



Preserving, promoting, and developing Wellington North's unique cultural resources to build a vibrant community and a prosperous economy.

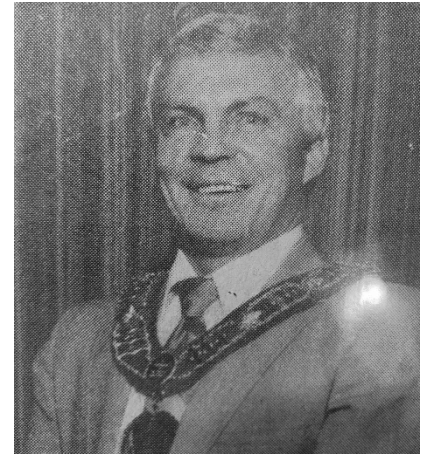
CULTURAL MOMENT FOR DECEMBER 2, 2024 CELEBRATES HAROLD 'TOAD' REEVES

Harold 'Toad' Reeves is a name that resonates deeply with the residents of Wellington North, particularly in Mount Forest. Born on July 1, 1937, Toad was the sixth of fourteen children in the Reeves family. Despite his small size at birth, which earned him the nickname 'Toad,' he grew up to be a significant figure in the community.

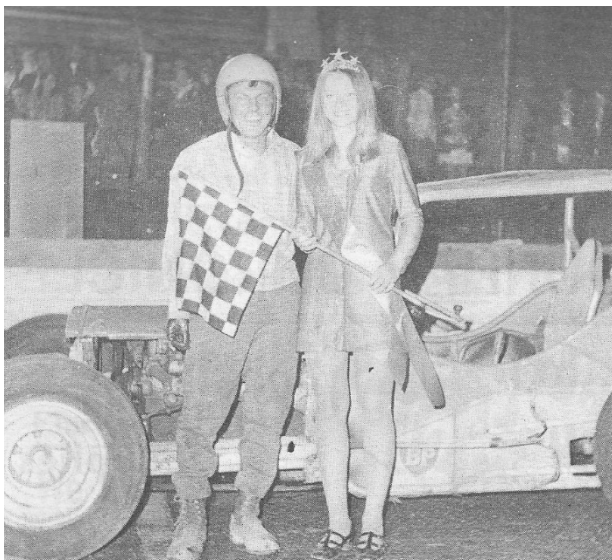
Toad's early years were filled with typical childhood adventures, including joining the Boy Scouts and spending countless hours playing hockey and baseball. He was often seen riding his bike to various fishing spots with his friends. His involvement in the family business, Reeves Construction, began at a young age, and by 18, he was named superintendent of bridge building.

In 1955, Toad married Marion Noreen Weber, and together they had three children: Katherine, Michael, and James.

In 1963, tragedy struck at a job site in Hepworth while pouring footings for a bridge. Hydropower jumped 14 feet and hit the crane, causing immediate electrical shock to Toad and another worker. The power hit Toad in the chest, resulting in the amputation of his arm. He was fitted with a heavy artificial spring-back arm and endured years of insurmountable pain. Despite this, Toad continued to build bridges and work with the family, adoring his children and grandchildren, and becoming more involved in the community and sports. He was a founding member of the Mount Forest Drifters snowmobile club, part of the award-winning WOAA Intermediate hockey team, and an umpire in men's baseball.



Harold 'Toad' Reeves



Toad Reeves, 1970 Champion, with 1970 Speedway Queen Diane Bryan.

In the mid-60s, Toad raced go-karts at Hillers and Cromwells, the Mount Forest go-kart track, always managing to outpace his opponents with his fearless driving. From the late 60s to the 70s, with the ingenuity of Ray Spencer, Toad and his legendary racing team – the Mount Forest Connection – raced to victory at almost every event. They traveled across southwestern Ontario, racing on both dirt and pavement tracks. Former racers recall the helpful, hard-working crew and their innovative designs and adaptations of motors and car chassis. Toad, a one-armed race car driver, trailblazed for people with disabilities in sports. He operated his vehicle, including the legendary bee bomber called the Flintstone Flyer, using a spindle hand mount to move the steering wheel with his artificial arm and hand. Nothing could stop him. One night, during a long endurance race, the

power steering failed on the second lap. Toad managed to maneuver the car without power steering, not only finishing but winning the race, despite severe injuries to his good hand.

In 1974, Toad was elected to town council and fought for many issues on behalf of his constituents. In 1976, he was elected mayor and was involved in the police commission, bringing Westinghouse (now the Cooley Group) to Mount Forest, and spearheading the town's economic development. In 1982, he was elected to county council and played a key role in building the new Mount Forest Fire Hall. He served on various committees, including finance, legislation, bylaws, and PUC liaison. He was also the town's representative on the North Wellington Landfill Site committee and the economic development appointee.

Toad was instrumental in preventing school closures in Arthur, Palmerston, Fergus, and Mount Forest. He suggested building their own schools and an entire school board for the area if closures occurred. In 1984, he helped establish the North Wellington Advisory Group (now Community Resource Group), which changed social programming in Wellington North for years to come. This group identified needs and resources for families, individuals with disabilities, housing, and more, securing provincial funding for much-needed programs in rural areas.

Toad was also involved in developing the White Bluffs area, including Oakview Crescent, which opened on December 2, 1976. During his time in office, Toad was respected and loved by both his supporters and opponents. In his spare time, he enjoyed coaching and spending time with his family, often visiting McGinty's for ice cream with his grandchildren.



Marion and Harold Reeves.

In 1981, Toad began building the Forest Court Medical Centre on Main Street North, which was completed in 1985. It was the first of its kind in Mount Forest and is now home to multiple commercial businesses. Harold Reeves passed away suddenly on May 15, 1986, at Louise Marshall Hospital from a heart attack at 48 years old. This hard-working, often impetuous man who chose nontraditional paths was one of the most unique individuals, and his life and work touched everyone in Mount Forest in some way. Toad will always be remembered as a person who gave his undivided attention, remembered who you were, and listened when you spoke. It is only fitting that we celebrate someone like Toad Reeves, an admirable fighter both personally and professionally. In an article by Dave Wenger, publisher of the Mount Forest Confederate, he was described as "A lion of a man" – a fitting tribute to a man whose courage stayed with him until his unfortunate passing.

Submitted by Trina Reid, Wellington North Cultural Roundtable