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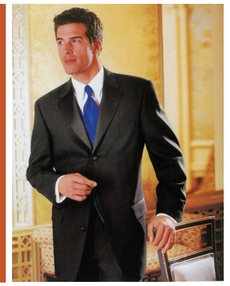

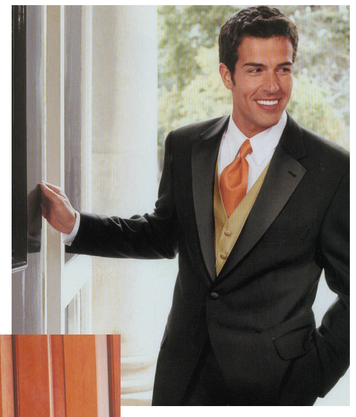

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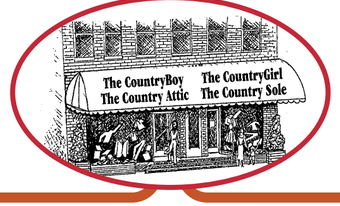

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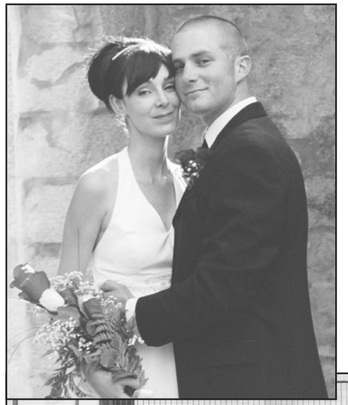

On the cover

Amber Vandale's dream of having her wedding photographs taken inside the picturesque St. Boniface Cathedral-Basilica came true on June 19, 2004. Her happy groom was Graham Torrance from South Mountain. The cathedral is on the east side of Winnipeg and was destroyed by fire in 1968, but the ruined walls remain a popular location for wedding photographs.





Get me to the church on time

Bride Pamela DeJong has some help from mom and dad getting to the church during a rain shower. Pamela married Gordon Dean on June 14, 2003 at the Christian Reformed Church in Williamsburg.

Photo courtesy Heather Cooke Erwin Photography

A touch of class, and then some

by Chris Zabel
Press staff

CHESTERVILLE — The most important part of being a limousine chauffeur isn't just driving the car, but making the passengers feel special. Few occasions require the luxury of special transportation.

"This is their one day of feeling like royalty, and we try to do that," said Ed De Jong. He and wife Jolanda will be celebrating the first anniversary of opening Royalty Limousine Service this spring. The new business has found ample demand for its 28-foot Lincoln Town Car.

"I always found limousines very sleek and beautiful cars," said Ed. He grew up farming south of Chesterville where he still has a dairy operation. The first time he was in a limousine was a number of years ago when Jolanda's parents were visiting from Holland. To make the occasion extra special, they rented a limousine to pick them up from the airport in Montreal.

Although he had previous experience as a limousine chauffeur, he said driving the vehicle isn't that great a challenge. "You have to watch the cornering, but that's about it," he said. "Some people have asked me to try to go through a drive-through, but I have to say no."





At your service

When his clients are getting married Ed De Jong is always dressed in a tuxedo. The motto at Royalty Limousine Service is, "Service with a touch of class."

Press Photo — Zabel

Ed sees his main job as ensuring that everything about his transportation service is first class. For weddings and proms he is never without white gloves and a tuxedo. The Town Car seats eight, and is equipped with a bar, optic lighting, a stereo, television and VCR. The seats are leather and the ceiling is mirrored.

Recently they added a global positioning system (GPS) to the vehicle to help with directions. Ed always knows exactly where he's going when he's on a job, but the GPS can prove invaluable in case of the unexpected. "In Montreal, sometimes a street is closed and you have to know where to go," said Jolanda. And considering the size of the car, any assistance in finding parking spaces is an asset.

Wedding parties enjoy numerous extras along win the rental fee. Ed has a red carpet that he rolls out for the bride when she arrives at the church or wherever the wedding is being held. After the service, a Just Married sign is provided along with snacks for the wedding party.

"We found that because a lot of brides are nervous before the wedding, they don't eat," said Jolanda. After the service, however, everyone has a glass of champagne to relax and suddenly people realize they're starving. A food tray is provided for the wedding party while they're being photographed. Clients can choose from vegetables, fruit or meat and cheese.

Two bottles of champagne are included with each wedding rental. Ed and Jolanda work with clients beforehand so they can provide exactly what they want. If there's a flower girl in the wedding party, a nonalcoholic alternative to champagne can be included. When the occasion is romantic, a rose is always provided for the lady.

Although Ed does all the driving, the business is a strong partnership. "We clean the limo together. That was part of the agreement when we started this," he said. One of his favorite features of the car is the strips of chrome down the lower sides.

The Royalty Limousine fleet currently includes two vehicles, the stretch Town Car and a Lincoln sedan for airport trips. So far they haven't had any celebrity clients, but they're already starting to book clients well into August. For more information call 888-762-4545 or check www.royaltylimousine.ca.

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Juli Annah's Dress and Bridal in the Moose Creek Mall has everything a bride needs for her big day. Sylvie MacDiarmid (left), Zoe Dovas, store owner Vivian Théorêt and Diane Lapensée are ready to serve you.

Juli Annah's

• continued from previous page

Dovas, who thought that Moose Creek sounded like a funny name for a town when she first started working with Théorêt, loves what she does.

"A lot of customers respect me and respect my job," said Dovas. "All I need to hear is that they appreciate it. We're available any time for customers — to help you out."

Juli Annah's is closed on Sundays and Mondays, but appointments are still available on those days if a customer needs them.

The employees bring a lot of retail experience to the store, and are there to help customers as much as possible. A mix of personalities is also helpful.

"You try to be yourself, but to also make the customer feel good," said Diane Lapensée, who admits to getting excited when she sees a bride getting excited.

The calm, professional atmosphere is just one of the steps to help make a bride's dreams come true.

"Having a staff that really cares what you look like, that matters a lot," said Théorêt. "You need girls that like to sell things that are beautiful."

Théorêt loves the fact that every day she gets to go to work and see beautiful brides in beautiful dresses.

"This is a happy area," she explained. "The bride, her dreams are coming true and you are helping her achieve her dreams."



Scenic setting

The backdrop for your wedding photos can make all the difference. Choose a spot that's special to make the day even more memorable. There are many places in SD&G that are perfect for wedding photos, including Upper Canada Village, Crysler Marina and Winchelsea Farms, or pick your favorite heritage building or garden. *Photo courtesy Studio Bérubé*



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Dresses galore at Alliance boutique

MOOSE CREEK — In its second generation, soon to be passed onto a third, is Salon Alliance Bridal Boutique. Located just off of Highway 138, the 5,000-square-foot store, which also includes Chez Ginette, boasts a wide selection of bridal gowns and cruise wear, and is the only store in eastern Ontario to have a separate prom dress shop, with more than 300 styles in stock.

"It's hard to tell everyone that I've moved," said store owner Ginette Lemieux, who eight months ago left behind her 1,200-square-foot store to expand her business. "Five thousand square feet, and still we're out of space."

The store has many unique bridal gowns to choose from.

"We carry the best dresses of every name brand out there," Lemieux said. "And dresses are added to the bargain rack often. It's ongoing."

The store has a large room for layaway, and already has wedding dresses being held until 2008. The alteration room has four sewing machines and six seamstresses.

"In high season, the summer, the machines are buzzing constantly. They don't stop," said Lemieux.

The store goes through 10 gallons of water a week just for steaming, pressing and ironing the dresses.

The store was originally owned by Lemieux's mother, Thérèse Théorêt, and originally called Chez Thérèse. Now, Lemieux offers experience and education to her customers.

Lemieux's daughter Valerie, 18, is poised to take over the business in a few years.

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Photo at right: *Thérèse Théorêt (left) was the original owner of Chez Thérèse. Her daughter Ginette (right) now owns the 5,000-square-foot store in Moose Creek where Salon Alliance Bridal Boutique and a separate prom dress shop are on-site.* ***Above photo:*** *Valerie Lemieux (left), will take over the family business from her mom, Ginette in a few years, bringing the bridal gown legacy into its third generation.*



Blushing bride

Isabelle Lacoursierre, 22, tries on one of the many bridal gowns available at Salon Alliance Bridal Boutique in Moose Creek. "I haven't decided yet, but I like this one very much," said Lacoursierre, who will be married at the end of June.

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'Something Special for Someone Special'



Ginette Lemieux owns Salon Alliance Bridal and Chez Ginette in Moose Creek. Her 5,000-square-foot store offers a wide variety of wedding dresses as well as prom gowns and cruise wear.

Alliance boutique

• continued from previous page

"I love it," she said. "Just being with the people, the big groups. I'm just a people person."

She graduated from Casselman High School and has fond memories of her prom. Now she sells dresses to make memories for others. The store also keeps a record of prom dresses sold and which school the student attends, to try to make sure that identical dresses don't show up at the same party.

"We have a dress in the prom shop that's designed by Paris Hilton," said Lemieux.

Lemieux said that recently some bridal parties have chosen prom dresses as bridesmaids dresses.

The store has a constant stream of customers and seems to be thriving.

"We've almost thought of everything," said Lemieux. "Almost."

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One-stop shopping

Juli Annah's makes dreams come true

Meghan Duncan
Press staff

MOOSE CREEK — After one full year of planning, Juli Annah's Dress and Bridal opened its doors to the public on Oct. 19. The store completes the one-stop shopping experience at the Moose Creek Mall.

"We're run off our feet," said store owner Vivian Théorêt. She explained that on one Saturday there were 10 brides booked for appointments and four dropped in.

"It's advisable to always make an appointment to ensure the best possible service," said Théorêt.

The store sells formal attire for women. Bridal and prom gowns, mother of the bride apparel and dresses for other formal occasions.

Other stores in the mall sell and rent men's formal wear, and with a shoe store at the same location, all preparations for a formal evening can be completed.

By the end of January, the store has already sold about 15 prom dresses, perhaps because a lot of the store's selection is unique in eastern Ontario. The exclusive, world-renown labels and designs are sure to help make the memorable event of selecting a wedding gown that much more fun.

That's Juli Annah's philosophy — to be unique and different and sell gowns that are genuine and original.

Everything is always unique and brand new," said Théorêt. "You're not going to be duplicated."

The store sells a lot of dresses for destination weddings, as well. Generally these are less formal gowns with no crinoline and are easy to transport. These gowns tend to complement the simplicity of overseas weddings.

The sparkling dresses are sure to catch many customers' interest.

"Women love this stuff," said Théorêt.

An artificial tree in the middle of the store that climbs to the ceiling is covered with twinkle lights. "It makes you feel close to nature," said Théorêt.

Creating the elegance of the store was not a simple task. "We all give a lot of energy to the store," said Théorêt. "It was a labor of love to make our store unique and different. Rome wasn't built in a day."

The store has a display case full of tiaras and headpieces, as well as hair jewellery, both elegant and funky.

Customers have traveled from as far as Clarence Creek, Montreal, Ottawa, and the U.S. to shop at Juli Annah's.

"A lot of shoppers, they do their homework online," explained Théorêt. "They see our website, then they come and see us. And word of mouth goes out quickly."

Making sure a wedding dress fits properly is crucial.

"The most important thing, the heart of any bridal store, is a qualified seamstress," explained Théorêt. "You cannot entrust a bridal gown to anyone but the best."

Enter Zoe Dovas, who immigrated to Canada from Greece five years ago.

"She can do everything," said Théorêt. "She's highly qualified; we're very lucky."

Others feel the same way.

"She's amazing," said Sylvie MacDiarmid, an employee who works with Dovas. "You need someone very talented to do what she does."

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Sylvie MacDiarmid (left), Zoe Dovas, store owner Vivian Théorêt and Diane Lapensée peek through some of the dresses available at Juli Annah's Dress and Bridal in the Moose Creek Mall.



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SUV limo

• continued from previous page

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Byers also operates the more conventional low profile limousines, which accommodate six, eight and 10 passengers.

The owners of this company, James and Shelley Byers, have been building their business over the past 10 years by being dependable and by providing the best service available. Without necessarily intending to do so, the Byerses are well on their way to becoming a world-class limousine service. They may already have attained that status. In the area of pricing, they remain very competitive. "I look at what we're providing and I know we should be charging more, but we won't be doing that," said James Byers.

Whether it's a wedding or a group of friends heading out for a night on the town, Byers Limousine Service has provided transportation for a wide range of occasions, from the extravagant to the very economical.

James Byers told of how one bride, travelling between the church and the reception, asked the driver to pull over in front of a pizza parlor so she could order and pay for the reception dinner. "I thought, wow, even a low budget wedding is using a Byers Limousine," he recalled with obvious pride.



A fully equipped bar is just one of the special features provided by Byers Limousine Service. Passengers can also watch a DVD of their choice on four TV monitors, or listen to their favorite music via the surround sound speakers.



Join the party

Wedding parties come in all sizes. Whether it's a small, intimate ceremony or a large, lavish affair, the memories will last forever. Many photographers now have on-line portfolios, so couples can research their photo options from the comfort of home. Photo courtesy Wayne LaPrade Photography

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Catering for over 30 years

AJ's serves variety of menus for every wedding style

by Sean Meagher

METCALFE — A business office nestled upstairs in a Metcalfe commissary has a phone that is ringing off the hook. A desk with several pamphlets, large three-ring binders bulging with papers and the occasional Post-it notepad cover the dark, wooden surface — an organized yet chaotic work environment.

The binders and booklets are constantly getting fatter with weddings, funerals, fundraiser and banquet forms. More phone calls. More schedules. More planning.

Working at AJ's Catering Inc. is both a challenging, but fulfilling job and Isabel Cheney, the event co-ordinator and catering specialist wouldn't have it any other way.

"We have a wonderful team and everyone does their share of work," said Cheney. She then answered "AJ's, good afternoon," as she picked up the phone once again.

At most businesses, Sunday isn't meant to be so hectic, but at AJ's Catering Inc., each day is a surprise.

"We've already got four funeral receptions booked for tomorrow," said Cheney.

First impressions mean everything to this catering company, which strives to make each call to their office important whether it is on a Sunday afternoon or during a Thursday rush. "When people call, they want to talk to someone, not a machine," said Cheney.



Being employed at a catering service involves much dedication to the tasks at hand, good organization skills, but above all, attention to detail. Planning and setting up banquets, weddings and funerals are not easy jobs. With great production, distribution, catering and office teams all the work becomes that much easier.

Funeral receptions, sometimes-large ones, must be finished within only a day's notice. Weddings are a bit more work than funerals, but there is usually more time in advance to create a beautiful and splendid celebration.

"Brides, once they get engaged, are looking to get everything organized right away.

Booking a caterer is a huge decision and helping them understand our services and answering all their questions is very important – first impressions mean quite a bit," said Cheney.

The full range of menus, from elegant multi course dinners to full sit-down meals and buffets, make it hard to decide.

But once an engaged couple decides on AJ's, the progress toward a reception begins at a sit-down meeting usually involving a discussion about all the aspects of the wedding. The meeting with the caterers covers everything from what the couple wants the reception to look like, to what types of food will be served, how the decorations should be set up and the schedule of the wedding day. "In the meeting we basically listen to what the bride and groom want to happen on their special day," said Cheney.

From the meeting, AJ's will produce a detailed schedule of the wedding day, broken down into time slots to be discussed further and approved by the engaged couple and their families.

Weddings indeed keep AJ's busy, but right now funeral receptions, corporate banquets, fundraisers, home and business parties are the main reason why Cheney can't seem to put down the phone.

Al Graham, owner of AJ's, has been in the business for over 30 years - and will continue to produce the excellent quality food and service that has made him famous throughout Metcalfe and the rest of the Ottawa area.

For more information about AJ's Catering Inc., call 613-821-1445 or visit their website at www.ajscatering.com.

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Betty Walter sits in one of the jacuzzi suites at the McIntosh Country Inn in Morrisburg. The facility has recently added an outdoor hot tub, which is in addition to a sauna and gym.

Photo — Meagher

Fine food, accommodations at the McIntosh Country Inn

by Sean Meagher

MORRISBURG — When needing a place to stay, to host a conference, to organize a christening or even plan a wedding, the McIntosh Country Inn located in the heart of Morrisburg accommodates all of the above.

The facilities and services at the inn are of the highest quality, adding a feeling of luxury that keeps customers coming back. Betty Walter, the food and beverage manager, described the McIntosh's atmosphere as a mix between the quality of the city and the feeling of the country.

"It's the feeling in here. It's a very relaxed feeling," she said. A few minutes away from the the picturesque St. Lawrence River, the McIntosh has 59 guest rooms including suites, four of them equipped with a jacuzzi and fireplace.

Things can get busy around the inn. Sometimes Walter plans a wedding, christening, business conference, funeral and a birthday party all in the same day. She said the end result always makes it worth the effort.

"At the end of it all, when we all work hard and we achieve, that's really rewarding for me," said Walter. She has experience in almost all employment positions at the inn including server and front desk staff.

Weddings aren't frequent at the McIntosh, but Walter has had her share of them. The size of weddings has ranged from 20 to 120 people. "I've had about six or seven couples married here," said Walter.

"We're hoping to be able to accommodate more people in the future."

Walter added that the staff includes skilled decorators capable of assembling exquisite wedding setups and displays. "It's amazing what you can do with a lattice and lighting," said Walter.

Entertainment packages including attractions such as Upper Canada Village and local golf courses are also available to anyone staying at the inn. Wedding couples looking to have fun before the big day may want to take advantage of these deals.

As with most things at the inn, the foods served are also some of the best around town. "Everything here is homemade," said Walter. "You don't get that in a lot of places."

From homemade bread, cakes, pastries and a variety of other dishes, food at the McIntosh Inn is of the highest quality. A Chinese buffet, a prime rib buffet and chicken wing nights are all examples of some of the variety the inn presents on a weekly basis.

An outdoor hot tub is the latest addition at the inn. The McIntosh Inn also has a sauna, whirlpool, heated seasonal swimming pool, an exercise area and an arcade.

Not only people from eastern Ontario visit the inn. According to Walter, people from all over Ontario have come to Morrisburg to experience the McIntosh. "We have people travel here on a regular basis from Ottawa," she said.

For more information about the McIntosh Country Inn, located on County Road 2 east in Morrisburg, call 613-543-3788 or visit the website at www.mcintoshcountryinn.com.

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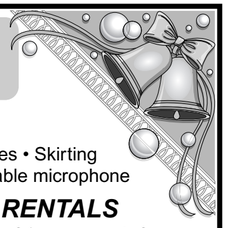

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SUV limo offers roomiest ride on the road

by Matt Barbour

IROQUOIS — When most people think of limousines, images of stretched Cadillacs and Lincolns come to mind. However, when a high riding, elongated sport utility vehicle (SUV) goes by, it usually draws a second and sometimes, a third look.



SUV limousines have become popular in the United States, but are just now being introduced into Canada. Surprisingly, the ride in these vehicles is extremely smooth. There are only three of them in eastern Ontario and soon, a fourth will be appearing. Byers Limousine Service of Iroquois currently operates one SUV limousine, a stretched Ford Excursion and has ordered a second to keep up with a growing demand for this type of vehicle.

The SUV limousine is reported to be a favorite among younger people, perhaps because it is a new and innovative concept in luxury transportation. Everyone will find embarking and disembarking much easier because of the increased interior space. From floor to ceiling, the SUV interiors are about 25 per cent higher than standard limousines. An extra 25 per cent is added to the inside width as well, due to the configuration of the seating, and passengers can comfortably stretch their legs.

In addition, some of the stretched SUVs can carry more passengers. While two of the SUV limousines in eastern Ontario hold 10 people each, the Byers Excursion has seating for 14. The extra four passengers are accommodated in a VIP section at the rear of the vehicle.

Measuring 33 feet from bumper to bumper, it is the longest limousine permitted on Canadian public roads. Plus, the Byers SUV is equipped with just about every amenity that can be put into a limousine, including a DVD player for movies and music videos that can be viewed on four LCD monitors.

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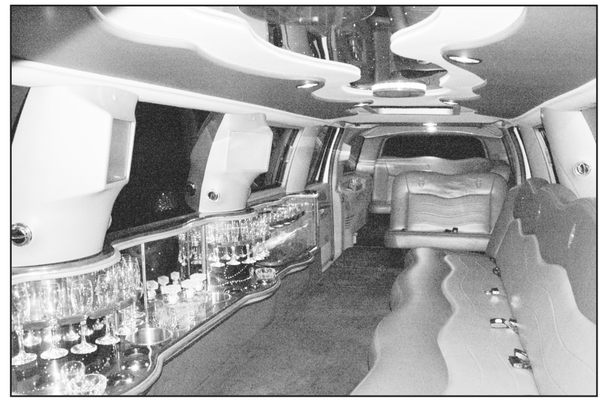

As soon as people enter this vehicle, they realize they will experience more than just an average limousine ride. Byers Limousine Service of Iroquois is world class and "Red Carpet Treatment" is more than a figure of speech.



Limousine owners Shelley and James Byers take great pride in providing their customers with a unique experience. Shelley works very closely with prospective clients to determine their exact needs and wants.

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Marriage Announcements



Daines – Duke

Patty Duke, daughter of Denzel and Margaret Duke and Tim Daines, son of Nancy and the late Kenneth Daines were united on August 28, 2004 at Winchelsea Farms in Winchester. Patty and Tim reside in Chesterville. Thank you to families and friends for making our special day memorable.

Heather Cooke Erwin Photography



MacDonald – Berends

Amy Berends, daughter of Ben and Anja of Reids Mills and Kevin MacDonald, son of Allen R. and Lucille of Glen Norman are pleased to announce their marriage which took place on September 18, 2004 at the bride's family farm. The happy couple now reside in Dalhousie Mills where Kevin dairy farms with his parents and Amy continues her job as a firefighter for the City of Ottawa.



Burns – Bierworth

Sandra, daughter of Robin and Astrid Bierworth of Winchester Springs, and Philip, son of Wayne and Huguette Burns of Winchester, were married on June 12, 2004, at the St. Thérèse d'Avila Church in Marionville.



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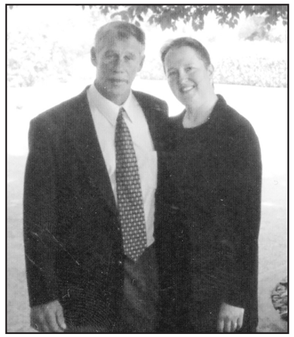
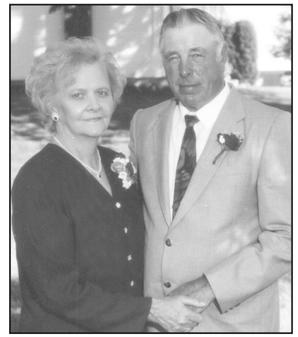
Wedding Anniversaries



Fred and Deb Dings

Congratulations to Fred and Deb Dings who will be celebrating their 25th Wedding Anniversary on August 30, 2005.

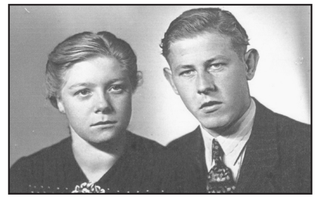
Love from your family and friends.



Raymond and Doreen Como

Raymond and Doreen Como will be celebrating their 50th Wedding Anniversary on May 7, 2005.

Congratulations from your family.



Mr. & Mrs. Hemmo Buter

With joy and gratitude to God, Mr. and Mrs. Hemmo Buter look forward to celebrating with their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, their 60th Wedding Anniversary (Feb. 27, 1945-2005). Open house on March 5, 2-4 pm at Winchelsea Farm (north of Winchester).



Marion and Roy Hart

Marion and Roy Hart will be celebrating their 63rd Wedding Anniversary on August 17, 2005.

Congratulations from your family.



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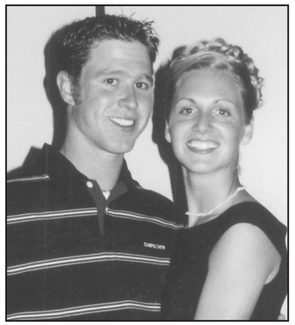
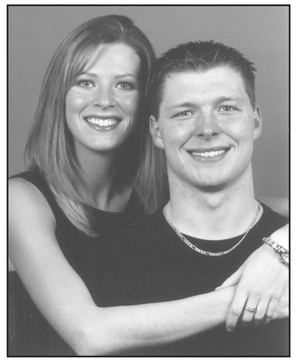
Engagements



Yelle – Griffith

Gilles and Christena Yelle are pleased to announce the engagement of their daughter Jacqueline Suzanne to Gregg Stuart son of Don and Cheryl Griffith. Their wedding will take place on July 30, 2005 at the home of the bride's parents.



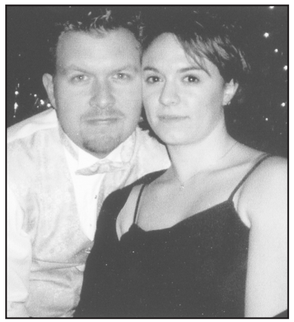
St.Pierre – Holmes

Denis and Jean St.Pierre announce the engagement of their daughter Monique St.Pierre to Craig Holmes, the son of Barry and Cathy Holmes. The wedding will take place on July 9, 2005.



Vanier – Garlough

Raymond and Annie Vanier of Metcalfe are pleased to announce the engagement of their daughter Christina Ann to Timothy Michael son of Hugh and Zonia Garlough of Williamsburg. Wedding to take place on June 18, 2005 at Williamsburg United Church.



Murray – Epps

Clifford and Karen Murray are pleased to announce the engagement of their daughter, Elisa Ann to Shane Daniel, son of Stephen and Terri Epps, all of Marvelville. Wedding to take place Friday, August 5, 2005 at St. Andrew's and St. Paul's United Church in Russell. Reception to follow at the Marionville Community Centre.



Weir – Moss

Roger and Sharon Moss wish to announce the engagement of their son, Adam Roger, to Cara Anne May Weir, daughter of Margaret Forrest and Murray Weir. They will be married at Blessed Sacrament Church in Ottawa on November 12, 2005.

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Follow a horse on your wedding day

by Matt Barbour

MOREWOOD — "Love and marriage go together like a horse and carriage." You've likely heard that expression more than a few times and you might have heard the song. Well, for some, a horse and carriage literally go together with love and marriage.

Plans for the wedding day are usually detailed, because after all, it is a day for making memories that will last a very long time. The music, the flowers, the colors, everything is well thought out in advance. So too, is the matter of transportation. The romantic appeal of a horse-drawn carriage can be irresistible.

The leisurely pace at which the carriage usually travels allows the newlywed couple to have a period of relaxation in what otherwise is a very hectic day. It's an opportunity to enjoy being alone with each other for the first time as man and wife. There is time to take in the view, to see and be seen. In an open carriage, the fresh air gently improves the glow emanating from the bride and groom. In the clippity-clop of the horse's hooves, there are echoes of a time when such a mode of travel was commonplace.

Denzel Duke of Dukedale Farms has been providing such wedding day transportation for 10 years. His white victoria-style carriage, drawn by a gentle Belgian horse, has carried numerous newlywed couples from churches to receptions. Duke's wife, Margaret, is the one who looks after the bookings.

She sometimes speaks at great length with the person making the arrangements to ensure that the carriage service will be provided in accordance with the wishes of the bride and groom. She always urges customers to form a contingency plan, in the event that the weather doesn't cooperate, or in case some other unexpected circumstance arises. Sometimes she and her husband will even go over the proposed route in their car to check the distance and look for possible impediments to the passage of the horse and carriage.

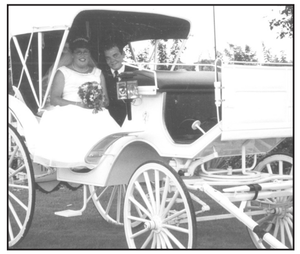
Duke has been a dairy farmer all his life and has always liked working with horses. He has fond memories of when he was a child, working his father's farm with horses. In later years, those memories led him to acquire horses of his own. "I've actually worked this farm with my horses," he said. "But that has been just fooling around. It would be impractical to run the whole operation with horses, as much as I would like that."

Duke currently owns three Belgian horses and said he prefers the breed because of its gentle nature. "The Belgians are good workhorses. They're called the gentle giants. They are sensible and level-headed." He said he would not use any other breed for pulling a carriage with passengers. He also describes Belgians as patient horses, explaining that they can stand still for periods of time, but when it's time to work, they're ready to go.

Duke has also participated in many parades. He recently purchased lights for his carriage, solely for the purpose of being able to take part of the Winchester Country Christmas Parade of Lights.



Angela and Allan Marriman decided a horse and carriage was right for their wedding in May last year.



Patty Duke and Tim Daines were married in August last summer. A carriage ride following the wedding ceremony can provide newlyweds with a needed break to be alone during a hectic day.

Heather Cooke Erwin Photography



It's a Belgian that Dukedale Farms employs for wedding duties. Denzel Duke finds they're the best horses for the job with their calm temperament. Duke said that he'd use his horses for all of his farm chores if that was practical.

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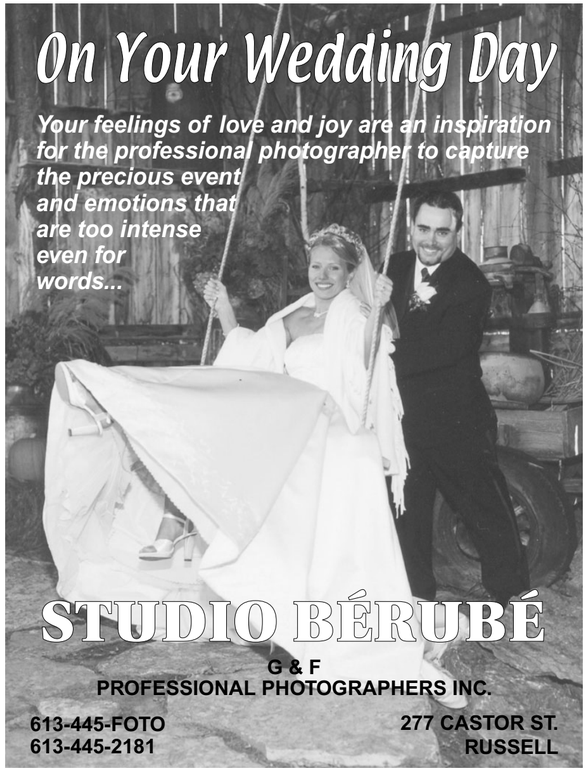

Jamaican wedding

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One of Danielle's uncles passed away before the ceremony. His friend, Joan Russell, is a makeup artist who has done makeup for a lot of stars. "Her promise to him was that she'd do my makeup on my wedding day," said Danielle. Though she thought that her makeup was a little too heavy, it looked good in the photographs.

The helpers at the villa put flower petals and chocolate on the couple's bed, and made a swan from the towels.

"It was just beautiful," said Danielle. "They made it like a little sanctuary."

Danielle said that even though the wedding planner thought the ceremony was taking place on a different day, everything seemed to work out.

"The things that didn't go as planned were concerning the food, where there wasn't a clear communication," said Danielle. "It was stressful because we were dealing with U.S. dollars."

The couple also mentioned that when you get married abroad, you have limited resources. But Danielle was pleased to have orchids as her wedding flower, a flower that would be unaffordable and tricky to get in Ontario.

The wedding was a lot less expensive than it would have been if they stayed in Ontario. The villa that the couple chose was not an all-inclusive place like many resorts are, so guests had the choice of how much they wanted to spend, and could choose if they wanted to order a less expensive meal or go all-out.

At all-inclusive resorts, guests would be paying about $3,500 with flight for one week.

"Ours topped out at $1,500 with the flight," explained Danielle. "And that's what our main stress was, 'Do people want to pay that?'"

There was a down side to having a wedding so far away.

"The flip side of going away is that not everyone can come," said Chris, whose parents graciously organized a reception at the Winchester Lions Hall scheduled for when the couple arrived home from Jamaica. About 200 guests who couldn't be at the ceremony had their chance to wish the couple congratulations.

"You get to spend time with the people," Chris said, explaining what he liked about having a wedding abroad. "It's not over in one day."

"There was a lot of atmosphere," said Danielle.

Looking back at the planning process, Danielle thinks she could have been more assertive.

"I would have been more hard-nosed," she said. "But overall I think I was pretty good with my communication."

The logistics of the guests' flights were somewhat terrifying, but worked out perfectly in the end. The couple wishes to thank Owen Shortt at Winchester Tours and Travel Agency Ltd. for his help.

"We couldn't have done it by ourselves," said Chris.

The guests flying from Ontario were on two separate flights, about 24 hours apart. The travel agency was also a big help in seating arrangements and putting seats on hold.



Danielle and Chris look through their wedding album in their Ottawa home. The couple exchanged their vows in Jamaica, during a small, intimate ceremony. Many couples are deciding to have unique and special weddings overseas.

The couple picked their invitations on-line and said it was a very cost-effective, efficient decision.

And as for picking a date?

"That's the other thing about planning an overseas wedding," said Danielle. "You have to know the seasons."

The couple's Aug. 5, 2004 wedding was more expensive than if they'd chosen another month, but September was hurricane season, and early in the summer was high season, meaning flight-costs would be increased. The couple also happened to choose the Jamaican independence holiday for their wedding, which caused some problems with flight bookings.

"You really need almost a year," said Chris. There are more things to think about when planning a wedding away; extra time is needed.

Giving guests almost a year's notice is appreciated as well, so that they can have time to save money and make sure their calendar is free. But a lot can happen in a year, too. Guests may back out due to job situations or new babies.

"You can't hold them to it," said Danielle. "But you have to give them enough time to figure it out."

As for the numbers of overseas weddings now, Danielle says that it's more than just a trend.

"They're still special and individual and that's the most important thing," she said. "For something unique and special — do it overseas. You get to spend time with the people, it's not just meet and greet. It's special." She also said that it's sort of a middle ground to eloping. "All we wanted was a party."

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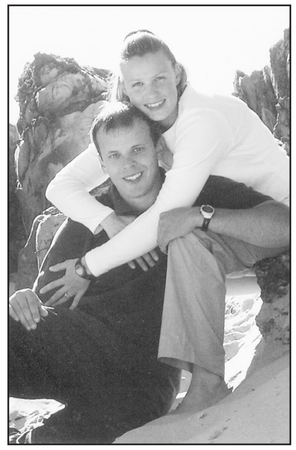
Engagements



Van Gurp – Helmer

Tony and Betty Van Gurp of Chesterville are very pleased to announce the engagement of their daughter Angie to Kevin son of Don and Linda Helmer of Winchester. The wedding is planned for the summer of 2007. Congratulations to you both.



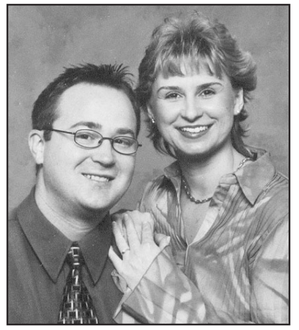
Corrigan – Bell

Sarah Jane Corrigan and Barry James Bell wish to announce their forthcoming marriage on August 20, 2005 at the Bean Town Ranch, Plantagenet. Proud parents are Anne Stockwell and Brian Corrigan, and Ron and Sharel Bell.



Drouin – Geurts

JeanMarc and Francine Drouin and Richard and Leslie Geurts are pleased to announce the engagement of their children Sophie Lorraine and Jeremy Christopher. The wedding is planned for February 11, 2006.



Desnoyers – Fawcett

Kaylee and Amber are thrilled to announce the engagement of their parents Theresa Desnoyers and Todd Fawcett. The celebration of love is to take place on July 16, 2005 at Stanley's Olde Maple Lane Farm in Edwards.

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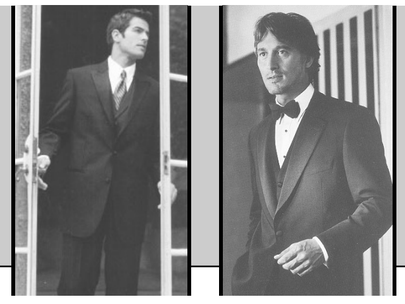

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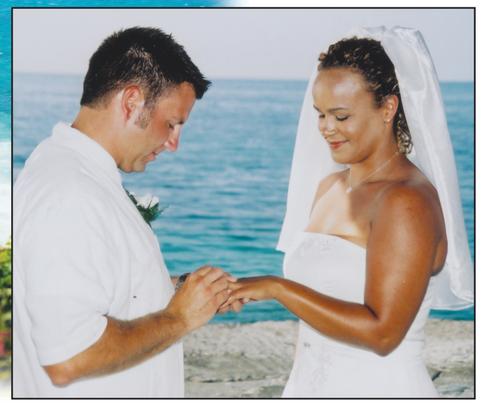
Tying the knot on a tropical island paradise



Chris and Danielle were married in a gazebo which could be seen from their villa courtyard (photo right).





Meghan Duncan
Press staff

OTTAWA — It was on the cold, snowy Christmas Eve of 2002 that Chris Van Bridger proposed to his girlfriend Danielle Roberts at their Ottawa home. But it was 107°F the day they exchanged their vows on a beach in Jamaica.

"We were looking for locations to get married and different venues," explained Danielle, sitting in the couple's home with her new husband. "We wanted to have a small and intimate wedding and it would have been impossible to have that if we were here [Ontario]."

It was on a previous trip to the island, where many of Danielle's family members reside, that she saw the location.

"That's where I'm getting married, and if Chris wants to, he can come," she recalled saying to her father long before the proposal.

Chris and Danielle were originally thinking about having the ceremony in Mexico, where they met. But Mexico would have been much more expensive, and having Danielle's family in Jamaica made their wedding location more appealing. Danielle wanted to make sure that both families got to know each other and that a cultural exchange took place.

"It was crucial to me to get married there [Jamaica] because I wanted Chris' family to know my family," she said.

A total of 58 people were present in Jamaica for the ceremony. Of that, 30 guests were from Ontario.

"That baffled me," said Danielle. "I really didn't think that many people would come." The guests stayed for one week while the bride and groom had an extra week to relax.

"We needed an extra week to stay on the beach," said Danielle.

"You definitely want to stay longer than the wedding," said Chris.

A wedding planner from the area was in charge of all the details. Danielle said she wouldn't have done it any other way. She said the planner's connections alone saved a lot of money and aggravation.

"Some people do it on their own, or go through a resort," said Danielle. "But it was just easier through one person." She also remarked that the planner organized everything from tables and chairs to cutlery, tasks that would have been a hassle to look after in Ontario.

Having their photos taken by a local photographer was also less expensive than it would have been in Ontario, especially because the couple received all of the negatives for easy reprints. The photographer also used techniques that made their photos truly unique. There is one picture in the album where Chris is looking at himself and Danielle kissing.

The planner had reliable photographers to choose from, and Danielle was able to speak with previous clients and check out the photographer's online portfolio before she made her decision.

Uncles and friends helped out filming the ceremony. "It would have been another $360 U.S. for five minutes of the ceremony," said Danielle.

The wedding planner organized a steel-drum band, which was a surprise to the bride. Danielle's uncle then paid the band to play for an extra two hours, which the couple thought was an excellent wedding gift.

The gardener at the villa where the wedding took place gave the couple breadfruit. "They said it was good luck," said Danielle. Breadfruit is potato-textured fruit that grows from a tree on the island. The tradition is to cook it with butter, and it's very tasty.

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The brilliant blue Caribbean Sea provided a spectacular backdrop for Chris and Danielle's late afternoon wedding ceremony.



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