

# Director of former experimental farm shares stories of government-run agency

By Anica James

A fan hums in unison with Harold Blair Heeney's trembling nerves, as he gently rocks back and forth on his La-Z-Boy in his apartment at the Quinte Gardens retirement residence. Books and photo albums are strewn across his lap and piled high on the small table next to him. He leafs through the pages in search of his article *Smithfield Experimental Farm: 1944-1985*.

"I was the director so I had a lot of responsibilities," Heeney, now 93, says of his former job at the government-run Smithfield Experimental Farm. Flipping through an old photo album he points out the old house that he and his family lived in on the farm.

"My family and I sold our house in Ottawa and moved to a house on the farm," Heeney says, furrowing his brow. "My kids were upset because they had to change friends and school, but my wife and I enjoyed the country living. It was a lot simpler then."

Heeney was appointed the director of Smithfield from 1960-1979, where he developed and administered the facility, which included recruiting and training staff. He was also responsible for building laboratories on the property. Studies were made on various types of fruits and vegetables during the 19 years Heeney was in charge of the facility, before he retired in 1979.

"Previous to 1960 only minimal technical staff were permanently located at the Smithfield Experimental Farm," Heeney says. "Laboratories did not exist before me, so work, research and administration were supervised by staff at the Central Experimental Farm in Ottawa, which caused a delay in production. I changed all of that and brought work to the Quinte region."

Located between Trenton and Brighton, just north of Highway 2, the derelict buildings that remain on the farm offer a glimpse into the region's agricultural past.

Historically, the areas along the St. Lawrence River and the north shore of Lake Ontario have been important apple production areas in Canada since the region was first settled. As late as 1940, Prince Edward and Hastings counties were two of the most important areas in Ontario for the production of crops for processing, particularly tomatoes, peas



Photo by Anica James

**Harold Blair Heeney sits in his residence at the Quinte Gardens retirement home on Monday. Heeney was the director of the former Smithfield Experimental Farm, located west of Trenton, from 1960-1979. He has published 27 books and has received a number of awards for his involvement with the Canadian horticultural and agricultural societies.**

and corn.

"The Quinte region has always been known for being at the forefront of the fruit and vegetable industry in Ontario," Heeney says, who has published 27 books about horticultural and agricultural issues. A number of his books concern the development and cultivation of different tomato and apple species in Ontario.

"However, it was not until 1944 that funds could be obtained to purchase land for the establishment of a research facility

in the Trenton area," Heeney says.

The farm officially closed its doors in 1996 and staff relocated to the Central Experimental Farm in Ottawa. Since then the relinquished property has been undergoing a facelift.

According to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency archives, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) proposed the demolition of building #1, a laboratory, and building #7, an office, at the former AAFC Smithfield Experimen-

tal Farm in 2009.

Trenton residents Rick and Aaron Lange purchased the land from the government in 2012 and currently use the farmland to grow soya beans and corn.

"The government was unable to sell the land in the state that it was in," says Aaron Lange. "My father and I bought the land for a good price, and at the request of the government, we are going to continue removing the buildings on the property. We removed one this past summer because it

was full of mold and asbestos."

Sighing heavily, Heeney looks around his room, staring at the artwork on his walls and half-completed crossword puzzles jumbled on the floor.

"I still drive by the old farm from time to time," he says. "Both my son and daughter live out near Brighton so I still take a detour every now and then to look at it but it has changed so much. I have fond memories of the place, but now they can belong to someone else."

## Chefs serve wild game to the adventurous

By Guillaume Nolet

Some of Quebec's chefs are going wild.

"I will take the squirrel special, please."

Some of Quebec's finest chefs will soon be able to serve wild squirrels, muskrat and beaver among other wild game meat, to their most adventurous customers.

This comes after an announcement made last week by the provincial government to allow a number of restaurants, such as Montreal's famous Toqué and Au Pied de Cochon, to add wild game meat to their menus as part of a new pilot project.

A cooking instructor in Loyalist College's culinary skills program, Chef Levi Richards, said he is pleased with the proactive approach taken by Quebec.

"I'm all for it, as long as it is regulated and it does not put any species at risk. It's a good way to look at new and different meat for people."

With better education toward the origin and tradition of this type of food, Richards said the same idea could be realized in Ontario.

"It might be a shock or sounds weird for mainstream people to eat this type of food, but the Ontario government could eventually, if people are educated properly, implement a similar program," said Richards.

Having cooked and tasted beaver and muskrat in the past, Richards said that it's no file mignon, but cooked

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*Chef Levi Richards*

properly, braised for example, it is definitely something to try.

"The customer is looking for different tastes, different avenues, beyond beef, and some of those wild animals are maybe leaner and better for our system," concluded Richards.

Avid hunters such as John Ward, in line at a Belleville hunting and fishing store, said he thinks this new program is a great initiative by the Quebec government and a good way to endorse hunting.

"What a great way to help promote the image of hunting and trapping in general. Hunters often get bad press,

because people think we just hunt for trophies, while in fact, a big majority of us do it for the meat," said Ward.

"People will be more aware of the different options out there and will be surprised to discover the great taste of game meat," added Ward, who has been hunting for the last 35 years.

Jolanta Kowalski, senior media relations officer from the Ministry of Natural Resources of Ontario, explained there are certain circumstances in Ontario where game meat can be served in restaurants such as deer, elk and some furbearing mammals.

"If you lawfully bought game meat, e.g. white-tailed deer from a deer farm, you can serve it in a restaurant," said Kowalski.

If there was an interest in serving wild game meat, such as the one introduced in Quebec, Ontario would need to make modifications to its legislation.

"The province would need to make changes to the Ministry of Natural Resources legislation as well as other legislation such as the Food Premises regulation under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*," said Kowalski.

Quebec's wildlife and environmental minister, Yves-Francois Boisvert, said that only non-endangered species, and those known to be safe for human consumption, free of bacteria or illnesses, will be served during this pilot project that should start early next fall.

## Belleville native receives accolades as goaltender at Queen's

*Receives titles of MVP, rookie of the year and goaltender of the year*

By Sarah Taylor

It was a very successful year for Queen's Gaels' goaltender Kevin Bailie, who received the titles of most valuable player in the east, rookie of the year and goaltender of the year.

"It's just his focus. I've never seen a kid his age have the focus that he does," said Gaels hockey coach, Brett Gibson.

Although the 22-year-old Belleville native said he is very excited about his awards, his team's success is more prominent.

"Everyone wants those awards. But during that time when I found out, we were in the middle of playoffs and I told everyone I would trade that a million times over to win a championship, I think that's more important to me. But to be recognized like that is always obviously really nice," said Bailie.

He said he also feels the awards are not an individual success.

"Although they're individual awards, there's no way if you had guys not trying hard enough blocking shots on you it would ever happen," said Bailie.

Bailie started playing hockey when he was seven years old and a year later, went into the net. At the age of 15, he was drafted into the OHL by the Oshawa Generals and later played for the London Knights. In 2012, Bailie was nominated for OHL MVP.

Bailie described playing on a university team as being much more competitive and intense than in the OHL.

"The competition between schools is a lot more heated because all the students get involved and it's bigger than just the hockey team... it's a battle of which school is better in that sense," said Bailie.

Now that the season has come to an end, Bailie reflected on the season.

"Everyone loves to play hockey. You don't realize it as much when you're playing it. It's more like right now when you're done and how much you miss it," said Bailie.

The hockey player is currently in his first year of the general arts program and dreams of becoming a lawyer one day. Once he completes his degree he plans to consider his options in hockey.

"The sky is the limit for him... I could see him playing as high as he wants to. That's how good he is," said Gibson.

## Frozen lakes this winter result in bird deaths

By Nathan Zbeetnoff

A large number of birds have been dying all across the Great Lakes.

The Great Lakes are 92 per cent frozen over this cold winter, and because of this, the birds are not able to get food for themselves. So many birds are dying, officials with the Sandy Pines Wildlife Centre in Napanee originally thought there might have been another reason for it.

Carcasses were sent to the Wildlife Centre in Guelph to identify the issue and they said "it was malnutrition, along with poor muscle mass and definitely starvation." The wildlife centre found about the issue from people in the Quinte West area finding deceased birds along the edges of the water. People started phoning wildlife and rehabilitation centres, explaining the issue.

Small and large communities that live near the birds have taken things into their own hands and are trying to feed the birds whenever they can.

In Barcovan, they dredge the water, which sometimes takes away their food source and it doesn't come back in time for them" Lisa Peterson, a licenced wildlife custodian said.

Peterson started a petition to try and lift the bylaw in Cobourg. Over 1,000 people have signed and that number will continue climbing until



Photo by Elaine Bombay

**Carol Whitehouse of Brighton feeds corn to the swans, geese and ducks at Barcovan Beach. The extreme cold and heavy ice have made it difficult for the birds to get food this winter and hundreds have died. Volunteers and others like Whitehouse who have heard of their plight have been feeding the birds.**

the end of April.

When Bill Thompson, a resident of Cobourg, found out that the birds were in distress he started feeding the birds. Thompson started feeding the birds in January and didn't have

any issues until February 18 from a bylaw officer. He was written a ticket for \$105. Thompson continued to help the birds by feeding them, which led to him getting an additional ticket of \$105.

"We are not asking for them to remove or change the bylaw. We are asking for amnesty," Peterson said. The request is that they also lift Thompson's tickets as well.