

# Thomson Tradewinds

DAVID & MARY THOMSON C.I. ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 1997

## ON THE INTERNET

It's time for Thomson Tradewinds to enter the electronic age! A volunteer web site has been established to support our school's outreach to former students and staff across North America and around the world. Server space has been donated by William C. Stratas (Class of 1977), who is president of Planetcast Presentations, Inc., the Toronto-based web corporate communications firm which he founded in 1995.

The site is intended to be a community effort. E-mail contributions of graphics, scanned photos, and articles are welcomed. William and his team will assemble these items as they are sent in, and present them on the web for your edification.

At present the only functional area of the web site - but its best feature - is the discussion group, which permits users to post messages and view all previous submissions. The discussion area is divided into seven sections for alumni messages, plus special topic areas for teaching staff, SAC members, team players, music performers, and valedictorians. You can read all these areas without restriction, but posting messages will require registration of your e-mail address.

So type in <http://www.planetcast.com/thomson/> and give it a try!

Please pass along your comments and suggestions to William Stratas at [president@planetcast.com](mailto:president@planetcast.com), or by telephone to Planetcast at 416-593-6993.

## PUB NIGHT: FEBRUARY 28

Yes! Your ever-active organizing committee wants to brighten the dark days at winter's end with a get-together over a warm (or cold!) beverage (etc.). We are inviting you to join us at Father's on the north-east corner of Highway 7 and McCowan Rd. from 8:00 p.m. on, Saturday, February 28. Get together a group from your years, or even Thomsonites from work and/or recreation. Spouses/ partners, etc. are also welcome, if they can put up with nostalgia from your youth!



We will need some idea of numbers in advance. We hope to put together a phoning committee to issue reminders in mid-February. If you could

volunteer to phone a few fellow grads, or if you don't get a call, and plan to attend, call Joyce McGill (416-291-3984), Janet Evans (416-265-3942) or Stan Farrow (416-267-2834). You can also reach Stan through e-mail: [Stan\\_Farrow@sbe.scarborough.on.ca](mailto:Stan_Farrow@sbe.scarborough.on.ca).

Decorating this article are a couple of photos from our picnic at Thomson Park in September. The attendance of two dozen or so (not all there at one time) was a

bit disappointing, and is one reason we have decided to go with a phoning committee for the Pub Night. (We know some of you forgot the date!) Those who arrived, year books and memories in hand, had a good time. Bill

Stratas was there with a camcorder, and he hopes to post some of the resulting interviews on his web site. (See the article to the left.) Bob Doi came armed with his camera, and took the two photos reproduced here, one of "lunch", and the other of a group conversation. If you aren't in the picture, you can remedy that situation in February, and perhaps have your moment of fame on our front page!



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# Profiles

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At this year's Commencement, two new awards were presented. One, donated by **Robin McComb**, is to be awarded to a female student who is graduating from either grade 12 or 13 and is going on to College, University, or other learning facility, and who has faced and continues to meet challenges and overcome difficulties in order to further her education and continue training for her chosen career. The 1997 winner was **Perna Shah**. The second award, donated by **Don Moyer**, is to be presented annually to a deserving student who is pursuing the studies of Chemistry at the University level. **Khalid Butt** was the recipient this year. Both Robin and Don were on hand to present their awards in person, and we felt it would be appropriate to salute their generosity and support by making them our profiles in this issue.

In addition, **Edith Stevenson**, the widow of our first principal, J. Ross Stevenson, has made a generous gift from their investments as the capital from which a memorial prize will be presented in future years to a student going on to further studies, with demonstrable financial need, who exhibits the qualities of leadership, initiative, and enthusiasm associated with Ross himself. On the back page, we have included a memorial to Ross, edited from a tribute composed by Bill Parish, former Director of Education for Scarborough.



Robin McComb in  
Grade 11

The next time you get in a car and decide to forget about seat belts, because "it's just a five-minute trip", think of **Robin McComb**. In 1980 she had completed Grade 11 at Thomson, and was enjoying an August visit to Parry Sound ("just a five-minute trip from a campground into town") when disaster struck. The van she was riding in smashed into a parked car, and Robin's next memory was semi-consciousness in the Crippled Children's Centre in Leaside. She now knows she was in a coma in St. Michael's Hospital for over a month, and spent several more months in rehab in Leaside. Her great incentive, as she set about regaining the skills we usually take for granted, was the promise that she could go home when she learned to walk again. Home was at the west end of Rushley, looking onto the grounds of Thomson. And, with the support of her family and her favourite teachers, she returned here in 1981 to work on her Grade 12. She remembers teacher **Geraldine Black** visiting her in Leaside and telling her she had to come back to Thomson, because that was "her school".

That "five-minute" seat belt message was part of the presentation Robin made during a lengthy volunteer stint with PARTY (Prevent Alcohol and Risk-Related Trauma in Youth) at the Sunnybrook Health Centre. Student and other youth groups would attend day-long sessions to discuss (and often witness first-hand) the effects of careless use of alcohol and risk-taking. Robin's personal presentation was always a centre-piece of these programs. Those who remember her flair with words and with drama at Thomson will not be surprised!

Volunteer work has been Robin's trade mark since she graduated from Thomson in 1983. At the Crippled Children's Centre (now the Hugh MacMillan Centre) she became involved in "Moving Masks", a trio of thespians bringing their message to children across the city. She was part of a vocational assessment program at Toronto Hospital for a number of months. And, despite a prognosis that she would never sing again (a tracheotomy was part of her hospital history!), she is now in two choirs, one at her church in Pickering, and another group, "Celebration", based in Scarborough, that she was recently invited to join (by an old Thomson class-mate!).

For five years, Robin has been a member of Toastmasters International, and often participates in their workshops on public speaking. She has just finished a training program with the Second City company on improvisation, her favourite form of drama. (Hint: She is available to bring her talents and teaching to drama classes in school!) Under the auspices of the March of Dimes she has done some travelling (to the south-western States, including the Grand Canyon, and to the Rockies). Cruising in the Netherlands is next on her list! And her newest interest is the association for the Romance Writers of Canada.

At present, Robin volunteers once a week as a teaching assistant in Grade 2 at Donwood Junior Public, her old school. While at Thomson, she took part in a Co-Op program assisting in Grade 1 at Pringdale Gardens. Following graduation, she enrolled for one term in the Early Childhood Education course at Centennial College, and completed a year working in the day care facility that was affiliated with that course. So she is actually refurbishing a long-standing skill and interest.

Any conversation with Robin may be sprinkled with remarks from her other personae: Honeee McComb (get the pun?), a genteel southern belle, or Agnes Crabtree, her more earthy compatriot; Lady Chrysanthemum, a British school-girl (along with her upper-crust mother); and various assorted children and/or parents sprung from lifelong play-acting with her brother, Richard, and other family members. They provide a link with Robin's "younger days", and one source of the strength and determination that help her battle the physical and emotional scars from that "five-minute" ride. The award she has instituted at Thomson is to recognize others who are overcoming their own challenges, and is also a way of returning some of the support she has received over the years.



At the Grand Canyon, 1993



**Don Moyer** was Thomson's first Science Head, in 1959, fresh from completing the same task the year before at Porter C.I. He had begun his career in 1940, teaching fourteen classroom subjects plus Phys Ed at a two-teacher continuation school in Lansdowne (in eastern Ontario). A brief stop at Forest (near Sarnia), teaching Math, Science, and Shop, led to Malvern C.I. (1943-1958) where he eventually specialized in the various science courses, while working on shows (Norm Jewison was one performer), and advising Hi-Y boys (including Tom Wells and John Sewell) and the SAC. He earned the respect of his students, as well as the nickname "Doc", from the way he initialled marked assignments.

As the lone science teacher at Porter, Don used his well-equipped Malvern labs as the model for finding suppliers and setting up equipment. (These became the basis for science departments at many later Scarborough schools.) But he determined not to be alone at Thomson, and set about hiring young students who had caught his eye: Keith Telfer, then a student teacher at R.H. King C.I., and Peter Sidorchuk, Pat Fleck, and, later, Don Woodman, from his classes at Malvern. Don even found another ex-student, Bill Torrance, to shore up the Math department. When former Malvern colleagues, Bruce Evoy and Doug Scovell, joined our staff, Don received the principal blame (or credit!) for our facetious nickname: David and Malvern Thomson.

After two and a half years, Don was promoted to Vice-Principal, a position he was proud to hold until 1966. He was appreciative of the support from the teaching and office staffs, but perhaps he was most proud of recommending Evelyn Hunt as our new receptionist (he had taught her son, Lindsay, at Thomson).

From 1966 to 1969, Don was a Master Science Teacher for Scarborough, and co-ordinator involved in science at the elementary schools. A course he took in the U.K. emphasized behavioural objectives as well as the hands-on approach, making materials and good teachers both essential. Don also completed his M. Ed during this time.

In 1969 he accepted an invitation to become principal of Collingwood C.I. During his three years there, he spear-headed plans for a new circular library and a team-teaching science set-up, while resurrecting the art department, putting the cafeteria back in business (by keeping students on the property at lunch - an old Thomson trick!), introducing school musicals (again like Thomson), and encouraging the school band to travel to Osaka, Japan. However, he felt he never really overcame staff resentment at an "outsider" being appointed by the new Simcoe County (as opposed to the old local) Board. When the hassles became too heavy, and the farm the Moyers had purchased began taking too much energy and attention, he was glad to complete his career (from 1972 to 1974) setting up (for the third time!) a new science department, this time at Twin Lakes in Orillia. Once again, he was back in the classroom, enjoying the daily interchange with young people.

Don has always regretted that the responsibilities of teaching never allowed him the time to "go through the chairs" of St. Andrews Masonic Lodge, of which he is a fifty-year member. He determined that in retirement, he would do some of the other things that his career had curtailed. The Moyers raised a herd of pure-bred Herefords on their farm. Don was elected to Nottawasaga Council, and later became Deputy Reeve attending Simcoe County Council, and representing the municipality on the Niagara Escarpment Commission. He became involved with the local Agricultural Society, and was instrumental in raising the money to purchase and build on a new 46-acre fairground site. He was a charter member of the Collingwood Rotary Club, becoming president in 1980, and co-operating with CIDA to build and equip a science lab for a school in Jamaica. during the early 1980s.

In 1984, the Moyers sold the farm and moved to Aurora, not far from where both grew up on farms, and close to the home of their eldest daughter, who is now a Vice-Principal at Bathurst Heights in North York. In all, the Moyers have four children, and fourteen grandchildren, at least two of whom are headed for teaching! As he did in each area where he has lived, Don has become active in the local United Church, serving on the worship committee. He keeps busy with woodworking, stained glass, lawn bowling (he's their treasurer), and Rotary. From January to April, you can find Don and Gertrude relaxing in the club house heated pool at their Florida condominium. After 23 years of retirement, Don is glad to inform those who have yet to retire that there is life after teaching...but you never get a day off!

As we were going to press, we learned of the deaths, just two weeks apart, of two former Thomson Mathematics teachers. **Jean Osborne**, a member of Thomson's original staff, had not been well for some time. **Doug Scovell**, long-time Head of the Mathematics Department, fell victim to fairly recently diagnosed leukemia. We hope to include fuller profiles in our next issue. If you have special memories of Jean or Doug and would like to share them with us, send them along, and we will include what we can.

**Karen (Beer) Burrows**, one of the picnickers photographed on page 1, is trying to locate **Sandy Monkman**, an old friend from Thomson. We don't have Sandy on our Alumni list, but perhaps someone out there has kept in touch. Karen can be reached at (905) 471-1998. Give her a call if you can help...and let the Alumni know as well, so that we can add Sandy's address to our files.

Last issue, we gave **Janet Evans'** travel business a promo. If you want to arrange a trip through Janet, she is still in travel, but now with The Bay in Hillcrest Mall, Richmond Hill. Her phone number is (905).



Don Moyer at the microphone in 1966

## IN MEMORIAM: J. ROSS STEVENSON

1910-1997



Throughout his 37 years in education, Ross Stevenson demonstrated excellence as a teacher and superior leadership and administrative abilities both as a Sec-

ondary School Principal and as a School Superintendent. As an administrator, Ross strove to recruit the best teachers and principals so that students would receive the finest possible programs and the highest level of instruction. In addition, Ross constantly encouraged young teachers to seek out leadership positions in the rapidly growing Scarborough school system. Ross was a "big man" not only physically but also in the energy and drive he brought to every project he undertook. He never backed away from difficult decisions; however, with his quick smile and dry sense of humour he could also see the lighter side of any situation.

Ross earned his B.A. in Honours Business Administration (with a major in English) from the University of Western Ontario. He later received his M. Ed. from the University of Toronto. After graduating from the Ontario College of Education in 1935, he began his teaching career at Oshawa Collegiate Institute. In 1949, he left Oshawa to become Head of the Commercial Department at the new Arva District High School.

Ever seeking new challenges, Ross became Principal of Perth Collegiate Institute in 1953, even though it meant a \$500 reduction in salary. In 1955 he left Perth to accept the position of Principal at Pickering District High School. His widow, Edith, still lives in the beautiful home they purchased in Pickering.

In 1958, Ross was appointed principal of the new W.A. Porter Collegiate in Scarborough. Ross, while still Principal at Pickering, had to attend to all the problems of staffing and opening the new school, so that it would be ready for its students in September. Once Porter was open and running smoothly, the Scarborough Board appointed Ross as Principal of David and Mary Thomson Collegiate, which was scheduled to open September 1, 1959. Again he faced months of leading two schools at once,

and again he succeeded!

Recognizing Ross's great leadership and administrative skills, Scarborough appointed him Superintendent of Secondary Schools in 1962. In 1969, when the Scarborough Board became a single K to 13 system, Ross was appointed Superintendent of Instruction, a position he held until retirement in 1972.

During Ross's years, enrolment in Scarborough schools grew from 35,000 (1958) to almost 85,000 (1972). 48 new schools (34 elementary and 14 secondary) were built. This unprecedented growth demanded the provision of the finest facilities, equipment, and teachers. In a period when qualified teachers were in short supply, Ross and his colleagues worked diligently to guarantee Scarborough the best.

Ross was also part of the Board staff which spearheaded the innovative program of "Special Schools" whose courses, both academic and vocational, were designed to help build self-esteem and to lead to employment and/or to further education. Excellent teachers were recruited to guarantee success.

While Ross was Superintendent, Advisory Councils of parents, that you hear so much about today, were begun in the Collegiates. In addition, an Education Forum was instituted so that the views of the students represented by the Scarborough Student Councils could be heard.

Ross and Edith were married in 1937. Their daughter, Alice, an accomplished author, lives in St. John's, Newfoundland, where her late husband, Dr. George Story was a professor of English at Memorial University. Alice and George's three children, Kate, Lachlan, and Simon are also a source a grandparently pride.

Following Ross's retirement, he and Edith indulged their love for travel, theatre, gardening, and reading. Ross also continued his life-long interest in the stock market. Despite several bouts of serious illness, he continued to take pleasure in life and in his family.

It was always a privilege, a pleasure and an honour to work with and for Ross. He gave clear direction and leadership. He stood for excellence and the highest possible standards. Two of the most important activities in life are parenting and the education of children. Ross contributed so much to both.

## IN OTHER NEWS

**Charlie Hawkes**, long-time member of the History Department at Thomson, was honoured recently by being selected as one of only seventy history teachers across Canada to attend a six-day program in Ottawa from November 4 to 9. The teachers got to meet many politicians, and, even more impressively, the clerks and behind-the-scenes staff whose intellectual expertise, devotion to parliament, and fluent bilingualism make the process work. The teachers were also able to compare notes regarding education and politics across the country.

Charlie gained new respect for the House Speaker and for the Senate. He was also impressed by the number of former teachers, including the Speaker, in the House. The cross-section of occupational backgrounds, he feels, has come a long way from the days of 'lawyers only'.

"Every teacher should have an opportunity like this, once in a career," said Charlie. Congratulations to him for meriting this honour.

We also have interesting news from the Science Department. In recent years, Rooms 107 and 109 have been used by NYAD, a day care facility. Now they are being returned to lab use. The combined areas of Rooms 105, 107 and 109 will be turned into two enlarged labs, while, across the hall, Room 108 will also be enlarged, adding some space which is now part of the Science Office, located in old Room 110. These renovations are now under way; so the next time you visit the school, you should try to look in on our upgraded facilities. Together with the new drama/dance studio in old Room 112, just next door, they will help bring Thomson into the 21st century!

We would also like to pass on happy retirement wishes to two Thomson science teachers (who were both Thomson students in the 1960s). **Mike Woolley** retired in October and **Bryan Lake**, who has moved full time into guidance counselling, will be leaving at the end of January. (Alumni note: Bryan will be moving north after retirement, and he has asked that we find a new treasurer, living closer to Thomson, to replace him. Any volunteers?

Finally, thank you to former staff member, **Dennis Wrong**, who passed along the tribute to Ross Stevenson.