



# HARMONY RANCH RECREATION CLUB 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY



- Friday 7:30pm Welcome Corn Roast at Riverside
- Saturday 11am Time Capsule unveiling at Old Barn Museum
- Saturday 11am – 12:30 HR Memorabilia Museum Grand Opening  
(All Founding Members to Attend) (complimentary Refreshments)
- Saturday 1pm Event Registration opens at 1pm at the Picnic Shelter
- Saturday 1:30pm Opening Ceremonies at the Picnic Shelter
- Saturday 2pm – 5pm Special Festivities (Fun games and activities for Kids and Adults  
Food Truck/Ice Cream Truck (free), Photo Booth, Slide Show  
Cash Bar (Pop/Beer/Coolers/Wine/Free Water
- Saturday 5pm-6pm Museum Open at Old Barn
- Saturday 8:30pm **Dance Under the Stars. at Shields Kelly Rec complex**
- Sunday 9am-11am The Pancake Breakfast at the Shelter
- Sunday 11am-12:30pm Museum Open at the Old Barn
- Sunday 1pm Kids Mini-Golf Tournament (pre-registration not required)
- Sunday 7:30pm Anniversary Barbershop Show  
Featuring the Black River Chorus, Baldwin Blend Chorus, Gentlemen of Harmony,  
Various Ontario Quartets.  
Bring your own chairs  
Cash Bar opens at 7pm



Earlier this month, July 2023, Marg and I had the pleasure of sitting down with **George and Gail Shields** in their comfortable “trailer” that is situated in the Riverside circle of Harmony Ranch. The purpose of this visit was to hear first hand from George and Gail how Harmony Ranch initially was started. It was a most interesting visit! From the reminiscing memories of both George and Gail I have attempted to capture their story of how Harmony Ranch began. Here’s the story of how “our ‘lil bit ‘o heaven” became a reality. Jfp.

This tale begins in 1972, one year prior to the purchase of property at 184 Baldwin Road, Baldwin, Ontario. The summer of 1972, the Oshawa Chapter (The Horseless Carriage Men) hosted a camping weekend, inviting all Ontario Barbershoppers and their families to attend. This writer, along with his wife Marg and baby Fraser accepted the invite. Yes, and George and Gail camped that weekend too. It should be noted that George did not profess to be an avid camper, it might be more correct to say that George was not a camper! Maybe the lure of a barbershop song convinced him to try a weekend of sleeping under the stars? The weekend was a great success. Campfires, singing in four part Harmony, fine standard camp food and lovely beverages of personal choice. It was during this event that Barbershoppers, Gerry Yelland, Ralph Barton and Roy Cunningham relayed to George that “Barbershoppers should have their very own camp ground”! George, who at this point was still a confirmed non-camper responded by saying that he would personally not be interested in camping but would assist the search for a suitable property.

It was decided that a property close to Toronto would be most convenient and suitable. Marg Jelley, wife of Murray Jelley heard while visiting her hair salon, that an 88 acre farm property was for sale in Baldwin, just south of Lake Simcoe. A further property, south of Ravenshoe was also considered. With the help and knowledge of Myles Leckie, president of Elliott Research and the owner of a small plane and builder of golf courses etc, the property search was started in earnest. Myles and his trusty plane, flew George over the two prospective sites. They found that one had a major spring flooding problem, and indicated that, if we were truly serious, we couldn’t go wrong buying this farm property. Since there was another party interested in purchasing, George took Myles’ advice and purchased the site immediately! Harmony Ranch was on its way to realizing that initial vision of Gerry, Ralph and Roy, that Barbershoppers should have their own campground. By October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1973, seventy one Ontario Barbershoppers had signed on to become our founding members! 31 East York members, 18 Scarborough Dukes, 6 Kitchener-Waterloo, 6 Markham, 3 from the original Toronto Chapter, 2 Oakville and 1 each from Etobicoke, Grimsby, Oshawa, Thornhill and Burlington. A very substantial supporting cast!

With George’s long association on the PR committee of Scouts Greater Toronto, he was put in touch with Ralph Chysler, a consulting engineer and planner, who had laid out Scout Camps. George and Ralph took long walks throughout our property and plotted out two conceptual plans, one of which became the present layout with revisions. Getting approval to change zoning from “farming” to “recreational” was not a simple process. However, the short version is that an O.M.B. (Ontario Municipal Board) top official was “located” and “persuaded” to approve the rezoning application. Good politics and old-fashioned hard work in cleaning up the property convinced the OMB that the recreational property designation should be approved. Once approval was reached, members no longer needed to sleep overnight in the “old barn”. However, it should be noted that since Gail (Shields) father and mother were also members and original managers residing in the White farm house, (Bob and Phyl David) consequently non-camper George and Gail enjoyed the comfort of a real bed in the farm house. Roughing it out? To this day, HR will always accept material, with approval, at “HR pricing” (free). As an example of this rule, it was through Arlene Spicer that many hundreds of evergreen seedling trees were acquired and transported/planted on our new property. Approximately 2000 seedlings! A donation to the farmer of \$400.00 was made by George. Many donations of materials, tools, time and much labour created what HR has become today. A sincere grateful thanks to those original men who had a vision that **“Barbershoppers should have their own campground”**. Cheers and thanks to all HR families, past and present, as we celebrate 50 years of Harmony at our **Harmony Ranch**.

Frank Parkinson, ED.



## The Harmony Ranch RAG “Through the Years”

If my memory serves me correctly, Harmony Ranch “newsletters” might have originated from creative notes and poetry that were posted in the “Biffys” that were strategically located around the Ranch. The first editor of a newsletter was Jean McNown. Jean can be best described as a very clever, witty, generous and loving wife and friend to everyone. Her gift of wittiness could be found in the early newsletters. I would pay cash money if I could get my hands on one of her original creations. Jean’s famous barbershop painted bike is still hanging proudly in our barn!



*Jean & Bill McNown*

It was our second manager, Ron Ball, who insisted that the HR newsletter be named “The RAG”. As the new editor I had no choice or input into that decision. Consequently, the RAG was born and subsequently named. With grateful thanks to past HR founder/member Ross Mitchell, we have a collection of RAGS starting from August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1985. The collection is a marvellous recording of HR history, events and members past and present. This RAG collection will be on display at the “Memorabilia Museum” located at our Barn entrance. The collection will then be on a permanent display in the South members lounge.

Here are some notes from the August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1985 edition.

- TEENAGE LOUNGE NEARING COMPLETION: “Under the coordination of Buildings Chairman, Norm Clegg, great strides have been made over the past couple of weeks on the North Teenage Lounge and “Community Hall. Assisted by Ed Arnold, Gord Galer and Pat Adams. Some furniture has already been donated by George Shields, Darryl Long, John Moore and Norm Hamel.
- “Jill Shields and Karen Muzylo clean up Junior Tennis for 1985, Alex Boyd and Sharon Russel place second. Popsicles were provided for all”.
- Found in the August RAG of 1986 the London Chapter were welcomed for what was suggested might have been their 12<sup>th</sup> Annual visit to HR. Later, this group established “Harmony Woods” campground near London, Ontario.

As I have skimmed over all these RAG editions, seeing all the many names of HR members, past and present who have contributed to make our ‘lil bit ‘o heaven” one of the finest and truly the most unique Barbershop resorts in the world, I feel blessed to be a part of the HR family! Happy 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary to everyone!

**J. Frank Parkinson, HR Editor.**

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## ED ARNOLD PROJECTS AT “OUR ‘LIL BIT ‘O HEAVEN”



Ed and Audrey Arnold along with their two sons Rob and Chris, joined Harmony Ranch in 1976 if my memory serves me correctly. Ed (Edwin) can be best described as a man of multi talents. He constructed his own trailer, that met all the standards of a factory-built RV, except it far surpassed factory standards. The water slide at Melody pond was another Arnold project. Later this year it is hoped that the slide will be refreshed to its original state. The Mini-Putt course was another Arnold project. It is hard to imagine the hours of design planning and construction that Ed put into creating this marvellous recreational feature!



The course has been recently refurbished under the leadership of Pauline Giancroce along with a team of generous Harmony Ranchers. This writer is proud to have been in a couple of quartets with Ed who was a very fine lead. The 4-Tune Seekers and the Fortune Seekers performed at most district contests in the late 70’s to early 80’s. Good times! Harmony Ranch owes a debt of gratitude to yet another “fine Rancher”.

**Frank Parkinson, past tenor and baritone.**

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## THE PARTYS THROUGH THE YEARS



### "HARMONY RANCH" – A DREAM COME TRUE

The idea of a Barbershop Trailer Park took place back in 1972 when a group of Barbershoppers arranged a camping weekend at a park in the Oshawa area. Some that attended were dyed-in-the-wool campers, having their own tents, campers, and various accoutrements required to be comfortable, however there were some that had never camped before, but seeing the fun and fellowship of socializing, singing around the campfire, etc., as well as the whole family involved in having a fun weekend together, an idea took shape in a few minds. Gail & George Shields, not campers previously, Barb & Roy Cunningham, Marg & Murray Jelley, Lucille & Gerry Yelland, and Joyce & Ralph Barton who, I believe were previously enthusiastic campers, started to discuss the possibility of acquiring a parcel of land not too far from Toronto, to keep down driving time each weekend in getting to and from the location, and starting a private camp available to Barbershoppers only.

The search was begun with each of the above men checking out various locations, keeping in mind price, size, and availability of natural recreational possibilities, etc. When one would find a spot of interest, and time permitting, the others would go and take a look at the location. There were a number of areas checked out and eventually the Baldwin location was decided upon as having the potential of becoming a reality with unending possibilities. The property consisted of 88 acres with an old, badly abused, farmhouse and barn on the property, as well as the West perimeter being the Black River, a natural for recreation and privacy. The price was affordable if sufficient Barbershoppers were interested and willing to put up some money to make it a reality. In April 1973, George Shields arranged a walk-over of the property to evaluate the interest of those who came up and, by word of mouth, interest other Barbershoppers in the idea. The weather was quite cool, and in April no rural area is at its best. There was snow on the ground in places, and most of the ground was very wet, but the potential was there. The David's went on the walk-over even though we had our own cottage in the Haliburton area and were definitely not the camping type. We did not have the long-range vision that some of the others had, but there was considerable interest in the project. George started to get the necessary information, and Hugh Cole who was a cottage owner in Georgina Township and knew a number of people on the Council, etc. was invaluable in contacting the Township for the million and one requirements to start such a camp. The property was classified as "farming", however we would defy anyone into making the flat, sandy property a thriving farm, and being in a recreational area, with the close proximity of Lake Simcoe, it was natural to become a trailer camp in the eyes of those interested. However, the reclassification to recreational did not take place without many problems, some of them being neighbours in the area. One of the neighbours took up a petition against the idea of a trailer park, and in trying to change their minds, George arranged a meeting in the old house where coffee and goodies were served, and all the neighbours were asked to come and hear what the idea was all about. The fact that it would be private and would not accommodate transient trade was an advantage, and some of the people who attended, began to understand the concept changed their mind in favour. However, not all looked upon it as being acceptable, and to this day have not changed their mind. The neighbour in question had their property right across the Black River from the camp and could be considered as the closest neighbour with the exception of Reg and Jane Lake who live right across the road on the South side of Baldwin Rd. Prior to the inception of Harmony Ranch, the property was used as an obstacle course for old cars which involved a number of undesirable types. In fact, the Lake's had their home broken into more than once because of the car wrecking group, and we would have to say that they are more than pleased with their new neighbours "Harmony Ranch". **Cont'd....**

With the property having been purchased, and the necessity of having someone living there all year round, a live-in Manager was required. Gail, knowing that her dad was most anxious to take early retirement, made the suggestion that we consider taking it on. There was a Board of Directors formed, and we, along with another couple, were interviewed. As Bob was a Jack-of-all-Trades, having personally built our cottage without the advantage of Hydro being available, and the fact that he would be on pension from the Bob immediately gave in his resignation to Bell and the deed was done! He retired at the end of June, 1973, and immediately moved up to the far (as we called it at that time), while I decided to continue working for a while at Johnson Wax, a Toronto Sales Office. As mentioned previously, the house was a disaster area, having been inhabited at some time in the past by approximately 7 ex-convicts who were anything but clean and careful. With the help of many of the wives of the members who had bought into the camp, we washed all the walls down with various cleaners prior to Bob paneling all the walls throughout the house over a period of time. With help from the fellows, he started on the bedrooms upstairs, and as there was only one bathroom off the kitchen downstairs, we had been used to 3 bathrooms, it was decided to make one of the (cont'd) bedrooms into a 2-piece bathroom with a dressing room and a walk-in closet as there were only 2 small closets for the 4 original bedrooms. The plumbing for the small bathroom upstairs was done by Stan Howe. Walls were knocked down, and cupboards built, also 2 sliding doors were installed in the bedrooms overlooking the river and a balcony built, giving access from the bedrooms, but also giving some much-needed protection for the living/dining room area from the sun. With 8 windows in the living/dining room and 6 of them facing the West, the sun had the advantage, and the room was extremely warm in the summer. It was an advantage in the winter as the sun would heat up the room and help with the heating cost.

While Bob and the other members of the Ranch were busy renovating the house, George Shields got together a group of the men, and with the help of their wives began cleaning up the property. They succeeded in gathering together such a huge amount of garbage, including old wrecks of cars, tires, bed springs and mattresses, plus many other items too many to mention, and in order to hide this mound of garbage, George hit upon the idea of making a pond in the middle of the property. In making this pond, there developed what is now known as Shields Mountain, the pile of garbage covered by the soil dug out in making the pond. Today that same mountain is used by the children for all manner of play, in winter and summer. The first summer, I would go up to the farm about every second weekend as I was doing some painting, etc. at our home in the city preparatory to putting it up for sale. When I was at the farm for the weekend, the cooking I did was in a Corning Ware pot with a heating element, so stews and braised meat was our main menu, and this was done on a bench in the living/dining room amongst the sawdust, shavings, etc. If I can recall, I believe I used to take up things I had made in the city, but certainly not sufficient for two weeks, so in desperation Bob went out to eat occasionally. This went on until November when I moved up there permanently, and looking back on it, Bob couldn't have eaten very well as he spent from sunup until sundown trying to get the house habitable.

I will never forget the feeling I had when I moved up in November, having cleaned myself out of our home in Toronto and being tired out, arrived up in Baldwin with my small car piled to the roof. The kitchen was not touched, the living/dining room not fixed up and the downstairs bathroom a disaster area. I mentioned to Bob that I would likely never have a bath again as the downstairs bathroom turned me right off, when a knock came at the door and in came Eileen and Doug Spicer with a bottle of champagne and a flower arrangement. I was really touched as I realized that people can make you feel welcome and wanted. It took some time, but eventually Bob had the inside of the house looking very nice and it was comfortable and bright. It was home to us for nearly 9 years.

There was one summer that because our occupancy as a trailer park had not been approved by the O.M.B., the members could not stay overnight in their trailers, which necessitated them only coming up for the day, going home at night, and then coming up the next day – a real inconvenience. We had an average of 11 or 12 people sleeping in the house each weekend. They slept in the available beds, on the couches and in sleeping bags on the floor and believe it or not – it was fun. Naturally everyone could not sleep in the house, so many slept in sleeping bags in the old barn, but everyone there at the time became on BIG family.

It was determined we would require 2 Service Buildings, one in the South portion of the Ranch, and one in the North. It was not long before permits were obtained, and the buildings started. It was then we began to realize how much talent we had in the camp and virtually all the plumbing in the 2 buildings was done by Murray Jelley and his son **Cont'd**

Peter, Eric Queripel, Bob Ridsdale, Ed Arnold and many others from the camp. Over the years we have benefited from the expertise of various members and friends, not the least of which is Eddie McVeigh who has donated many hours to various projects, principally carpentry work, in particular the fine job he did in the old barn.

Part of the process of cleaning up the property was getting the grass cut where was termed by the members as the hay fields. To this end, two tractors were purchased, one a garden variety and the other a large Diesel. Bob spent many days and hours cutting and re-cutting the grass to get the property in some semblance of order, with help from Jim Lyon and John Derstine who also kept the machines in working order due to their mechanical expertise. A great deal of assistance was available and given gladly by people like Ross Mitchell and Doug Lyon who seem to enjoy riding the big tractor. It is not possible to recall the names of everyone who played a part in the maintenance of the property, so please accept my apologies for the omission of many names – it is not intentional.

As you could appreciate, if you had seen the property before any building or improvements were made, it would take many, many dollars to create a park. However, there is no one like a Barbershopper to get donations of materials, physical assistance, and brainpower no charge. (Cont'd) George got engineering assistance and architectural assistance, at a nominal fee or no charge in setting up the overall plan, and immediately things started to happen. The layout and lots were planned and those that put up their money were given their choice of the lots – first paid, first choice.

Many of the members brought up materials from their place of work, or friends donated items, and many hundreds of hours were put in by members and friends, resulting in services being available to the majority of campsites. At one of the meetings, George was interested in putting in a tennis court as it was his priority at the time, but the priority of others was a swimming pool. George said he would cover the cost of 1 tennis court if the club would cover the cost of the second court. Harry Wilson, joking of course, said he would pay for the water for the pool, not realizing that to fill the pool in those early years cost approximately \$500.00, and the price has gone up considerably since that time. As we were in the country, Bob decided that we should have some livestock, and as we had raised chickens when we lived in West Hill, he promptly ordered 100-day old chicks, which naturally had to be protected and kept warm under lighting for approximately a month. Guess where they were kept – naturally down in the basement. They are really cute as day old chicks, but when they start growing and developing, they get smelly. Oddly enough, the odour seemed to come up through the heat vents. It was a great day when Bob had the barn built (which is now the garage) and the chickens could be relocated. He also decided to try his hand at raising cows, and we became the proud owners of three cows. With the help of artificial insemination we eventually had 3 calves. They were lovely when they were small, but we found out the hard way that they require substantial fencing, which we did not have, so many times we were out trying to herd cows back into their enclosure. They don't always take kindly to being enclosed, so you would get them right up to the gate and they would decide to go the other way. There were many times when we would have Jane Lake and also some of the members out trying to round up the cows.

Being an old farmhouse, we had the problem of mice wanting space in the house, particularly when the weather turned cooler. One September we took a 2-week Mediterranean cruise, and having livestock, plus the camp to look after, Gail offered to stay in the house for 1 week and Sadie and John Moore offered to look after things for the second week, as Gail's children had to go back to school. Gail had commented to me on a number of occasions that she could not understand why I would continue working in the city when we had the beautiful country to live in, however after her stint of a week of looking after the place, rounding up stray cows in the rain, and mice actually running up the drapes in the living room one evening when she was sitting quietly, she decided that living in a farmhouse was for the birds. We eventually did get the mouse situation pretty well under control, but occasionally you would hear them stomping around in their hob nail boots somewhere in the walls, particularly when you would be up at 5:00 a.m. getting ready to drive to work in the city. I would be remiss if I did not mention Al Shields who was always working at something – cleaning up, painting, working on various projects, etc. I do not believe there is anyone who enjoyed Harmony Ranch more than Al or spent as much time as possible up there. It took some time to make members realize that the rules were for everyone, not for everyone else. We would like to think that most of the bugs were ironed out, making it easier for our successors, Ron and Anne Ball, to take over with a minimum of problems. **Cont'd**

There are many annual events started, not the least of which is the Gong Show which is enjoyed by everyone, but particularly the children who participate enthusiastically. There is also the Golf Tournament both for adults and for teenagers, the Tennis Tournament and many other events which have created a great deal of interest for members and their guests. We should mention that a number of people paid the initial fee even though they were not considering becoming active members, but only to financially assist the project to get underway, which was greatly appreciated by all. We feel a great sense of accomplishment seeing Harmony Ranch grow from a flat, sandy, unproductive 88 acres to become a tremendous recreational family camp for people with the same hobby and interest – Barbershopping! Now we are no longer associated with Harmony Ranch, but we still feel a sense of belonging and wish success to Ron and Anne Ball and we know they will be happy. To the members of Harmony Ranch, thank you all for a wonderful 9 years,  
**Phyl & Bob David.**

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### THE RANCH HANDS

Liam Shields, show here, is the current “Ranch Hand” of many who have worked before him. Doug Lyon, Doug Morrison, Greg Shields, Steve Bangham, Callum Parkinson, Connor Bangham, Tom Sedore to mention just a few.



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### Recollections from Harmony Ranch

For me, it all started with an August '72 camping weekend in Whitby with Ross Bangham and some fellow Barber shoppers. During a Sunday afternoon conversation, George Shields mentioned the idea of us buying a piece of property and creating a campground for Barbershoppers. Most of us involved in the discussion, thought it was a good concept, but could it become a reality?

By the following spring George had a piece of property to look at which eventually became Harmony Ranch. Having seen the property, I wasn't sure this was going to work, but at the time I was singing with Bob Sockett, and I trusted his judgment. He said, “If George Shields is behind it, it will be a success”! So, on the basis of that recommendation, we proceeded to invest in Harmony Ranch. And Bob was so right!

Once the approval from the local authorities was given, the real work began. Every weekend was spent with campfires, barbecues, and work crews. There were fence rows to clear, ditches to dig, trash to pick up, buildings to build, roofs to shingle and the list went on and on. As tiring as those workdays were, we developed a real sense of camaraderie among the guys and gals doing the jobs. Spontaneity was the order of the day! One Sunday afternoon someone brought a message that a next-door neighbor needed to get rid of a bunch of small trees. If we would get them out of there that day, we could have them for nothing, and I'm guessing there were at least 300 trees moved to our property before we went home that weekend.

But some of the best times with the greatest memories were the campfires Friday, and Saturday night, and Sunday if it were a long weekend. At that time, there were at least a half dozen campfires going every night all over the property. We solved world problems, and all the district problems at the same time. In addition, we had many, many laughs and lots of good tag singing!

I left in the summer of 1980 and have only been back one or two times since. But the memories and friendships that were created in those seven years are some of the best I've ever experienced! We were no longer local chapter guys; we were Harmony Ranchers from the Ontario District. And when we went to Internationals, everyone asked, “what is harmony ranch?” **[Thank you, George, thank you Harmony Ranch! Lyle Pettigrew-The Villages, FL](#)**



## GRAND OPENING OF HARMONY FIELD



On Sunday, July 30, 2023, Harmony Field was officially opened. The opening pitch was thrown by Bruce Marchant to his son Darryl Marchant. The annual North vs South game was the most exciting sporting event of the season, with the North team graciously conceding to a substantial win by the **South**. We are truly grateful for the time, energy and this generous gift from the Marchant family! **“Let’s Play Ball”.**

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**THE ANNUAL PICKLEBALL TOURNAMENT 2023** On Saturday, July 15<sup>th</sup> the Shields-Kelly Recreation Complex hosted the HR Annual Pickleball Tournament. A tip of the bat to the “Head Pickle”, Vic Linka for organizing this highly successful sporting event. Much laughter, cheering and pickling was “preserved” throughout the day. **“Let’s Get Pickled”!!!**

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## RANCHER, LEO McKENNA LOT 35 WILDWOOD

HR Member from 2000 – 2007

***Leo McKenna’s gift to Harmony Ranch was the Gazebo he built that currently overlooks our Melody Pond on the South bank. The following is his story.***

Leo sang with the Oshawa Chapter, the Horseless Carriagemen for over twenty years. He loved to sing and so enjoyed the men who were part of this chapter. He made many friends during his time with this group. Leo was a self-taught carpenter and built most of the homes where they lived. He built a two bedroom bungalow on Hillside Avenue just after serving in the Second World War, where he was a rear air gunner and radio operator when they flew reconnaissance missions. After a few years he rejoined the R.C.A.F. and was posted to Whitehorse, Yukon, where he and his wife Helen and two daughters moved for two years. It was during the polio epidemic that Leo decided Helen needed to leave and return to Oshawa to be safe, so she returned with two daughters and a son born in Whitehorse. Leo resigned from the Air Force, built a house on Wilson Road in Oshawa. In 1954 he decided to rejoin the Air Force and was posted to Trenton for ten months with family in tow. Then posted again to Lachine, PQ, where his youngest daughter was born, and while Helen was giving birth to her, Leo was once again posted and off to Goose Bay Labrador, where the family joined him and lived there for just under two years. Next, and final posting was Summerside, PEI and there Leo built two lovely homes and where his youngest son was born. It was the longest posting the family had in place. In 1964 Leo decided to leave the Air Force and returned to the Oshawa Area where he built a lovely 4 bedroom home on Zion Road where they lived for eleven years and where Leo’s youngest daughter was married. Leo and Helen sold the Zion Road home and moved into Oshawa for a couple of years. Then it was time to build once again it was here that on the 8<sup>th</sup> Concession in Hayden. Ten years later it was time to move again and they bought a house in Bowmanville and spent a few years updating it and putting in a new kitchen that Leo built. Although it was not a home he built, it was where the family all gathered for Birthdays, Christmas and many other Celebrations. It held many wonderful memories. It was Leo and Helen’s last home together before he passed away in 2004. **Submitted by Len and Carol Clement.**

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## Harmony Ranch 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

It gives me great pleasure on behalf of Ontario District to congratulate Harmony Ranch on its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, such a great milestone achievement. I think the Ranch has had a profound impact on Ontario District. Even though it is not officially part of Ontario District, the Ranch has hosted many Ontario District events over the years. Most recently the fun day for Ontario District's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations which in traditional ranch style the guests from the AIC were shown hospitality second to none. So many wonderful memories for so many of our members are attributed to the Ranch.

On a personal note, I have been coming up to the Ranch on and off for 40 years now since I was 15 years old and have developed many great friendships over the years as I know so many people have. It is a place full of singing, sports, outdoor activities and the odd campfire, with a few drinks mixed in.

Again, Congratulations looking forward to the next 50 years of building memories.

**In Harmony, Dan Locke, Ontario District President**

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### WORDS FROM A FIRST GENERATION RANCH BRAT

Can you recall where you were on Good Friday April 20th, 1973? I certainly can. Little did I know what was in store for me that day, and more significantly, for the rest of my life. I was just a six-year-old boy, accompanied by my parents Ross and Barb, and my sister Rhonda, when we were picked up by the Pettigrew family - Lyle, Saundy, Scott, Pam, Lee and Todd. The ten of us squeezed into Lyle's spacious blue station wagon and embarked on a 90-minute journey to Baldwin, ON. My dad and Lyle were part of the KW Twin City Harmonizers, and they, along with other members of the Ontario District, had received an invitation to explore an 88-acre farm property that could potentially serve as a campground for barbershoppers and their families. As we approached the property, us kids in the car felt a sense of disappointment. It wasn't a campground at all. Instead, it was a dilapidated old farm with no trees around. However, for the first time in my memory, I caught sight of two boys who looked exactly alike to me, playing catch and sporting cut-off hockey jerseys. I later learned that they were Dave and Chris Alexander. Little did I know that they would play a significant role in my life during my teenage and young adult years. Today, Dave is not only one of my closest and dearest friends but also my best buddy! It's the same Dave Alexander who is currently our beloved HR Chairman.

On that same day, we were introduced to a kind man named George Shields. He was the one who had invited the barbershop singers to Baldwin. With his wife Gail, George gave us a tour of the property, taking us to the old barn and various entry points to the Black River. Despite being eight months pregnant, Gail managed to keep up with George's fast pace while also keeping her two young boys in check. How could one imagine that yet to be born baby, soon to be named Gillian, who had experienced that same visit in a completely different way, would end up being my wife and the mother of my child?

My parents and the Pettigrews, and the rest of the barbershoppers were invited back to the property's well, located just outside the white house. George presented a proposal: to purchase the land and cultivate it into a fully-functional campground, mostly self-sustaining and built through hard work and collective passion. He expounded on his vision with fervor and detail, inspiring many, including my parents, to sign on and purchase the property. Thus, the conversion began, and we became members of the Harmony Ranch Recreation Club.

Most of my time at Harmony Ranch was spent at Gross Pointe during the 70s. It was the preferred location for Kitchener Waterloo's barbershop community, including the Socketts, Parkinsons, Pettigrews, Brennemans, and Ridsdales. Lee Pettigrew, my closest friend then, and I enjoyed jumping off the rope swing into the river behind the Pitts, playing catch, hitting the occasional movie in Sutton with the older teens, walking the nature trail, visiting the bridge by the railroad tracks and participating in the tag contests and summer talent shows. Lee was exceptional at learning, teaching, and singing tags at a young age. Near the end of the 70's, Steven Boyd from Gross Pointe joined our little clique, and we transitioned into a trio. Although I was a little jealous and reluctant at first, Steve fit in beautifully. Another fond memory of the 70s, was frog hunting with a young Fraser Parkinson, where we would fill buckets of bull frogs, only to be told to release them back into the cow pond or frog pond. I will also never forget my visits with Jeannie McNown, when I had no other friends up on a weekend, she always made me feel great about myself.

The summer of 1980 was another turning point in my life. The Pettigrews left the Ranch when Lyle took a job at the Society's headquarters in Kenosha, Wisconsin. I lost my closest friend Lee. Steve who was a couple of years older, visited the **Cont'd**

Ranch less frequently, having developed other interests. To continue cherishing my time at the Ranch, I had to step out of my comfort zone and make new friends. Fortunately, I was neighbours with the Russells, and I knew Jennifer and Sharon well enough to begin socializing with them and the other teens around the property. The 80s would prove to be a completely different experience for me at the Ranch.

During this time, a new group of friends emerged for me at the Ranch. Steve Snoultzen, Glenn and Dave Queripel, Chris and Dave Alexander, Scott Peaker, Stacey Morley, and a cheerful fellow named Stuart Vandersluis became my companions. In the 80s, our main activity was playing baseball, and every Sunday we faced off against the "over 30s" in a nine-inning game. While I can't recall the exact outcomes, I'm certain the games were closely contested, with the "under 30s" displaying superior sportsmanship. We were often at the pond jumping off both rope swings, flying down our new waterslide or at the pool playing tag and jumping off the diving board trying to make the largest splash. I also worked as a "Ranch Hand" for two summers under the guidance of Ron Ball. My friends and their frequent outside guests were all a couple of years older than me. As parties became more prevalent, the teen lounge at the back, the firepit where the dog run now stands, and the Queripel and Alexander trailers, where parents were notably scarce, served as convenient gathering spots. Increasingly, more teens joined our group. Geoff Shields, Neal Cunningham, Jennifer and Sharon Russell, Karen and Wendy Gage, Shelley and Barbie Towner, Karen Muzylo, Sherri Snoultzen, Lisa Cunningham, Monica Lewis, and eventually Greg Shields and Robbie Snoultzen became part of our vibrant crowd and we were labelled the "Ranch Brats". As you can imagine, a few Ranch romances developed. I think I may have had one or two myself.

Next to the Queripel trailer lived Jim Beetham, a Ranch legend who rarely complained about our parties. Instead, he held his own campfires, which were magnificent for anyone who enjoyed good (Cont'd) barbershop quartets or off-key, late-night, loud singing sessions. Some of the best quartet singers in the Ontario District frequented his fire and some nights, his lot would be close to 100 people strong. Even though the amount of beer bottles scattered around his lot was staggering, Jim never seemed to mind. Two enterprising young boys, Glenn Parkinson and Mark Robertson, saw an opportunity to make money and collected beer bottles from the Beetham fire and around the Ranch. They made a small fortune every weekend from bottle returns.

My 90's experience at the Ranch was a time that I was very keen barbershopper, singing with the Dukes of Harmony and spending a lot of time with my best barbershop buddy Stuart Vandersluis. I mostly slept at Stu's trailer after late nights of fine tuning tags and trying to find a quartet that would tolerate the two of us. A large campfire on London Rd. became a weekend tradition and our version of "Tent City" evolved. This was a time that the younger "Ranch Brats" merged with my 80's gang, leading to the birth of the Long Island Ice Tea Party as well as the Hawaiian Open Golf Crawl. These events were packed with unforgettable memories, ranging from human lawn bowling where we would use ourselves as bowling balls, Darryl Marchant and Team #1 showing up every one else at the Hawaiian Open and a moron running around with a watermelon on his head singing Mr. Touchdown USA. Additionally, many Ranch couples who were also members got together during this time and went on to be wed. My wife Jill and I, along with Rob and Shelley Snoultzen, John and Kirsten Cooney, Dave and Krista Alexander, Rob and Rhonda Vanbuskirk, Darryl and Nancy Marchant, Todd and Barb Jacobs, and Stuart and Jackie Vandersluis. Most of us are still Ranch members and we've been fortunate enough to watch our children grow up at the Ranch. Stuart and I had also become quite pally with Rodger McTaggart and Barry Stringer (you may have heard of them) and you could often find us over at Rodger's lot, bonding and getting along in nothing but peace and harmony.

Since the year 2000, my time at the Ranch has been centered around family and lifelong friends. Unfortunately, Stuart and Jackie left Harmony Ranch in 2001, but thankfully, Stuart sold his trailer and beautiful screen room to Jill and me. In September 2002, our son Connor was born, and just two weeks later, he made his first visit to Harmony Ranch over Thanksgiving weekend. Connor has been incredibly fortunate to spend every summer of his life at the Ranch. At one point, Connor had an extended family of Ranch members, including three sets of grandparents, two uncles and aunts, four cousins, a great uncle and aunt, and two sets of third cousins. The Ranch has provided him with the opportunity to form amazing friendships with the children of our dear friends. These friendships have endured since their birth, and they continue to spend their summers at the Ranch together. Among this group of friends are Georgia and Noah Cooney, Dylan and Sadie Alexander, Charlotte Marchant, Matt Buckley, and even Connor's cousin and current "Ranch Hand", Liam Shields. Connor, Matty and Noah are even attending Brock University taking the same program. If you quiet your surroundings at night, you may just hear the laughter and joy emanating from Teen Island as these kids create their own treasured memories.

These are my cherished memories and experiences at Harmony Ranch, and I know that every single one of us has shared in countless wonderful times over the past 50 years. I feel incredibly blessed to have maintained strong friendships throughout the years, while also creating new ones and being welcomed into an incredibly loving family. Without the vision of my father-in-law George, my life as I know it would not exist. **Steve Bangham.**

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## IN THE BEGINNING THERE WAS.....AND IT WAS GOOD!



### OUR NEWEST 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY MEMBERS:

**Don and Liz Pratt** Lot 64 in the P.I.T.S., and **Jason Gucsma** Lot 69 Gross Point, are amongst our newest HR full members. This is a testament to the success of our seasonal camping program. Lise and Jim Price brought a wonderful non-singing, non-barbershop couple and their son into the Ranch and with the help of Ray Danley, Barb Jones and Mark Robinson,



have turned Don and his step-son Jason into barbershoppers loving the hobby. Don and Jason have been members of the Accapella York Chorus for the past year. Liz and Don have been very active members in the P.I.T.S., they care for Hole # 16, and in keeping with the HR community spirit, they are frequently seen helping out neighbours. Don is still working in his renovation company, actively working with Community Police Services, as well as doing spots on a TV show.

**Jason Guscma** is frequently seen at the Gross Point fire pit. When not at work with Rogers, Jason can be seen splitting/stacking and enjoying the friendship found around the Gross Pt. fire pit. His motto, "If you build it, they will come." Jason works full time with Intek communications, contracted by Rogers Cable.

**Ken and Sheila Rear.** Ken is a 42-year member of BHS. He and Sheila hail originally from BC. He and two other notable Ontario barbershoppers (Dave McEachern and Rod McKenzie) anchored the bass section of the Langley BC Chapter. Ken's business activities resulted in moving to New England District (sang with Nashua chapter), then onto Atlanta (sang with Big Chicken Chorus) and finally landed on Anna Maria Island, Florida, where he joined the Sarasota Chapter. Ken is a 5-year term president of the Sarasota Chorus of the Keys as he stayed on beyond the normal 2-year period to help guide the chapter through the pandemic. As a result, Sarasota Chapter emerged as one of the success stories. The Rears, in typical Canadian fashion and without fanfare, have been major facilitators in seeing that less fortunate school children in their community are receiving adequate clothing and footwear. Last year Ken and Sheila came to the ranch to be part of the Ontario District 75<sup>th</sup> celebration. They liked it here so much they made plans to spend 5 weeks with us this year. Within the first couple of weeks they looked at one another and determined this is where they want to a) spend more time with fellow barbershoppers and b) escape the Florida heat. A warm "welcome back" to our fellow Canadians who will be residing at lot 11 Sing-Sing Circle. A warm welcome to our Keswickian neighbors, Don and Liz, Jason and Floridians Ken and Sheila.

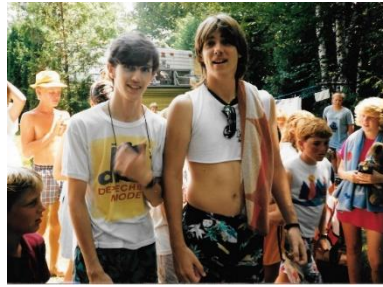


**Happy Harmony Ranching to you all!**

## MINI-GOLF ADVENTURES



## THE EARLY GENERATION OF HR BRATS



# PLAY TIME AT HARMONY RANCH





HR FRIENDS

## UPCOMING EVENT SCHEDULE

August 5 – 8 <sup>th</sup>	HR 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Weekend (Event Schedule in Special RAG)	
Saturday August 12	Ontario Quartet Event	
Sunday August 20 <sup>th</sup>	2pm – 9pm	A Capella York Chapter picnic
Saturday Aug 26 <sup>th</sup>	11am – 1:30pm	Black River Chorus
Saturday Aug 26	1:30 – 6:30	Scarborough Dukes Picnic
Saturday Sept 2	10am and 12pm	The Moose Pasture Open
Sunday Sept 3	10am – 12pm	Back Bacon on a Bun
Thanksgiving Weekend	1:30pm	General Membership Meeting at 1:30pm

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