine, in conjunction with the province's Lung Association. The centre addresses the problems of health, safety and lifestyle issues specific to farmers and their families, and deals with a broad spectrum of medical concerns, ranging from dusts, chemicals, cancer, lung and skin problems to farm safety and stress.

The mandate of the Saskatoon clinic includes research, teaching, health promotion and diagnostic services not to be found at other medical centres.

The centre has been at the forefront of research into the potential health risks of farming, studying everything from psychiatric problems to skin disease and chronic lung disease. Preventive education also plays a strong role at the centre, with medical professionals assuming leadership in both risk and prevention assessment. In the area of health promotion, the centre works with other agencies to develop programs aimed at prevention of disease and disability. The centre also offers early diagnosis services aimed at identifying diseases or disabilities before they reach the irreversible stage.

As well, the centre has published articles on lung troubles in farmers, with considerable work conducted in the area of grain dust. Other projects include a pilot project studying hog farmers and the environment, skin problems in farmers, and stress experienced by farm wives in the Swift Current area. The centre has hosted conferences on cancer and farming, assessing the relationship between agricultural chemicals and cancer incidence, and has co-ordinated research into farm accidents and safety.

The Saskatoon centre is the only agricultural health and safety centre in Canada, and that's what irks Monteith. It's not as if his Ontario medical counterparts aren't interested in the concept of farmer medicine, he says, it's more a case of their not being conditioned to it.

"Agricultural medicine has been in my mind all along because I've always dealt with rural people," Monteith said. "A lot of people say agricultural medicine would fit into other medicines. But what do you mean when you tell a farmer to go home and take it easy?"

Monteith says medical professionals at such clinics don't necessarily have to be farmers themselves, although they should have a good knowledge of the farm environment and the potential health risks of farming. He admits that he doesn't have all the answers when it comes to the actual mechanics of establishing an agricultural medicine clinic in Ontario, but he thinks a study into the need for such a centre would be a good place to start, followed by researching a pilot project.

Monteith claims he is not personally interested in bringing the idea to fruition. He describes himself merely as "the guy who plants the seed, germinates it, and gives it away." Towards this end, the doctor-farmer has written a little poem, which he has sent to certain key people in Ontario politics, namely, the premier, and the ministers of agriculture and health. The poem laments the absence of farmer medicine, and ends with the following resolution:

*'I've dealt with farmers all my years,
Have learned their dangers and their fears.
In grave I will not peaceful lie
Without a try to help this guy.'*