

WL Kiwanis Pres. Bob Walker pays tribute to W. Liepmann

"It was an honor to be chosen to speak at Wolfgang Liepmann Night," West Lorne Kiwanis Pres. Bob Walker stated Saturday in the International Club, but he said he accepted with trepidation, because it would be difficult to talk about a man who has done so much for the community, his

country, his family and church.

The speaker said Mr. Liepmann has made a great many decisions by "precision guesswork", each decision taking him forward physically, mentally, spiritually and socially.

Pres. Walker reported having talked to

a mutual friend from Pennsylvania at a convention, who expressed Mr. Liepmann's greatest attributes as integrity and sincerity, which were obvious on the original meeting.

Pondering that, Kiwanian Walker said everyone who knows Mr. Liepmann would be of the same opinion. Another supplier reported only a handshake, never a signed agreement, was all that was required to do business with Milner-Rigsby, which is the only company he carries on business with in that manner.

REVIEW

Reviewing Mr. Liepmann's life, Pres. Walker said it was amazing how intertwined their lives have been, both having worked for the same company, doing some of the same jobs, lived on the same street, attended church in the same building, he sponsored Win Liepmann for his citizenship, and the Liepmann and Walker families attended the same Kiwanis talent shows to see and hear their daughters compete sometimes in the same category.

Now he and Mr. Liepmann are members of the Kiwanis Club, Mr. Liepmann for 35 years, being a former president and the speaker being the current president.

"Everyone who has come in contact with Mr. Liepmann and family are honored and proud their lives have touched," Pres. Walker said. "And the community is justly proud to have a man who cares and promotes it."

LIFE

The speaker went on to tell about the honored guest's life in Germany, as a prisoner of war here, since immigrating in 1951, his years with West Lorne Lumber and Erie Flooring, later joining Andrew Rigsby.

Taking Milner-Rigsby over following Mr. Rigsby's death, Wolfgang has taken the firm from being the smallest manufacturer in the area to the largest employer.

Originally, his company made tent pegs, whipple-trees, wheelbarrow handles, splints and tongue depressors, and now is one of the largest manufacturers of laminated truck trailer flooring, a maker of plank and parquet floorings, stair treads and many other wood products.

In '85, grandson Rodger joined the firm, making three generations, all of which are records Mr. Liepmann is justly proud.

"Our area is the winner. Our gain is his home country's loss.

"I'm certain one of Wolf's guides through life has been the saying: "The winner never quits — the quitter never wins!" Kiwanian Walker said.

"In addition to being a builder of his company, he has taken time from his busy schedule to be a builder of his church, a builder of his community, and a builder of the Kiwanis Club. He lives by the Kiwanis motto We Build, and this year's theme, Take Time to Care."

"This great builder has put together integrity, sincerity and concern for his fellow man and moulded it to achieve the great goal — success."

During their travels he and Mrs. Liepmann are like photographers — always seeing people in the best light.

In conclusion, Kiwanian Walker read prose on Controls, which he assured Mr. Liepmann has to have to be successful, and he presented Mr. Liepmann and his wife, Gertrud, to the audience, which prompted a standing ovation.



WEST LORNE KIWANIAN HARLEY Lashbrook presented Wolfgang Liepmann with a VCR on behalf of the club and the 240 attending Saturday's Wolfgang Liepmann night in the International Club. Also pictured are Kiwanis Pres. Bob Walker,

who was the speaker, and Kiwanian Ray Peckham, who was master of ceremonies and contributed entertainment. The book at bottom right pictures sailboats which have won the Americas Cup, the gift of a supplier.

240 honor WL industrialist Wolfgang Liepmann Sat. night

The International Club was almost full Saturday night, when West Lorne Kiwanians sponsored Wolfgang Liepmann night in recognition of what he had done for the village, the community and the club the past 30 or so years.

It was the fourth villager Kiwanians have honored, and the second this year — Pastor Norman Schlarbaum — as well as the late Earl Lemon and the late Wilfred Johnston previously.

Mr. Lemon was a former club member. Mr. Johnston was a member until being hospitalized the last time. Mr. Liepmann is a 35-year Kiwanian having joined shortly after the club was chartered.

His son, Winfred, also a Kiwanian, entertained with piano selections prior to the roast beef banquet catered by the International Club's Ladies' Auxiliary.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

Kiwanian Ray Peckham was master of ceremonies, who introduced the head table, played the piano for the sing-song, entertained with Kiwanian Bill Graham and John Campbell, and sang with Jannette Fisher.

Kiwanian Ray Jobson, son-in-law of the honored guest, offered grace. His daughter, Catherine presented her grandmother with a bouquet of flowers. Kiwanian Bill Seaton toasted the ladies, to which

Nancy Lashbrook replied.

Entertainment was provided by Connie Baptista singing two numbers, one in Portuguese for the large crowd of her countrymen, many of whom are employed by Mr. Liepmann at Milner-Rigsby and another in English, which Shirley Walker accompanied. Sharon Liepmann, accompanied by Cindy Walker, sang two numbers, and Kiwanian Peter Ayling made a humorous presentation.

SPEAKER

Kiwanis Pres. Bob Walker was the speaker, an account of his address can be found elsewhere in this issue. In it, he paid glowing tribute to the honoured guest for all he has done for the village, community and the Kiwanis Club.

Presentatins and short addresses were made by Reeve Joe Fischer on behalf of the village, Bill Seaton on behalf of the Kiwanis Club, Vera Ripley on behalf of the West Lorne Women's Institute, and Hilde Morden in recognition of Mrs. Liepmann's contributions to the village's WI, the district's, and for attending several world women's conferences.

Mike Bilty represented the Grace Lutheran congregation, where Mr. and Mrs. Liepmann are stalwarts.

Kiwanian Harley Lashbrook presented

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240 honor

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a VCR on behalf of the crowd, and explained that a video tape of the night's proceedings was being made for the Liepmanns as a lasting record of the evening.

MRS. LIEPMANN

Mrs. Liepmann remarked she was pleased so many attended to honor her husband, that it was difficult for her to say more than "thanks".

She admitted she couldn't believe it when she arrived at the hall and saw so many people in attendance, and when she came to Canada she never dreamed her husband would be so honored.

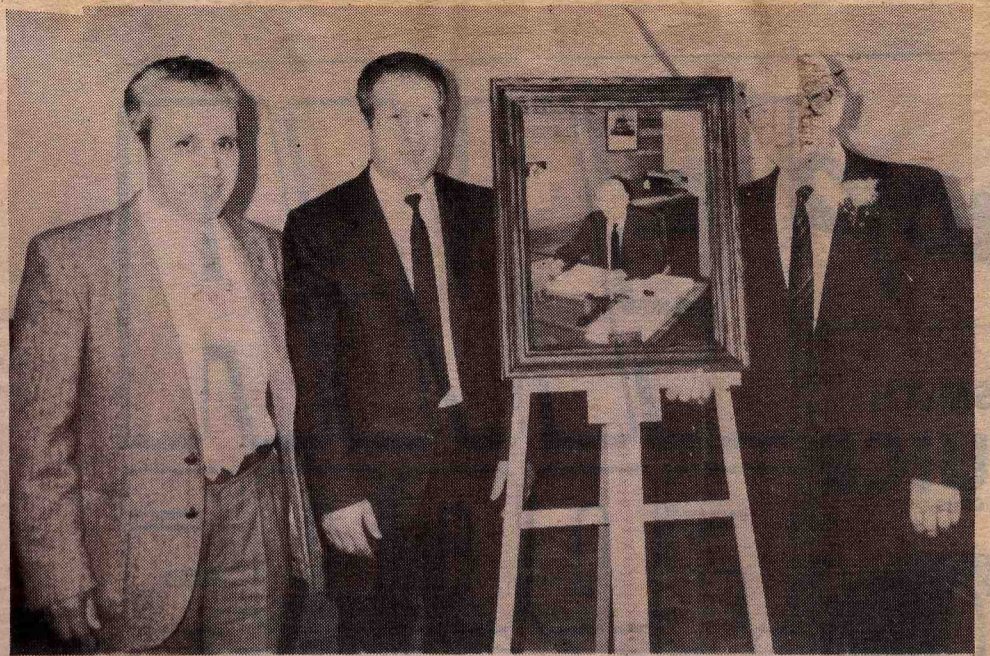
In conclusion, she said she is proud and happy to be a member of the community and the Women's Institute, because she considers herself just a plain housewife and mother.

Mr. Liepmann spoke at length, explaining how he came to West Lorne, a report of which can be found elsewhere in this issue.

At the conclusion he presented cheques to the Kiwanis Club and West Lorne, which were accepted by Pres. Bob Walker and Reeve Joe Fischer.

Pres. Walker accepted the cheque, assuring the donor the money will be put to good use in the community. He assured the donation proves Mr. Liepmann practices the Kiwanis principles of "We Build" and "Take Time To Care".

Reeve Fischer assured the money to the village will be used to pay for projects, the generosity being very much appreciated. The evening concluded with Pastor Norman Schlarbaum offering the benediction, and Win Liepmann accompanying the singing of "God Save the Queen."



MILNER-RIGSBY EMPLOYEES John Oliveira and Jack Lopes presented their boss of 25 years, Wolfgang Liepmann, with this

framed color photo in his office, the frame being made by the two donors.

CARD OF THANKS

A very sincere Thank You to all our friends who attended the party in the International Club on Saturday, May 23rd. The party, the Kiwanis Club named Wolfgang Liepmann Night on a day the village council had declared Wolfgang Liepmann Day. Thanks for the various gifts. Thanks to

everybody taking part in the program. Special thanks also to Ray Peckham, the MC, as well as the International ladies who put on a first class meal. It was a night cherished and long to be remembered.

Gertrud and Wolfgang Liepmann

As a prisoner of war Wolfgang came to Elgin, for being active- the community said thanks

By BOB MEHARG
T-J Staff Reporter

When Wolfgang Liepmann first came to West Elgin, all he really wanted to do was get home.

Owning a West Lorne factory, becoming a village councillor and having the community name a day in his honor were the farthest things from his mind as he worked in local fields under guard, a German prisoner of war.

But that is exactly what happened. On Saturday, his amazing life and contributions to the community were honored with the official proclamation of May 23, 1987 as Wolfgang Liepmann Day in West Lorne.

Born in Berlin, Germany, he joined the merchant marine in 1926 and during the next four years travelled to Africa, and the Far East, and South America. By 1936 he was a master mariner and served on merchant ships as a second or third officer.

DECLARED WAR

In 1939, Britain declared war on Germany. Three months later Mr. Liepmann was on board a vessel headed from the Canary Islands to Germany where he was to take up duties as a navigation instructor for the German airforce. Waiting for him at home, were his wife Gertrude, two children "and another one on the way."

He would not see them again for six years.

His vessel ran into a British blockade. He and the other merchant seaman on board were taken prisoner and shipped to several detention centres in England.

In 1940, after the fall of Dunkirk, there was a concern that a German in-



WOLFGANG LIEPMANN

vasion of Britain was at hand, so the prisoners were shipped from England to Canada.

Mr. Liepmann eventually ended up in a camp in northern Ontario near Monteith, a camp which eventually held about 2,000 prisoners.

Mr. Liepmann said conditions at the camp were tough, but bearable. During the course of the war, they started to deteriorate.

He was then shipped to Elgin County to work as field labor on local farms based out of a POW camp in Glencoe.

Then the war ended, but instead of being sent home as he expected, "I was given the privilege of staying on in Glencoe to pick sugar beets," he said.

"When you are the victor, you can do what you want."

CHOICE

He was given the option of staying in a detention camp or signing a six-month contract to work on a farm, where conditions were better, the work was outside and you could sometimes talk the farmer into providing a good meal.

"I was hopeful that after the term was over I would go home, but nothing doing," he said.

After six months, he was again given the choice to go back to a camp in Fingal or continue working in the fields.

"So voluntarily, I was compelled to again sign up for another six months."

In the meantime, he lost track of his family in Germany. For the first years of the war, he and his wife had been able to write letters. Later, after the bombing of their home in Hamburg, she and the three children, including the baby, had been forced to flee. As the war closed, the flight became a constant race from the approaching Russian army until the family found safety with relatives in what is now Poland.

Finally, in November, 1946, Mr. Liepmann was sent to a detention camp in Fingal and on Christmas Eve stepped off a truck in the town, where his wife had fled, and put his arms around the son he had never seen.

During the next five years he was an interpreter for the British armed forces. Then he managed to find a ship under construction on which he could serve.

At the same time, the Elgin farmer for whom he had worked during the last year of his imprisonment wrote offering him a job.

"We had a family council and we decided to take whichever came first," he said.

Money for construction of the ship ran out, and the family moved to Canada. But by the time they arrived, the farm owner had changed his mind.

Luckily, Mr. Liepmann found a job with the West Lorne Lumber Company. That sawmill was taken over in 1954 by its parent company Erie Flooring and Wood Products Ltd. and by 1955, he was its purchasing agent.

That same year, he moved to another wood products company, the Milner-Rigsby Co. Ltd. as a partner. When Andrew Rigsby died in 1962, Mr. Liepmann became company owner.

Milner-Rigsby with 125 workers, is now the largest employer in the village. As well as providing that employment in the district where he was once a prisoner, Mr. Liepmann also has been president of the local Kiwanis Club three times, and served on the village council from 1959 to 1961. That is why the local Kiwanis Club has named him the club man of the year and why the local council picked up on it, to make it official.

Wolfgang Liepmann Day was officially observed at a reception held in his honor at the International House near West Lorne on Saturday night. Mr. Liepmann was characteristically modest about the honor. "I'm just happy today to have been able to be of service and able to provide the village with work," he said.

Ray Peckham
Recognition Night



Saturday, April 22, 1989

West Elgin Legion Hall

One hundred and forty tickets were sold for Saturday's West Lorne Kiwanis sponsored Ray Peckham Recognition Night, and many more could have had West Elgin Legion Hall been able to accommodate more.

The branch's Legion Auxiliary catered a tasty smorgasbord, which everyone enjoyed, thanks for which was expressed by Kiwanian Peter Ayling with Jean Jamieson responding.

During the social hour, Kiwanian Winn Liepmann provided background piano music. Kiwanian Bob Walker acted as master of ceremonies. Rev. James Potter of the United Church, offered grace. Mary Liepmann introduced the head table, and Kiwanian Bill Seaton toasted the ladies, to which Vivian Ayling responded.

ENTERTAINMENT

During the entertainment period, the highlight for the crowd was Ray Peckham and Janette Fisher singing a couple of songs they sang many times to many crowds through the year. Mrs Fisher also sang two numbers, accompanied by Ruth Mistele. Kiwanian Bill Graham accompanied himself on the guitar for two songs, and Allison Peckham, granddaughter of the celebrants, who had just competed in London's Music Festival, played two numbers on the piano.

The United Church choir, of which Ray has been a member for years, sang three numbers, one especially written for the occasion by choir member Bill Graham, which featured four soloists.

SPEAKER

Kiwanian Harley Lashbrook introduced quest speaker Jim McLandress of Chatham, formerly of West Lorne.

While his address was not a "roast" in the true sense of the word, Jim poked good natured fun at Ray in stories, all of which was new material to the audience. And wife, Alice, came in for some good natured jokes, all of which kept the audience amused for 20 minutes.

Peckham's son Vaughan, introduced his family, his brothers' and several relatives.

PRESENTATIONS

Presentations were made by several, Reeve Charles Rushmere presenting a framed picture of the C & O Station. The choirs' presentation was made by member Ken Watterworth, and Kiwanis Pres. John Lawrence announced that the club was having the occasion video taped so the couple would have a lasting memento of the evening.

Kiwanis Lt.-Gov. Charles Scott of London, former interim minister in the United Church some years ago, spoke briefly, congratulating the Peckhams.

He reminded that Ray is a natural motivator, and has prompted many people to do things, him being a leader in Kiwanis, being president four times. "And he has used his talents in the club, the church and community, which has been a part of the couple's lifestyle," Lt.-Gov. Scott said.

In conclusion he brought greetings from the Kiwanis International Governor, and the Governor of the Eastern Canada-Caribbean Division.