



LIVEWIRES

A Look At Our Past



**RTO
ERO** District 21
Renfrew

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AN INTRODUCTION TO THIS ISSUE

Gus Cammaert, Editor

In this issue of Livewires I am hoping to celebrate some of the happy events that have taken place in our District 21 over the past number of years. As you look through this edition you will begin to realize that while many of you joined RTOERO for the health benefits it offers, a number of our members have been active in organizing events such as luncheons, birthday greetings, bbq's and interesting and informative excursions to places like the Shaw Woods, the memorable boat ride back in 2009 and our AGMs. Our district has over 800 members and while most are retired teachers, we are happy to have had other education workers join our ranks.

Not all of our members are active in the work of RTOERO and our AGM usually attracts about 10% of the membership. We're happy to see you on those occasions. The pictures which I have included will have some of you say "Oh, I remember that" or "Hey, look there is Joyce". If you have been a member for a number of years and you look at the pictures you begin to realize that many faces or names show up again and again. The reason for this is obvious. A core group of dedicated members step forward year after year to fill out the ranks of the executives, committees and callers to keep the wheels of RTOERO moving forward.

From Pg. 1

You and I owe them a sincere Thank You for their many hours of work. The outreach of our district through project 'Service to Others' has brought benefits to our neighbours through help provided to parents, food banks, long term care homes and other organizations which serve seniors. Help has been provided to people who were in need in other lands, particularly the Dominican Republic and Guatemala. I hope that you enjoy a look at some of the pictures and stories of the past of RTOERO, District 21



District 21
Renfrew County
Our History – Our Future
Written with the assistance of Grace Merchand in 2006

As many of you have read in the latest issue of our provincial magazine, “*Renaissance*” the birth of STO/ERO was a result of actions taken by the Ontario government in 1965 – 1967 to the Canada Pension Plan. The Superannuation Act was also amended in 1965 to become effective Jan. 1, 1966. The amendment reduced the ‘10 best year clause’ to the best seven years. Newly retired teachers were to be the beneficiaries, leaving many already retired teachers at a disadvantage. The Ontario Teachers Federation, which was the official voice for retired teachers petitioned the government to include in the legislation teachers who were already on pension. The government flatly refused this request. This refusal along with the fact that the retirees had contributed 6% to the Superannuation Fund from which pensions were paid upset many of the retirees and they were ready to act. At the urging of OTF and with their financial and organizational support, a committee of 10 led by Arthur and McLeod organized themselves into the Superannuated Teachers of Ontario (STO)* thereby creating a consolidated voice – STO was born.

On March 14, 1968 the first STO/ERO Senate was held. McAdam a member of the Ontario Public Schools Men Teachers’ Federation was elected president. Twenty two people attended that first Senate meeting. And here we are, 40 years later, with 47 districts comprising some 60,000 retired teachers, a strong voice demanding to be heard on matters of our pensions and other issues which affect seniors. Locally, Gwen Kidd, one of our more senior members (94) and a person who quickly took on a leadership role as Secretary Treasurer (1978-79) in our organization continues to take an active interest in RTOERO. She attends unit and district’s AGMs whenever possible. Only one founding member (1968) is still with us in District 21. She is 98 year old Euloina Trapp who resides in Pembroke.

How have we, in Renfrew County evolved over these forty years? In 1973, with a provincial membership of 13,792 retired teachers, STO/ERO was formed into districts. Our district, then known as STO/ERO District 21, consisted of members from the following counties: Carleton, Dundas, Glengary, Lanark, Prescott, Renfrew North, Renfrew South, Russell and Stormont. By the following year, 1974, membership at the provincial level had increased to 15,246. We were on a role! District 21 soon proved to be too big. Some counties began to form their own districts. Renfrew County followed the trend and in 1975, District 21 then consisted of Lanark County and Renfrew County. Harry Redfern, a District 21 member, was one of STO/ERO early provincial presidents..

By 1978, Lanark County had become District 29 and Renfrew County, District 21, with North and South units, stood on its own. Our first president was Hildred Coughlin. Our longest standing member of the District Executive is Grace Merchand. In 1983 she took on the role of District Secretary/Treasurer. She still sits on the Executive as an honorary member. She attends each district executive meeting where her advice and guidance are sought regularly.

This year we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the founding of RTOERO, then known as STO/ERO. Over the years our members have served the retired teachers of Renfrew County as members of either unit executives or district executives, or both. Some have distinguished themselves by serving on the Provincial Executive and/or provincial committees. Bill Sly became District President in (1985-1987) and went on to serve as Provincial President (1993-94). During his term as Provincial President, Bill emphasized RTOERO's continued commitment to learning and to being politically aware. Five members of our District have received the highest honour a District may bestow on its members for meritorious service. The first honorary member, now deceased, was J.R. McCrimmon., first president of Unit 211 and a strong organizer and believer in STO. He set up the first constitution of the district. President Margaret True (1983-85) presented this honour to J.R. during his last illness in recognition of his devoted service. Also in this list of distinguished members are: Bill Sly, district president 1985-87 and Provincial President 1993-94, Donald Fraser, district president 1991-93, Ron Griffith, district president 1999-2001, and Grace Merchand, district secretary 1983-1991. Ron and Grace continue as sitting honorary members of the district executive to this day.

District 21 has a lot of which we can be proud. Following are but a few of our accomplishment: District 21 joined the Best Five Campaign to correct the inequity that existed for a large number of members who had retired between 1976 and 1982. These retirees had retired before May 1982 and therefore their pensions were not calculated on their best 5 years. A petition asking for re-dress was sent to the Ontario Legislature. After years of lobbying all pensioners were finally given equal treatment.

A provincial initiative "Project Service to Others" has been accessed by District 21 with great success on a number of occasions. Needy school children and parents who required knowledgeable representation at IPRC meetings have all benefited from the work of RTOERO District 21. The latter project is still ongoing. District 21 was the first district to present to Senate and receive its approval for the request that the widow or widower of an RTOERO member not receiving a retired teacher's pension in his/her own right, be given the right to apply and receive emergency help – a right not previously permitted.

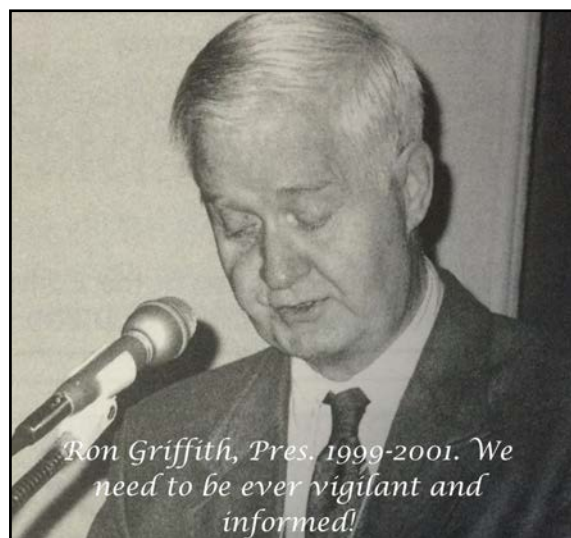
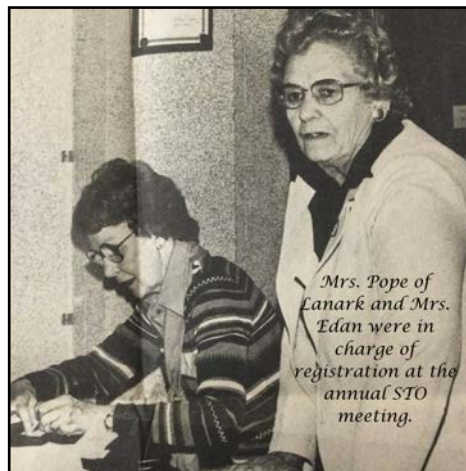
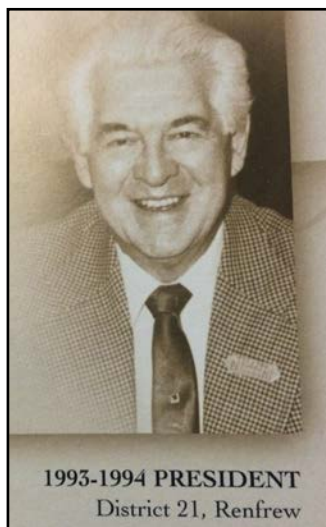
Presently District 21 members have contributed over \$7000 as their Service to Others project. When the project is completed in the fall of 2008, we hope to swell that amount to \$10,000 to fully equip a patient's room in Hospice Renfrew. Now that is Service to Others!

Our district newsletter was begun in 1986 by Bob Carmichael. He was its editor until 1995. It has evolved over 22 years. Since 2001 LIVEWIRES has a production run of 900 and is distributed to all members of District 21. It was published by Michael Laverty until the Fall of 2012. In addition to the 3 times per year publication, Mike maintained an excellent website on behalf of RTOERO District 21. LIVEWIRES has greatly improved our communication with the members of the district particularly in the areas of health insurance, member services (goodwill) and recruitment of new members.

If our history teaches us one lesson it is that only through strong membership will we be able to safeguard our pensions and benefits. No longer are we fortunate to have members come forward voluntarily to fill vacancies on our units' or district executives. We may be proud of our past but what will happen to our future? We need strong leadership. The RTOERO motto is "Service to Others". Service does require a certain sacrifice of time and commitment. You, as members have plenty of talent and leadership ability. We, in District 21 are over 900 strong. We need your help. We ask that you seriously consider giving some of your time and talents to the RTOERO. Do offer to serve so that our executives can continue with vigour to add to the legacy and benefits gained by our predecessors.

* On July 1998, the name Superannuated Teachers of Ontario was changed to Retired Teachers of Ontario (RTOERO)





RTO-ERO District 21 President, B. Carswell, presents the first installment of the Sound Beginnings for Children donations last summer to the chairs of the Principals' Associations. From the left are Marian Jenvey and Patsie Milne (RCDSB), Barry Carswell, Carol Sulpher (RCCDSB) and RTO-ERO Unit 212 President, Elaine Turner.

CYCLONE AT CASTLEFORD ~ JUNE 1893

The little log schoolhouse on the River Rd. at Castleford was known as S.S. 3, meaning the third school section in Horton Township, that being in Renfrew County, Ontario. Its situation was ideal because the distances to be to be walked were divided fairly; the farthest in any direction being about 2 1/2 miles.

A rail fence enclosed the schoolyard. A gravel road went by the at the front or North side meeting one on the West side. To the East was the Johnson farm and across the road in front was the McConneghy farm. It backed onto the Ottawa River where it was wide enough to be a lake, Chats Lake.

There was ample playground for ball and tag but it was more fun to hop over the rail fence behind the school and play hide and go seek in the woods. Through the woods, atop a hill, was the old O'Brey farm.

The children had a happy noon hour running barefooted and free on that lovely summer day. The teacher, Miss Sterling, had rung the big brass handbell and they settled quickly into their double seats. Work began. Everyone was quietly busy.

The sunshine disappeared. A gloomy light filled the room. The teacher, working with 4th class stepped to a west window and peered out. "There may be a storm coming" she said. You wouldn't have time to get home before it comes so we'll just continue as well as we can. The coal oil lamps wouldn't help enough to bother lighting them. The first- and second-year children slid closer to each other on their wide benches. The middle classes nervously continued to work on their slates frequently looking up under furrowed brows toward the west windows.

Suddenly Queen Victoria's portrait fell from the front wall, the glass shattered, children screamed then came a loud cracking and plaster fell from the ceiling crashing onto the teacher's desk. "Out" Miss Sterling commanded sharply, and Big Sandy was first to the door. He snapped the latch several times and heaved his full weight against it, but it wouldn't budge. There were noises from everywhere, little children crying, girls screaming, big boys yelling, pictures falling, floorboards splitting, books and slates clattering to the floor and roaring wind in the world outside.

Then came a sharp snap and the school canted off its foundation and tilted its twisted structure to lean against a huge elm tree in the yard. There was a shower of plaster and a string of stovepipes opened letting out a sooty downpour. The desk's seats and stove, being bolted to the floor, served as anchors for the frightened children. Then the big boys in fourth class took command. "This way out" and they each took a little one and put them out under the lowest log and over the foundation. The bigger girls scrambled out themselves and sheltered the little ones along the wall until the



teacher, last to leave, said everybody is out and nobody is hurt. Fence logs were blowing across the road and there was a heavy rain but for the children the worst was over and they remained huddled close until a quiet returned. They were dismissed and started for home.

Those walking by the old Buddy O'Brey farm saw that the house and barn had been blown over the hill and settled against the woods. Others saw that Mr. McConneghy's house and buildings were demolished. The Johnson's stable roof and hay from the loft had blown across the river and landed in Québec.

A few days later Mrs. O'Brey had her apron returned by the person who had found it in her yard in Québec. She knew who owned it because there was still a letter in the pocket. There were no serious injuries among children or adults in the neighbourhood. A new school was ready for September opening. Miss Sterling did not return. The shock had been too much for her and she died a few months later.

This story was taken from the first edition of Livewires and was written by Doris Humphries from notes written by Lorne Humphries who had been a 6 year old child who was help to get out by Sandy Johnson.



Yamasa, Dominican Republic
Healthy Moms, healthy babies project by Roger
Perry and Bruce Munro

District 21 was successful in receiving \$3500 from Provincial Office for their Service to Others Project "Enhancing Parent Friendly School Communities". A team of RTO members chaired by Rosemary Cammaert developed a kit to help parents better understand terminology such as IEP's and IPRC's, so that they could more effectively be involved in decisions regarding their child's education. This project extended over many years, under Myrtle Carroll's guidance, where RTO members often assisted parents one-on-one. **Pic: Bruce Munro and Rosemary Cammaert explain IPRC Package to community organizations involved in supporting children and families.**

HOSPICE RENFREW

District 21 was successful in receiving \$2000 from Provincial and raised another \$8000 to furnish a room in the newly opened Hospice Renfrew in 2008.



POSING ON THE VERANDA OF THE HOSPICE RENFREW IS THE RENFREW DISTRICT RTO/ERO SERVICE TO OTHERS COMMITTEE. Left to right are Harold Bolger, District President; Jim MacKillican, Chair of the Board of Hospice Renfrew; Committee Chair, Mike Lavery; Bob Albert, District Treasurer and Committee Secretary and Carol Parker, President of U 212. Missing is committee member, Barb Bristow.

BUYING A NEW CAR? HERE IS ONE MEMBER'S STORY

Jackie Asselin



When my 12 year old Yaris started to give me headaches, I decided to invest in a new car, just as my friend came back from Toronto enthused about her brother's Tesla that she claimed only costs \$40,000 (not true) and requires no maintenance. Upon further investigation, I became intrigued. I have vowed that I would hold on to my old car until a self-driving vehicle became available and there it was. I felt that as I got older, it would be harder to adapt to a new vehicle, so this was a good time to jump in – I think I still have most of my marbles.

Buying the car was a novel experience. There were no service centres in Ottawa and I was told to see one I could go to in Montreal or Toronto (which I was not prepared to do during covid). The solution was to go online to Tesla Canada and order my car. Tesla provided a service consultant out of Toronto and I went ahead to build my car although I had never seen one. I was notified four weeks later that my car was available for pick up so went to the bank to get a wire transfer to Tesla in payment. The bank teller gave me a hard time, thinking perhaps I was being foolish to send such a large amount of money to buy a car I had never seen from someone I had never met. I understood her reluctance and convinced her that this "little old lady" understood the risks of sending money by wire transfer and that the bank would not be held liable for my foolishness.

I have never loved a vehicle I purchased before – they were just a car – something to get around in. But I do love Edna, my Tesla (you must name your car). The vehicle is incredibly quiet, comfortable, and sporty. You have to learn how to drive it and to trust it when you put it on auto pilot, but what a joy – it adjusts the speed when it changes, stops at traffic signals and changes lanes automatically on four lane highways, and best of all, I never have to stop at a gas station. I installed a charger in my home (although I did not have to).

I could go on and on, but the best thing about my Tesla is the feeling that whenever I go out, I am no longer emitting carbon into the atmosphere. It runs clean. Driving an EV means I am helping to advance sustainable energy by at least 5 years, and maybe closer to 10. This could make all the difference in the world.

I hear people who own one have not had to sweep snow off the car because you can melt the snow using climate control (as long as you remember). It is 4 wheel drive so I am hoping it will be fine. Have heard good things.

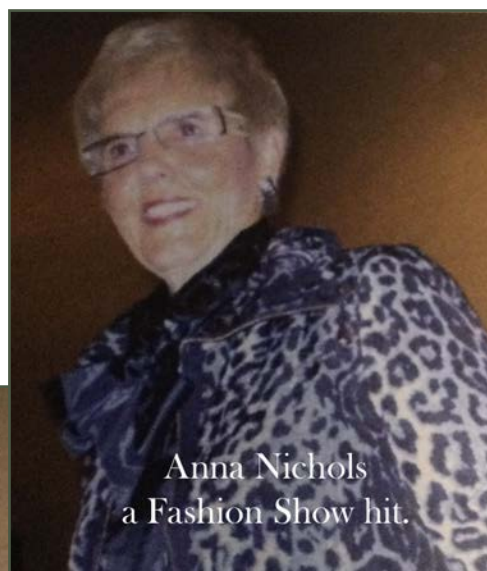
Jackie

PS - Give her a honk when you see her in her new candy apple red wheels tooting around Arnprior. (GC)



*Margaret Farmer
Fashion Model*

2006
Fashion Show
in support of
Hospice
Renfrew



*Anna Nichols
a Fashion Show hit.*



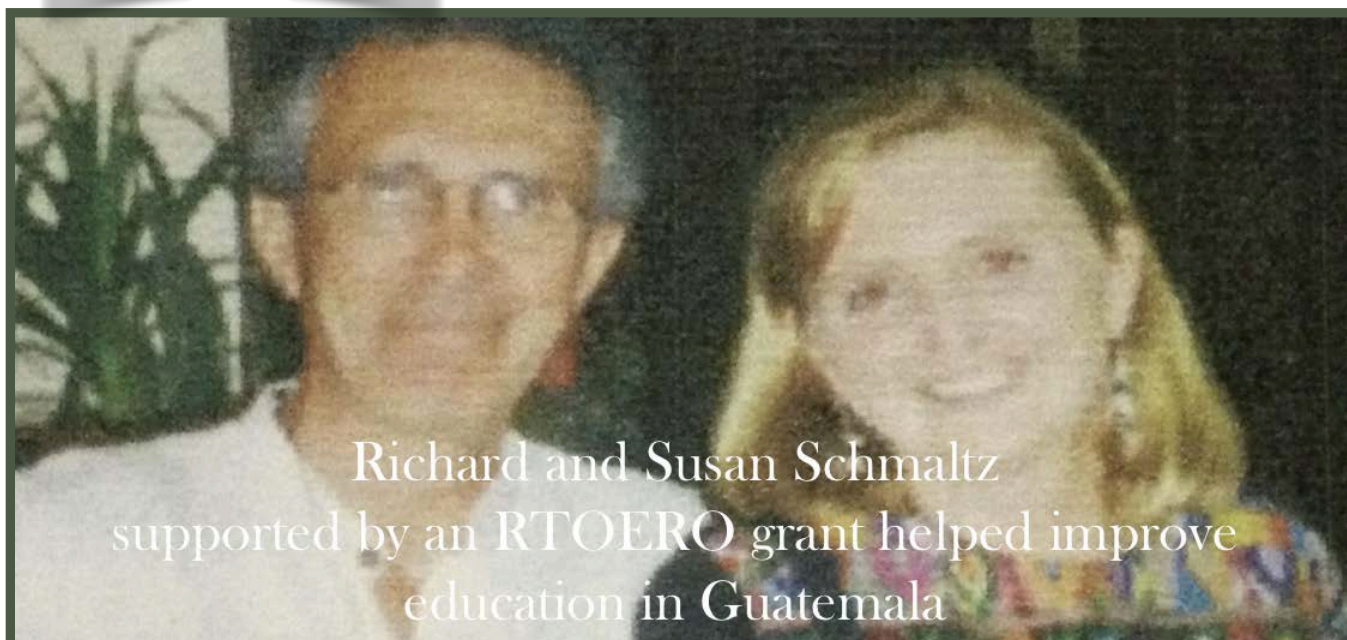
*Rose-Anne Boucher
\$4000 for
Guatemala*



*Marilyn Leclaire
in the Fashion Show*



*Sandra McGregor
the RTOERO
leprechaun*



*Richard and Susan Schmaltz
supported by an RTOERO grant helped improve
education in Guatemala*

HUGS

A pandemic story by Sue Larkin.

“A hug is two hearts wrapped in arms.”

Something I am missing greatly since the pandemic began is the hugs for and from family and friends. I realize that not everyone likes hugging but I come from a big family of big huggers.



On my 70th birthday at the end of May, my daughter and her family arrived at my home for a socially distanced birthday meal outdoors.

That in itself was a wonderful gift but a thrilling surprise was in store for me. I was instructed to close my eyes for a few minutes and when told to do so, I opened them to behold a “hugging machine” which had been constructed by my daughter and her partner with decorative touches by the kiddies. One by one I received lingering, enthusiastic hugs from six people, beginning with my 10-year-old granddaughter who ran to be the first to embrace me! I was moved to laughter and tears! It had been 8 weeks since I’d had any kind of physical contact.

There are medical facts that proclaim the benefits of hugs and hugging. These include the release of endorphins which reduces tension and stress, the boost of oxytocin levels which reduces feelings of loneliness and anger, stimulation of the

thymus gland which balances the production of white blood cells... to name only a few.

In a discussion with our District President about one of my new socialization methods, playing bridge and euchre online, she drew a parallel between this pastime and hugging. An excellent site, trickstercards.com offers a video feature so that players can see and communicate with one another, the second-best thing to getting



together in person. Because it is so user friendly and free, I have been introducing more and more people to the site. These have included a friend with advanced MS who has only left the house a couple of times since March, a relative with a traumatic brain injury who craves social contact, a young man whose mental well being has been in jeopardy, friends who live alone. Rosemary likened these interactions to giving a hug and I certainly agree that the “feel good” result is similar!





Whether you're keeping connected with phone calls, face time or Zoom communication, or are fortunate enough to get and give real time hugs, there's no denying the role that human interaction plays in a happy, healthy life. Coincidentally, someone recently posted on Facebook a song which has been meaningful to me since I was a young girl in St. Joseph's choir in Ottawa. We made a trip to Pakenham to sing there on a Sunday evening and I'll never forget the feeling I experienced as we sang "You'll Never Walk Alone". That song still resonates with me. "Walk on, walk on, with hope in your heart and you'll never walk alone..."

Here's hoping that next year we can all celebrate the worldwide annual unofficial event on January 21 named Happy Hugging Day in real time with as many people as we want!



THE LAST WORD



History is a wonderful learning tool!

Our past president, Carol Sulpher, has had 6 boxes containing District archive material. Over the past weeks she has reviewed and organized years of stored material. She has shared some of these materials with Gus from which he has produced this edition of Livewires. Thanks to both of them for all they accomplish for District 21. Enjoy the pictures and stories from our past.

Covid is not going away soon! It has become a part of our history. RTOERO, in 2020, moved all of us into the virtual world. 2021 is not going to be much different, as the office and the Board of Directors have indicated that all this year's meetings will take place through, my nemesis, Zoom.

If Covid has you feeling isolated or lonely and you would like to have a member contact you on a regular basis please let us know. You can contact me (president21@district.rtoero.ca), or your Goodwill Chair (Unit 21-1 Myrtle Carroll (carrollt@nrtco.net) /Unit 21-1 Rosemary Flood (rosebris@hotmail.com)). We will follow up your call and find a volunteer member who will contact you.

Stay positive, stay safe,
Rosemary Cammaert, President District 21



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