



THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE GATINEAU LA SOCIÉTÉ HISTORIQUE DE LA GATINEAU

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Newsletter

No. 99-1: February - March 1999

"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." - George Santayana

Coming Events

Monday, February 15

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Keynote Speaker
Presentation of Awards
Election of Officers
Other Business

Keynote Speaker: **Alan Heginbottom**

"VIRUS HUNTING - Medical Archaeology and the 1918 Influenza Pandemic"

In 1918 a new and virulent strain of influenza, the so-called "Spanish Flu," swept across the world, killing an estimated twenty to forty million people. Unusually, the outbreak caused significant loss of life among young adults, as well as infants and the elderly. Research is under way to identify the actual flu virus responsible. One approach has involved exhumation of the bodies of six coal miners who died of "Spanish Flu" and whose bodies were reported to have been buried in permafrost. The bodies lie in a small cemetery at Longyearbyen, on the Norwegian arctic island of Spitsbergen, only 1,300 kilometres from the North Pole.

Chelsea's **Alan Heginbottom** was a member of the research team that carried out the exhumations. Alan recently retired from the Geological Survey of Canada, where he had worked since 1968. At the GSC, he was involved for many years in research on permafrost in the Canadian Arctic, on environmental impact assessment, and on natural hazard assessment. He has published several maps of permafrost and ground ice for Canada and the northern hemisphere.

7:30 - Social hour
8:15 - Keynote Speaker
9:00 - Annual Meeting

Monday, March 15

Demonstration of a new
WORLD-WIDE WEB SITE

"Exploring the Historical Legacy of the Gatineau Hills"

A project of "Resort to Work" (Wakefield)
and the Historical Society of the Gatineau

Team Members:

Hannah Roger, Matthew O'Meara, Greg Marshall

Team Leaders (for "Resort to Work"):
David Nobbs, Louise Mailloux

NOTE

Monthly meetings of the Historical Society are held in the **Chelsea Community Centre**, Old Chelsea, Québec.

Refreshments: 7:30 pm / Meeting: 8:00 pm

ANNUAL REPORT 1998

Text of the **Annual Report** and **Financial Statement** will be available at the Annual General Meeting, and will be distributed to all members with the April-May issue of the Newsletter.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

If the date on your mailing label reads either **98/12/31** or **1998/12**, your membership is about to expire. Please renew now by sending a cheque for either \$15 (one year) or \$25 (two years) to the address on our masthead.

Nepean auctioneer top in world

BY MICHAEL PRENTICE

Michel "Hoss" Bertrand — newly-crowned "all-around world champion auctioneer" — will be back at his job Monday selling antiques and old furniture in a drafty auction hall off Merivale Road in Nepean.

Thirty-eight years old and an auctioneer for six years, Mr. Bertrand laid claim to the title of world's best auctioneer by beating 21 rivals from Canada and the United States at the annual convention of the Auctioneers Association of Canada near Toronto on the weekend.

The association was first in the world — in 1984 — to introduce a competition for all-around world champion, and is the only one allowed to bestow this title. The contest is open to all-comers, although contestants are usually North Americans.

Most years the competition is dominated by Americans, many of whom go from one auctioneering contest to another.

Mr. Bertrand, operator of Hoss Auctioneering Service in Nepean, was the first Canadian to win the title of all-around world champion in seven years, said Al Briggs, executive director of the Auctioneers Association of Canada.

Mr. Bertrand used to have a second-hand furniture store on Wellington Street in Ottawa, and became an auctioneer after taking a one-week course. "Mostly auctioneering is something you learn on the job," he said.

He and his wife Karen operate an auction business in Nepean, usually holding an auction every two weeks, selling mostly antiques and second-hand furniture on commission. They have two teenaged children. A beefy man, he got his nickname from the character Hoss in the old television drama *Bonanza*.

In last weekend's competition in an auction hall in Milton, Ont., contestants took turns conducting a real auction of antiques for more than 200 real buyers.

Competitors were judged by a five-member jury for their style, presentation, and sales techniques.

"It's not how fast you sell, it's how well you get the crowd's attention," explained Mr. Bertrand. "It's how well you know the product. It's your appearance and clarity and rhythm."

The key to being a successful auctioneer is to entertain the audience, he said.

Nine of the 22 contestants were Americans, and Mr. Bertrand's closest rival was Frank Tun-

zo, of Pennsylvania. "He told me it was a privilege to be runner-up to a Canadian," said Mr. Bertrand. "He said he would have been very sorry to have lost to an American, but didn't mind losing to a Canadian."

Mr. Bertrand's rewards were a cup, a large plaque and a gold ring proclaiming him world champion auctioneer.

It was the first time he had entered the contest, and he did so because "I really wanted to know what I'm doing wrong." The judges found little wrong, although one said he could have been clearer in his speech.

He said he's used to selling to an audience, but this was different. "It's nerve-wracking to be in a contest in front of your peers. It's one of the toughest things to do. You can almost freeze."

On Monday, it will be back to business as usual, when Mr. Bertrand will conduct a regular auction at his premises on Jamie Street in Nepean.

Ottawa-area contestants placed first and second in the novice class — open to auctioneers with less than two years' experience — at last weekend's event. Scott Morris was the winner and Theresa Taylor was runner-up.



WAYNE CUDDINGTON, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Michel "Hoss" Bertrand beat 21 competitors from Canada and the U.S. at weekend event near Toronto.