



File photo

RESPECTFUL RITES: Jeff Hill of Hinckley, England, was struck by Canadian ways and respect for the military when he came to West Lorne for the funeral of Master Cpl. Chris Fretter. Above, Fretter's casket is carried into St. Mary's Church as his widow, Alison, watches along with her daughter Cassandra, 9, and stepdaughter Bailey, 11. Capt. Troy Grant holds Alison's and Cassandra's hands. Fretter was killed in Pretoria, South Africa, working in the security detail at the Canadian Embassy.

Briton deeply impressed with humanity and respect of Canadians at officer's West Lorne funeral

Through the medium of your newspaper, I wish to express our thanks and admiration to all the people we met during our recent visit.

My wife Josie, daughter Sarah and I travelled to Ontario to attend the funeral of our nephew Chris Fretter, the military police officer who died tragically in South Africa.

The sympathy, empathy and genuine friendliness shown to us at this

sad time was exceptional. When I compare this to England, I regret to say that we are becoming a divided and insular country.

I last visited Canada in July 1996 and admired Canadians and your country very much. Our recent visit has confirmed my initial impressions. It was so good to see the strong care and support being given to all of Chris's relatives, not just by each

other but also by friends and colleagues. The organization of the funeral was exceptional from the Padfield Funeral Home, the civilian services and the military arrangements and we say thank you to all involved. You gave Chris a great sendoff.

After the funeral, I spoke briefly with Capt. Carol Moule expressing my admiration and thanks to all

involved. I told Carol that it compared to a VIP funeral back in the U.K. Her reply was simple but true. She said, "Chris is a VIP." You appreciate your military in Canada.

Once again, I say thank you and Canadians, please do not ever change.

Jeff Hill

Hinckley, England

Influx of war brides important to Canada

Amongst the death and devastation of war, love was still alive.

Peg Wheeler found love.

Former Reverend for St. Peters Anglican Church in Tyrconnell, Wheeler is a war bride.

A country girl, she was living near Worschester in England when she met a Canadian soldier.

It was November 1940 when Les Wheeler met the 18-year-old girl.

They met on the street:

"Can you tell me what time this joint opens?" Les asked, wondering what time

the theatre opened for a show.

They both went into the theatre separately.

Les sat next to Peg.

They shared a laugh.

Then followed her onto her bus.

He followed her all the way home and met her family.

"I didn't invite him," said the sweet 84-year-old woman, in the kitchen of her Grandview home, looking over the cliff at Lake Erie.

After that day, "I don't think he ever looked at another woman," said Wheeler.

Les passed away in 1980.

The two married in 1942, while Les was driving a truck in A Company in France.

Two of the couple's 10 children were born in England before the war ended.

Peg couldn't come back to Canada with Les after the war, as she had just had their second child.

Following year of the veteran last year, 2006 is year of the war bride.

Last year marked the 60th year since the Second World War ended.

It was 60 years ago this year, when Peg moved to Canada.

There were more than 64,000 war brides that came to Canada.

"There were so many of us," said Wheeler of the influx of young women that came across by boat.

"They did a lot for this country," she said. That meant, populating Canada.

The Wheeler's 10 children created 28 grandchildren who have created 22 great grandchildren.

It doesn't feel like 60 years have passed. "All that life lived. Incredible," she said.

Wheeler served five years with St. Peters Anglican Church in Tyrconnell after a lifetime serving churches.

She remembers all the women on the boat to Saint John New Brunswick.

She said the wives were treated so well. Of the war, she remembers seeing the fires



War bride JEFF KEMPENNAAR/THE CHRONICLE

Peg Wheeler shows the picture of her and her late husband Les, which she keeps above her bed. Wheeler met Les while he was serving Canada in England.

in Coventry from a hill near Yorkshire after the blitzkrieg.

She remembers moving to the south coast of England to be with Les during the war.

Les lost his brother, Ted, there. Peg said the country-side was full of soldiers and pretty girls were free play.

Soldiers were lonely; away from their homes for four years.

"Men are men and womwn are womwn. It doesn't take a lot to find love in war," said Wheeler.

She's found it interesting the war bride is being celebrated.

The year of the War Bride is not officially being proclaimed by the federal government, however it has acknowledged the vital role they have played in the building of

KREBSZ

"The community has lost part of its sunshine."

Peacefully, after a courageous

battle with cancer, on

Saturday, August 12th, 2006,

Rosalie Elizabeth Krebsz, of

West Lorne in her 62nd

year. Rosalie was a well

respected business-

woman, operating Krebsz

Jewellery for many years.

The community mourns

the loss of this wonderful

spirit and generous volun-

teer. Predeceased by her

parents Fred and Frony

Redinger (1998). She is dearly

loved and sadly missed by her husband Konrad,

special daughter in law to Elizabeth McMillan and

her husband Munro (1994); loving sister of Dr.

Richard Redinger of Kentucky, his wife Arlene and

their children Matthew, Mark, David and Heather;

Walter Redinger of West Lorne, his wife Marion

and their children Jennifer (Jamie) and Jeffrey;

Helen Mulcaster of West Lorne and her daughters

Melanie (Dan) and Leana; Linda Royal of West

Lorne, her husband Max and her children

Jacqueline (Jim), Monica and Kristopher; Shirley

Vandenberg of West Lorne, her husband Martin

and their children Zabrina, Tyler and Jacob. Also

surviving are one great niece and three great

nephews. Friends called at the West Lorne

Chapel, 202 Main Street, West Lorne on Monday,

2-4 and 7-9 p.m. where service was held on

Tuesday at 2 p.m. Pastor E. Betsch officiated.

Interment Evergreen Cemetery, West Lorne.

Memorial donations to the Canadian Cancer

Society, the Daffodil Society or Grace Lutheran

Church would be appreciated as your expression

of sympathy. Arrangements entrusted to the

Padfield Funeral Home, Rodney, (519) 785-0810.

Online condolences may be left at www.padfield-



A wonderful friend & lady.



MIKE HENSEN The London Free Press

CLOSE-KNIT: Harry Mezenberg and his siblings immigrated to Canada from Holland. Two years after arriving in this country, the children's father, Antonius, was killed in a motor vehicle collision, leaving their mother, Katherine, widowed with 12 children and far from home.

Canada home despite tragic start

The first time Katherine Mezenberg brought her family of 10 children here from the Netherlands, it was a huge yet exciting undertaking.

Three years later, with two more children, she'd arrive here a second time, only much more sadly and reluctantly.

It started in 1956 when Mezenberg and her husband Antonius sold their farm and followed their siblings to Southwestern Ontario.

"It was quite an undertaking," recalls the eldest surviving child, Ann Donkers.

"Everything was packaged up in a wooden crate. They bought some new furniture (and) dishes and it took six weeks to get here."

The family flew to Montreal on May 17, 1956 — 50 years ago this week. By train, they travelled to London, where an

HOW DID YOU GET HERE?

JANE ANTONIAK



uncle drove them to a farm he owned in West Lorne.

"Dad was quite discouraged that it was such a wet spring. The corn (from the previous season) hadn't been picked, so we all went out and picked corn," says Donkers.

The children went to school and their father worked on a relative's tobacco farm. They also grew and picked an acre of cucumbers for pickle sales.

A year later they bought their own tobacco farm in Rodney.

But in September 1958, on a foggy night while driving his car, Antonius crashed into an unlit tractor. He was killed instantly.

Newspapers here and in Toronto carried stories about the Dutch widow with 12 children, the youngest five weeks old, and crops still in the field.

Harry Mezenberg recalls that volunteers came from as far as Toronto to harvest the crop. "It was a big community effort." His sister Dina Koolen says she remembers "cars lined up the road for his funeral."

The next spring Katherine Mezenberg, then 40 and unable to speak English, decided to rent her farm and take her 12 children back to The Netherlands.

"She didn't know what to do," says Harry. "We

returned to live in the same house as it had been sold to relatives. We stayed for four months. In the end she said the kids all wanted to return to Canada."

Donkers says her mother was faced with a tough decision: stay in Holland and see her children leave or leave her country and come back here to be with her children.

So, in July 1959 they all returned. Two nephews from Holland were sent along to help with the farming. The eldest boys and Donkers quit school after Grade 8 to help.

"We hired the help. I did the financial part at age 14 and ran the equipment," says Harry.

Their mother never remarried but went on to buy another farm. Her mother came to live with Donkers in her later years. The eldest

brother died at age 27 of a brain tumour, but the rest of the children have stayed in the area.

They all became Canadian citizens and married. They produced 33 grandchildren and 27 great-grandchildren. Katherine Mezenberg died in 2001 at age 83.

"In the end I think she was happy here," says Donkers. "I think in her later years she accepted her choice."

The remaining children gather every April near their mother's birthday for an annual reunion.

"We've been treated well here," says Harry. "The biggest thing was the community support."

Jane Antoniak is a London freelance writer. She can be contacted at je.antoniak@sympatico.ca. Her column appears Mondays.

WESS grad Terry Carroll launches new book

Talented ballroom dancer Patricia Verkley donned a beautiful red dress for a ballroom dance demonstration at the launch of new mystery novel *Body Contact* by Terry Carroll Nov. 17.

It happened at the St. Thomas Elgin Public Art Centre, St. Thomas.

"One tie-in is the cover of the book," says Carroll. "And another is where I'm donating some of the proceeds."

Patricia and her husband Dave are experienced dancers with the Elgin Ballroom Dance Club.

Carroll has committed to donating \$1 for every book sold at the launch to that dance club and also \$1 to the St. Thomas Elgin Public Art Centre where he volunteers for its marketing committee.

The cover of *Body Contact* features a woman in a two-piece red outfit, a stylized

representation of a femme fatale from the novel.

This is Carroll's second mystery novel. His first was shortlisted for an Arthur Ellis Award for Best First Novel by the Crime Writers of Canada.

Carroll was born and raised on what is now the Carroll Line in West Elgin.

He is a graduate of West Elgin Secondary School.

Wild West weekend rounds up fun

The first-ever Cactus, Cattle and Cowboys weekend drew dozens of horses and hundreds of people to western Elgin County to take in the wild west experience.

Photos by Jeff Kempenaar



Cole Schnekenburger and Karlie Willcocks of West Lorne help out Empire Valley Farms at the farmers market.



Jessica Carroll of Wallacetown leads Allison Potter of Rodney around the grounds of the Cactus, Cattle, Cowboys festivities.



A spooked Long Horn steer scared organizers when it got away from owner Darryl Swain.



The Backporch Gospel Band started the weekend.



Evan VanDyk of Rodney tries roping at the Riding for Christ Ministry booth.



Iona Overland Stage Coach follows the horse parade out of West Lorne.



Port Glasgow Square Dancers entertained.

Boonies hoping to lure city folk

WEST LORNE

SCOTT HILGENDORFF



A conversation starts between two people standing in line at a St. Thomas store. Both know each other and are out of town shopping, a regular occurrence that troubles merchants and businesses in the communities of western Elgin County.

They talk about their reasons for not being in their home community, maybe feeling a little guilty, and the clerk overhears. She is incredulous — not that they're shopping out of town, but at the distance they travel.

"You came here all the way from West Lorne?"

Yes, they did. And at least a few hundred other people from western Elgin County did the same thing that day, whether to London or St. Thomas.

It's about 50 kilometres for the trip, or less than a half-hour drive. It's really not that far at all.

However, there is a backwards thinking at work here. Residents from the west don't think twice to travel to St. Thomas or London for shopping or to take part in events. But the reverse is not true. Ask some-

one in the city where Dutton is, and more often than not, they don't know.

It's something Marketing Partners of Western Elgin Region (MPOWER) is trying to change by raising awareness of the tourism opportunities that exist right in the backyards of Chatham, London and St. Thomas. MPOWER chairperson Robert White moved to West Lorne about 15 years ago, loved what he found and made his home here.

"We're working as a multitude of communities to try to get people to see what we saw when we first came here," White says.

A group of businesses, organizations and event operators in the communities of western Elgin County, has made great strides in building bridges and tearing down boundaries.

Post-amalgamation, there still exists a desire to protect traditional community boundaries. Some in

Dutton work to protect Dutton's identity at the exclusion of working with surrounding communities on issues that could help economic development. The same can be found in West Lorne or Rodney, even though the two villages are now part of the Municipality of West Elgin.

Many, however, don't share that view and some of them have found their way into the marketing partnership, including me.

"The uniqueness of this group is that we actually dropped the borders," White says.

The partnership has seen businesses working together from across the region, many knowing their efforts have no immediate benefit to their own operations, as they help draw tourists to visit western Elgin County.

Collectively, the two major municipalities, West Elgin and Dutton-Dunwich, offer a more complete tourism package than separately. West Elgin is home to several campgrounds and a port with beach access to Lake Erie. Dutton-Dunwich offers the historic Backus-Page House and the beautiful Pearce Park. The area has many parks and recreation opportunities.

With the cities so close and gasoline prices rising, the group is trying to promote the area to its city neighbours in hopes they'll bring their families to explore a lakeshore area closer to home.

To get started, two major summer events have been planned. The first is the Living History Weekend, May 28 and May 29, near Wallacetown, linking with the Tyrconnell Heritage Society to bring together an interactive weekend that explores pioneer life. Coupled with a mystery car tour on Sunday, local history will be brought to life during the weekend with many hands-on, family-oriented events.

July 29 and July 30 will feature a western weekend, taking advantage of the area's growing horse industry with opportunity for overnight camping, planned trail rides and a horses-only parade July 29 in West Lorne, surrounding a family day of cowboy-style activities.

Recognizing it's a daunting task, MPOWER is trying to reverse the trends and bring out-of-towners here.

Scott Hilgendorff is a freelance writer in Elgin County. Across County Lines appears Thursdays and Saturdays.



WEST ELGIN ARENA

Sunday, April 30th • 1pm

(Registration starts at 12:30pm)

HOT DOGS & DRINKS SERVED FROM 12:30 to 1pm

Pledge forms available at Krebsz Jewellery Store

or call Mary Lippold 768-1244; Mary Leipman 768-1224;

Leola Lawrence 768-1526 or online at www.cancer.ca



Command centre Rodney

JEFF KEMPENAAR/THE CHRONICLE

Lieutenant Dennis Grant, right, provides a briefing on operations to Brigade Commander Col. Judd at the command centre of the forward operating base set up at the Rodney Fair Grounds. Canadian Armed Forces conducted training exercises over the weekend.

Area used as model for army

Jeff Kempenaar
Staff

Some of the 140 members of the armed forces in the Rodney area over the weekend have been to Afghanistan and were preparing to return.

Exercise Maple Gale saw units from the Windsor Regiment, Elgin 31 Combat Engineers and other soldiers from London and Hamilton stationed at the Rodney Fairgrounds from Friday night to Sunday afternoon.

The area was renamed West Isle, a make believe scenario, meant to replicate places where Canadian Forces are in action, much like Afghanistan.

The Canadian Forces created a supply terminal at Port Glasgow Marina.

From there, supplies were to be transported to the operations centre in the village.

Opposing forces like the West Isle Armed Force and the Black Dawn Brigade disrupted the transportation of goods with ambushes along the route.

The two factions are meant to replicate the Taliban and Al Qaeda.

Real fire and fury were faced by troops escorting the convoy toward Rodney.

This area was chosen because it is unknown to many of the soldiers, said Lieutenant Dennis Grant.

New technologies and methods tried in Afghanistan were being practised here.

"If something doesn't work over there we stop practising it here," he said.

Grant said much like work over seas, the military try to win the hearts and minds of locals and the forces tried to respect neighbours while practising in Rodney.

Soldiers were put on both sides of the conflict, also acting as militants.

The exercises never match the intensity of a real mission said Grant.

"We put a rifle in the hands of an 18-year-old and he has to know whether to shoot or not," he said. "Here it's not life or death. You'll hear the pop and the bang but the bullets are blank."

After each exercise, many hours of review were done around the operation.

"It takes hours of administration and paperwork for five minutes of fire and fury," he said.

If the operations practiced in Rodney over the weekend were real, 2,000 troops would have been needed, said Grant.



Volunteer of the year

Melanie Knapp is presented with the volunteer of the year award at the Canada Day ceremonies in West Lorne by Irene Puddester from the Chamber of Commerce, Anne Smith from the municipality, Mary Lou Kominek rural development officer and Trudy Balint, councillor. Melanie volunteers with the Rodney Fair and works with youth.

SUBMITTED

Kids take over WEDS winter play

► Show starts this weekend

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever, will hopefully ring true as a young cast performs in the winter show for the West Elgin Dramatics Society.

Directed by Al Kirk and Greg Simpson, the play features a cast of 24, with 22 under the age of 17.

While the play is about a family of the worst kids in the history of the world, the kids in the cast have been anything but, said Simpson.

"I'm not just saying this because it will go in the newspaper. These kids have been great," said Simpson.



Best pageant ever

JEFF KEMPENAAR/THE CHRONICLE

Kid actors have been putting their heads together to make the Best Christmas Pageant Ever a success for WEDS' winter production.

Atmosphere at rehearsals is very different this year than the last 13 years of winter productions by WEDS.

"There's so much energy. When it's harnessed right it's amazing what can happen," said Kirk.

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever, written by Barbara Robinson, 1979, is about a small town's annual church pageant.

This year, the Mrs. Armstrong, a straight laced woman who has put on the pageant each year, broke her leg.

Therefore, organizing the play falls in the lap of a sweet couple, Grace and Bob Bradley, played by Adel and Carmon Lasson.

"We're the only two adults in the play," said Adel. "We're like their puppets. The kids are the orchestra, we rely on them to take the play along."

She said the child actors have been so sweet.

"Kids are so literal," said Adel who's son Zack is also in the cast. "They didn't get it at first that the play is about a play."

Please see WEDS, page 2



JEFF KEMPENAAR/THE CHRONICLE

West Lorne Santa Claus Parade

West Lorne Optimist Club held its Santa Claus Parade Nov. 24. Above: Angela Brown and Austin Kauzen-McMurphy enjoy watching the floats going by. Right top: Youth on Track with the Melody Fellowship Church provided a musical float. Right middle Tiny Tots Co-operative Nursery School with Ella Towers, sitting on the lap of Khloe Beer; Allison Rose, Nikki Damphouse and Katelyn Rose. Right bottom: Nelson Bergsma dressed as a penguin with a float provided by Albert's Generators.



Car tour explores Elgin

Get your motor running and explore Western Elgin County along the shores of Lake Erie.

JIM FOX



ONE-TANK TRIPS

In a bid to attract more visitors to this picturesque part of Ontario, southwest of London, a community group has organized a car tour May 28.

Called Travel Western Elgin Trails, the tour covers part of the Talbot Settlement.

"Western Elgin doesn't have any big, household-name attractions like Port Stanley or Stratford," said Leta West of Marketing Partners Of Western Elgin Region, a group of businesses and community volunteers behind the initiative.

The area includes the municipalities of Dutton-Dunwich and West Elgin (formerly Rodney, West Lorne and Aldborough Township).

Participants in the driving tour will learn all about the history of the area.

West provides an overview: The region "was developed by Col. Thomas Talbot, who for 50 years starting in 1803, supervised and settled 29 townships

IF YOU GO

► The Travel Western Elgin Trails car tour runs on May 28 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. from the Backus-Page House. The price is \$10 for a tour book, tour card and souvenirs.

► From London, take Highway 401 to the Dutton exit (No. 149) and travel south on Currie Road through Dutton to Lake View Line. Turn left on Lake View Line and the Backus-Page House is on the left.

► For more information, call (519) 762-3072; tyrconnell@execulink.com

and developed an excellent road system."

The tour starts at 10 a.m. at the Backus-Page House, a cultural centre in a house built in 1850 by Andrew and Mary Jane Backus. It is on land granted by Talbot in 1809 to Mary Storey, the grandmother of Andrew Backus.

Participants pay \$10 and receive a tour guidebook and card. Following the directions in the guide will take them around the area to view some of the older houses while finding answers to the questions on the card.

The tour ends at Old Boys' Park in Port Glasgow, where completed tour cards will be entered in a draw for a basket of Western Elgin mementos valued at more than \$200.

Along the way, here are some of the sights:

► St. Peter's Anglican Church, in continuous use since 1827 and a pivotal part of the action in the 1997 movie *That Old Feeling* starring Bette Midler.

► Southwold Native Earth Works, the location of one of the Neutral Indian tribes and a National Historic Site of Canada.

► Old Highway 3 Antiques located in a rounded-roof building that was constructed in 1955 by soaking the rafters in a pond for more than a week and then bending them into shape.

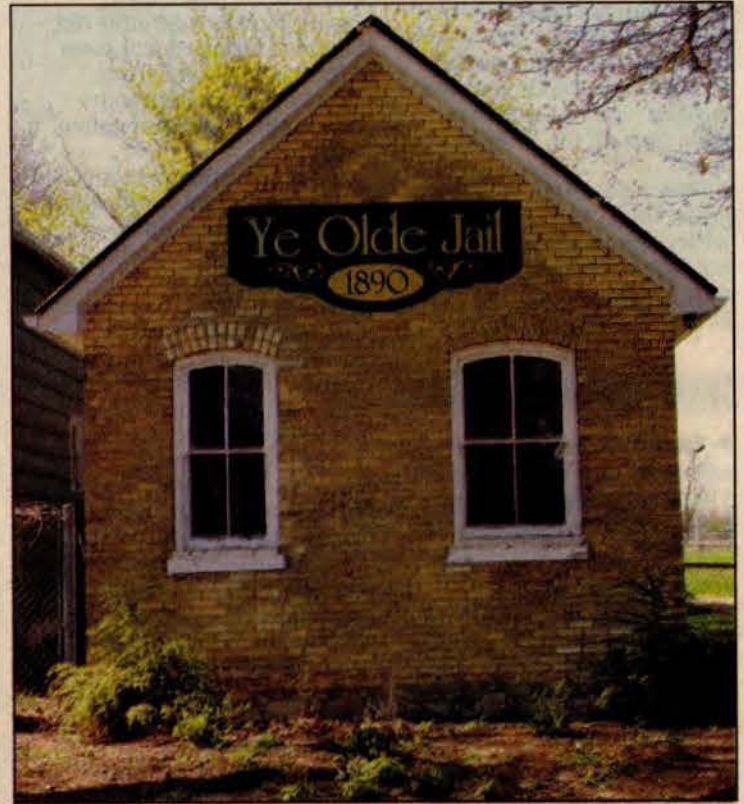
► The John Kenneth Galbraith Library in Dutton, named after the famous economist who died last month at the age of 97.

► The Buttermilk Bog created when the now-defunct Dutton Creamery dumped its whey in the area of large trees at the back of the property, giving the area a high salt content and thus its name.

► Empire Valley Farm Market, with its historic brick house built in 1888 and selling farm fresh produce and plants.

► Erie Flooring and Wood Products, home to pilot project for a wood-residue co-generation power plant.

► Ye Olde Jail, the oldest small



HEATHER BELL. Special to The Free Press

SMALL-TOWN HOSPITALITY: Ye Olde Jail, the oldest small jail in North America, located in Rodney west of London, is one of the stops on a car tour of Western Elgin County. On tour day, May 28, volunteers will be serving free coffee.

jail in North America.

► Port Glasgow Marina where settlers would disembark and camp before moving to the land granted to them by Talbot.

West hopes people on the tour will get interested in what else the region has to offer.

There's a "great wealth of attraction and activities for families" from nature, history, sports, crafts or shopping, West said.

Naturalists will be interested in the John E. Pearce Provincial Park, Carolinian forests, and bluffs high above Lake Erie to watch lake freighters, fishing tugs and bald eagles.

There's swimming and boating at the Port Glasgow marina, and several classic car shows during the summer, West said.

"The shopping is second to

none," she added, noting:

"There are virtually no chain stores here, beside the grocery and hardware stores.

"Every other business, whether it's a gift shop, jewelry store, garden accessory shop, flower shop, restaurant, farm produce vendor or antique store, is family owned, unique and with small-town prices."

There are also many artists and artisans in the region. Other events or tours to "focus on the uniqueness of the area" are in the planning stages, West added.

"When people get familiar with what we have to offer, they'll think of Western Elgin as part of their backyard."

Jim Fox is a freelance writer based in Kitchener. He can be reached at onetanktrips@hotmail.com

Former resident takes local training far away

Jason Lilley, son of Elaine and the late Clifford Lilley of Dutton, was all smiles as his new funeral home was dedicated on Oct. 15.

Jason was licenced in 1992 and credits his success to the early training he received locally working with both the Padfield and Arn Funeral Homes.

The new facility, Northridge Funeral Home, is located in Emo, Ontario, near the Minnesota border, in the Rainy River District.

Provincial Director Jim Price represented the Ontario Funeral Service Association at the festivities and also brought the congratulations and best wishes of Jason's many friends from our the local area.



A new frontier

Susan Peacock, Jason Lilley, Elaine Lilley and Jim Price at the grand opening of Jason's funeral home in Emo, ON.

SUBMITTED

West Elgin ponders taking ropes of economic development

West Elgin is looking at taking the helm for economic development.

This came after a joint application with Bayham for funding to hire an economic development officer was denied by the Community Transition Program.

"We seriously have got to do something because right now we're doing nothing," said Deputy Mayor Bernie Wiehle.

Mayor Graham Warwick delivered the news that the funding application was denied at the council meeting Nov. 9.

CTP is funding community based projects in Elgin, Oxford Brant and Norfolk, counties that have been hit by the decline of the tobacco industry.

West Elgin and Bayham filed an application to the Community Futures Development Corporation, which is administering the fund.

Warwick said he was told the joint venture did not get funding because it was too expensive and it at its core, an economic officer could be duplicating efforts being made by the CFDC and the newly hired Elgin

County Economic Development Officer.

Warwick went on to say Elgin County's Economic Development officer needs numbers and information from the west end of the county that only a local economic development officer could derive.

Council agreed to start looking into the costs of hiring its own economic development officer and developing a plan.

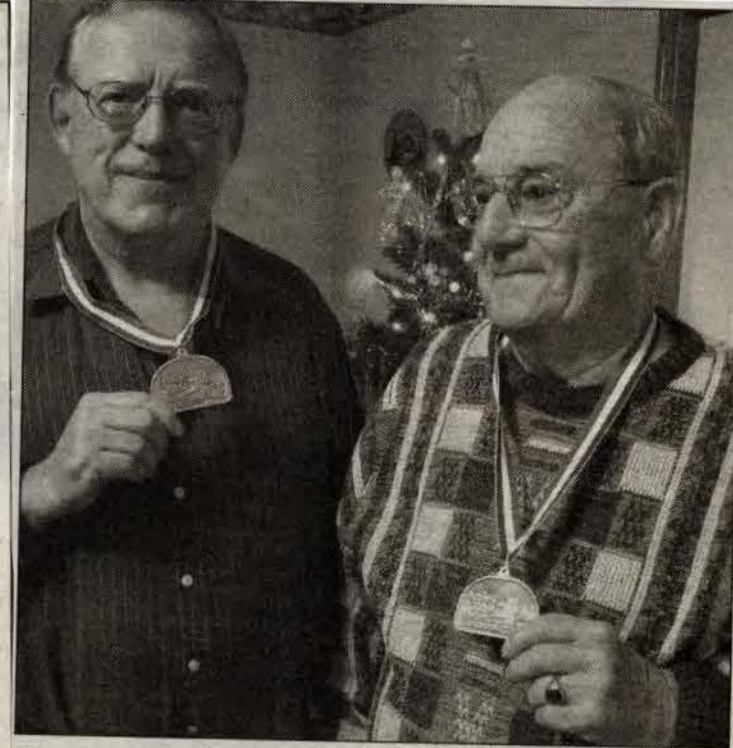
Currently, the West Elgin Chamber of Commerce is working on a plan for economic development.



WEDS Kids

JEFF KEMPENAAR/THE CHRONICLE

Katie Dawson and Anasthia Machado practise their lines during a dress rehearsal for the WEDS Kids production of *Who Murdered Who* which the dramatic camp kids performed last Friday night.



Gold

JEFF KEMPENAAR/THE CHRONICLE

Bob Hales and George Bell won gold in cribbage at the Ontario Senior Games.

Andres Kaups leaves Baptist church

After seven years, Pastor Andres Kaups and his wife Evi are leaving the Rodney and West Lorne Baptist churches. Sunday is their last service before retiring to Kitchener to spend time with grandchildren. Kaups has been ministering 18 years and made his fourth

and final stop in this area. "We have had great times ministering together with the people of West Lorne United Church, Grace Anglican Church and the Church of Christ's Disciples," he wrote in a letter to the Chronicle. He remembers the West Elgin Christian Ensemble concerts, the choir established for the

2001 anniversary. "The folks at West Lorne Baptist and at Rodney Baptist until its closure in 2003, have shown us much love and support that it is impossible to describe," he said. While the church continues its search for a new pastor, Kaups said there is still a lot of life. A new youth drop-in group began recently and runs

every other week. "These are the most hospitable and friendly people we've been involved with," he said. "They are really committed to the Lord and Christianity." This Sunday at 3 p.m. Kaups will lead a special celebration for his last service at the West Lorne Baptist Church on Graham Road.

Ontario champs

Two local men became cribbage champions at the Ontario Senior Games. George "Scotty" Bell and Bob Hales won gold at Actifest 2006 in Hamilton this past summer. The two have now qualified for the Canada Senior Games hosted by Dieppe, New Brunswick in 2008. Bell and Hales were top of the heap, beating 64 other teams in the two day cribbage event. The first day, Bell, from West Lorne and Hales, from Dutton went 9-1. "We were really hot," said Hales. The next day the strong play continued.

"We pulled up our socks and ended up champions," said Hales. It was Hales' first medal at the Ontario games and Bell's first appearance. It took several months before the gold medals arrived in the mail after an error. Hales had a choice to either compete in the cribbage event or golf after winning in the Elgin/Oxford, District 31 games. Other Actifest 2006 winners from Elgin/Oxford were Alice Kirk and Dorothy MacPherson, with a bronze in bid euchre and Dennis Tyrrell and Gene Glover, bronze in darts.

Code issues delay rebuild of Complex

Jeff Kempenaar
Staff

Reconstruction of the West Lorne Community Complex has been delayed three months as crews upgrade the building to meet current code. Phil Scott, of Hickman-Mount Reconstruction reported to West Elgin Council Nov. 9. He said when the building was erected in 1993 it wasn't up to the codes then. The floor, ceiling and insulation of the attic has been completed at the complex. Fire gutted the downtown building in an early morning blaze in February. Scott said many of the upgrades being made to bring the building to code are being covered by the insurance company. Some problems with the building found during reconstruction were: there was no fresh air exchange, the building only had a 200 amp electrical system and improper flooring. An engineer with Spriet Association said it was good the fire crew stopped the fire when they did, because it will be cheaper to reconstruct the building than to build a new complex. That and preserving a historic library building were a silver lining of keeping the complex. The first step now, is to prepare the foundation for the library expansion with excavation, and structural steel which could be complete before the holidays, said Scott. Completion date is expectation to be next summer.



Roof trusses in place

JEFF KEMPENAAR/THE CHRONICLE

Roof trusses were placed across the West Lorne Community Complex Monday. Reconstruction of the building continues after fire gutted the building Feb. 8.



Band rocks WEDS

JEFF KEMPENAAR/THE CHRONICLE

David Laidlaw and Jen Pinder joined the West Elgin Community Band to rock WEDS Theatre in Dutton June 5. The two had a drum-off during the band's Movie Night in Canada show.