

He's been called the eyes and ears of the **Chamber of Commerce**, and in fact was recently given its **John L. Stanley Award for Excellence**. Mac has also served on the **Orange County Economic Development Corporation**, is a trustee of **Graham Cemetery** and serves as the legislative chair of the local chapter of the **AARP**. He is also secretary-treasurer of the **Somerset Steam and Gas Engine Association**.

underground."

And so, 15-year-old Ellwood Arthur MacEwan joined the Canadian Army in 1943 as a "boy soldier." By the Korean War he was old enough to be shipped out. He sailed for Japan aboard an old Victory ship. "Jeesh, I was so sick I didn't care what they did to me," he remembers. "I was going to die anyway. I was sick all the time on board that ship."

In 1959 Mac was ordered to Washington, DC. His chief advised him, "Take your winter clothes. It's terrible down here... I got off that train, and I had a great coat on and high boots, and there's about that much snow on the ground," he makes a half inch gap between his thumb and forefinger, "not even an inch, and it was 28. I came out of below zero in Ottawa and 10 feet of snow." He couldn't peel his clothes off fast enough.

It was in Washington that Doris, the southerner and only child met Mac, the northerner and one of 17. Opposites attract, so they courted and were married in the Orange Presbyterian Church in 1960. In 1963, after their twin daughters, Jean and Joan, were born, they were posted to Canadian Central Command Headquarters in Oakville, near Toronto. On another occasion, Mac was sent to Chilliwack, British Columbia and Doris had to live alone with the twins in Halifax...4,000 miles away. All in all, Doris reckons she's moved 15 times over the years...four moves alone just in Germany.

Asked how she adapted to the cold in Ottawa, Doris shrieks "I didn't; I froze to death." She remembers using a Samsonite attaché case as a sled as she commuted to and from the college where she was studying to become a para-professional librarian. In Ottawa they clear off and flood a canal in winter creating a 12-mile-long ice rink. "People skate to work," says Mac matter-of-factly, adding, "I find it colder down here in the winter than I do at home. The humidity goes right through me."

Anyway, it should be noted that the Canadian Armed Forces' mission is different from our own. Canadians serve as peacekeepers and they have been deployed to do just that in the Middle East, Bosnia and other hot spots around the world. In fact, a vital part of Canadian military training is learning how to keep

the peace. Among Mac's many medals is one for peacekeeping. He was also awarded the Canadian Centennial Medal in 1967 for making "a significant contribution to Canada." One of his brothers won the same medal, and so the MacEwans are the only family in Canada to have won two Centennial Medals.

In 1983, Captain E.A. MacEwan retired from military service, and settled in Doris' childhood home, Somerset, Virginia to take care of her ailing step father

says Mac ominously. "I had no pity on these fellows. I'm not going down there three times tonight to read him his rights," he huffs, adding, "I'll say this: I never had one of my charges or one of my search warrants thrown out by the judge."

Mac came back in 1998. Most days you can see him walking along the brick plant road to stay in shape. "I enjoy doing things. I enjoy meeting people," he smiles.

His face is a familiar sight at public meetings. "Yeah, most of the meetings, I try to get to them, find out what's going on. I don't vote, but they take my money anyway." He remembers in his military days going to meetings so sensitive that no one was allowed to take notes. "And I could remember almost everything that was said as long as I could put a face to it." He pauses, shakes his head and adds, "but now I'm missing a lot." He doodles furiously with a pencil and paper.

He still finds himself in the role as note-taker and recording secretary for half a dozen local boards and committees. Of the innumerable public hearings he has attended, he says, "the only time they get a crowd there is when they got a beef. They wait until it's passed and there's nothing they can do about it and they holler and screech." He's been called the eyes and ears of the Chamber of Commerce, and in fact was recently given its John L. Stanley Award for Excellence. Mac has also served on the Orange County Economic Development Corporation, is a trustee of Graham Cemetery, a volunteer for the Orange Street Festival, and serves as the legislative chair of the local chapter of the AARP.

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Mac MacEwan, in his trademark driving cap, shares a moment with one of his 16 siblings, his brother Harry. Harry, who died recently, served in the Canadian Forces during World War II. His aircraft was downed by friendly fire in the North Sea. Mac says, "He threw the life raft out and got all the guys into it. They were three days in the ocean before they were picked up."

and mother. "I spent most of my nights and half of my time down here sitting with them," he remembers. "I'll tell you this retirement is tough, tough duty," blurts Doris

After her mother died, Mac and Doris moved back to Nova Scotia in 1989, and "and I got to know the remainder of his family," says Doris. During that last stint in the north, Mac became a Justice of the Peace. Roused by the police at all hours of the night, it was his job to determine whether to release or detain various miscreants. "If they lied to me, they went to jail,"

Right now, Mac is hard at work as point man in his role as Secretary-Treasurer of the Somerset Steam and Gas Association. The 30th anniversary Pasture Party is coming up next month, and for three sweltering days, Mac will hold court in the Mac Shack.

But it's his quiet behind-the-scenes work that will only be noticed by a few. His fellow co-mayor of Somerset and good friend, Pasture Party founder and host, Bill Roberts says, "If it weren't for him, we wouldn't have a Pasture Party." Bill pauses a moment and adds, "I think a lot of old Mac."

Mac MacEwan: "A habit of speaking my mind"



So anyway, Mac MacEwan is 19 years old and takes a part-time job driving a cab in Oakville, Ontario all night long on weekends. And towards the end of his shift he gets a call to pick someone up at an apartment complex. When he arrives all he sees is, "this woman standing out there on the

front lawn just screeching. I jumped out of the cab and ran over and here she was having a baby right there...NOW!"

So what does Mac do? "I bolted to the first door I could find, and this little kid comes out and I said, 'Where's your mother?' 'She's in bed,' " came the startled reply. "I rushed in and I said 'Look, there's a woman out there having a baby on the lawn. I'm the taxi driver. I don't know what to do. I've got to get her to the hospital.'"

"The woman jumped out of bed,

grabbed some sheets and said 'C'mon!' Out we went, she in her nightclothes, and she wrapped the baby in the sheets." The mother of the newborn was still screaming bloody murder when Mac shoved her into the cab and floored it for the hospital. "And some of the people started looking out, and what they saw was a taxi driver grabbing this woman throwing her in the taxi cab and all this blood all over the lawn. They phoned the police and said, 'The taxi driver just stabbed a woman on the lawn and took off with her.' "

To make matters worse, the hospital, at first, refused to accept the mother and newborn. "I said, 'You're taking her boys. She's going out of my taxi. I don't care how you do it.' So they took her. So, by

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this time... I'm just a nervous wreck...who pulls in and surrounds me but the police."

Mac's shoulders slump in resignation. The cops would have no part of his story. They practically frog-marched him down to the station. "I said 'Look, call the taxi cab company. They'll tell ya that I'm the taxi driver and that I got a call this morning and I took this woman to the hospital.' So finally they got it ironed out."

Or should we say "ironed out." Although Mac has spent the better part of 15 years as a resident of Somerset...endearing himself to his neighbors and friends...immersing himself in his adopted community and county...he still sounds like a true-blue Canadian...eh? And that's the way he likes it. "That's right. I have my green card," he says defiantly. When he dies, he wants his ashes spread on his brother's land in his native Nova Scotia.

The woman and the baby story is not the only time that Mac has been able to wiggle out of a difficult situation. How about the time he was in Korea, attached to the Commonwealth Division with Brits, Aussies, and Kiwis? They all served in the British G-Section, Operations Unit...the battle planners. They picked up and moved camp frequently. On one such move, he ordered his platoon to dig foxholes and a latrine. A knighted British Captain walked in demanding to know the location of the "comfort box." Mac gave this some thought. "Comfort box, that's gotta be the toilet," he surmised. 'Right over there, sir,' he remembers telling the Captain with cheery confidence, 'they're digging it by the trees there. '

The next thing he knew he was being hauled up for insubordination, ridiculing an officer in the field, "all these charges. Jeesh, I could be shot," he remembers thinking. The matter came before an Australian General, who "just

burst out laughing. 'He's Canadian; he doesn't know,' " says the General to the offended Captain.

Apparently a comfort box is not a restroom; it is a portable tea caddy that travels with British officers in the field. "The General laughed and dismissed all the charges against me," says a visibly relieved Mac...a tempest in a teapot.

That certainly was not the case during the Cold War when Mac and his newlywed bride, Doris Johnston of Somerset, were stationed in Washington, DC. The Soviets had put up the Sputnik. They were testing huge, multi-megaton H-bombs on the steppes of Siberia. At any moment now, the ICBMs could be coming over the pole, across Canada, to obliterate New York or Washington. "The Cuban missile crises happened while we were there," chirps Doris. "He wanted us to leave Washington!" It was a tense time.

Mac's specialty was "Communications Intelligence." He served on the staff of the Canadian Military Attaché at the embassy in Washington. "We had stations all over...same as the Americans...listening stations. We monitored all of it. The group that I was with, we met every morning and they would digest all this information, and they put a paper out, a daily brief. From there it went over to the British Embassy or to the Pentagon and we would tell our side of it...every day of the week."

His commanding officer, General Montgomery Wiseman, was a tough, old bird who threw the fear of God into his entire staff except for Mac. "MacEwan!" barked the General one morning. 'Did you open your eyes this morning when you got up?' " Mac froze. "And immediately I started running my hands over my uniform to see if I had

everything on; I had my belt, my nametag, all my ribbons on me. 'Yes sir, I did,' " he responded warily.

"Well I suggest that you put the lights on in the morning," retorted the General. "Look at your socks." Mac pulls a sheepish face. "I had on two different colored socks."

That night, Mac ran into the General at an embassy party. "Pull up your pants, MacEwan," snapped the General, as a horrified staff looked on. Mac obliged, hiking up his dress military trousers. "I got on two black ones, sir," he announced proudly.

"You had to have a little levity in the middle of the Cold War," observes Doris, who well remembers the embassy parties and the General with fondness. Not so the other staffers; they were so afraid of Wiseman that they'd ask Mac to go in and bear their bad tidings to him. And one time in the mess, the General sent Mac to find out what happened to the soup he'd ordered. Mac reported that it had been served to a civilian. He had also slyly told the waiter that if he knew what was good for him, he'd better fetch the General's soup on the double quick.

"You get out to the kitchen and get me a soup," bellowed the General to Mac. "Go get your own soup. I'm not a cook," he retorted defiantly. "Well these other fellows all scattered from the table," says Mac who shared a private laugh with the General about the incident later.

"A Nova Scotian can't be ordered around like that," says Doris of her husband of 46 years. When Mac was stationed in Germany with NATO forces, his commanding officer was nicknamed, behind his back, "Mighty Mouse." He was barely five feet tall. "We got along great," insists Mac. "I mean, I didn't take any of his bull...he handed it out and I accepted it and if I thought he wanted a reply, I gave him a reply, whatever was on my mind, and we got along great," shrugs Mac.

"One time we went up on the Czech border. There was two feet of snow on the ground and the Americans were there in wooden huts with heaters and everything. The Americans said 'you can have any of these huts over here.'" Mighty Mouse announced with stubborn determination, "My men will sleep in tents." I said, "your men may sleep in

tents but I'm damn well not sleeping in a tent." And that was that. Mac fidgets with a pencil. "I have a habit of speaking my mind at times, especially if I think the person is being stupid."

It's funny how Mac and Doris got together...Doris, an only child, daughter of William Johnston, legendary postmaster and storekeeper in Somerset for 29 years, brought up as a proper young southern lady. "That's my childhood in that store," she points fondly to the familiar white building next door to her home place.

And then there's Mac, one of, count 'em, 17 kids, born some 78 years ago in Westville, Nova Scotia, the son of a Scottish coal miner and a woman from Denmark...the town in Nova Scotia, that is, not the Scandinavian country. Doris shakes her head, saying Mac never made that distinction clear to her until years later. She always thought Mac's mother was Danish. "That's their idea of humor," she grouches.

Mac, who was fourth youngest, remembers all of his brothers working in the mines, dirty faces, "coming home all smashed up. When the whistle blew in that town everybody came to the pit head. There was a certain whistle that told you there was an accident in the mines." One brother survived an explosion, "and when they got to them, they were right up to here in water," he raises his chin as high as he can. "They were holding their head against the coal ceiling to get

air," he shudders.

His Dad, who emigrated from Aberdeen, Scotland, was the mine manager. "My father spoke exactly as I am speaking right now until he got mad, then he'd 'Rrrrrrr'... the Scottish brogue. If you were in his way you'd better get out of it," he says warily. In Westville, there were five Tom MacEwans: Old Tom, Young Tom, Black Tom, Red Tom, and Salvation Army Tom. People on the street would ask him "Which one is your father?" "Black Tom," came the reply...black from coal.

Mac, himself, would have nothing to do with the mines. "I'm the only one who didn't go down. I said 'when I go underground, I'm going under for keeps.' I wouldn't even go into their museum which is



Mac MacEwan's ID photo on his Certificate of Service with the Canadian Armed Forces. A native of Nova Scotia, Mac served from 1943-1947 and from 1952-1983 whereupon he retired and moved to his wife's family home in Somerset.



Doris Johnston of Somerset married Canadian Mac MacEwan at the Orange Presbyterian Church in 1960. She reckons they moved 15 times during Mac's military career before settling for good at her family home place in Somerset. The photo was taken by legendary Washington, D.C. wedding photographer Bradford Bachrach.



Among the medals Mac MacEwan earned in the Canadian Armed Forces was the Centennial Award for service to his country. Mac served in Korea, Washington, Germany and numerous posts in Canada before retiring to Somerset in 1983. Mac later moved back to his home in Nova Scotia, but returned to Orange County in 1998.

Photo by Phil Audibert



The Mac Shack

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Somerset Steam and Gas Association's annual Pasture Party.

The three-day event starts Friday, August 25 with all manner of old-fashioned steam and gasoline-powered engines, including a working sawmill, pony brake, and excelsior mill. And there will be demonstrations of threshing, corn chopping, and plowing. Also on tap is a beauty pageant, a parade, a tractor pull, along with displays of everything from antique cars and trucks to a shingle mill and a duplicating lathe.

As many as 4,000 people per day, some from as far away as Montana and Maine, attend this unique annual Orange County event.

Hosted by Bill Roberts at his Somerset dairy farm, a gate "donation" of \$5 is asked. According to the show brochure, "all proceeds, after show expens-



Mac holds court at the Mac Shack at a recent Somerset Steam and Gas Pasture Party. As secretary of the Somerset Steam and Gas Association, he stays busy year-round for the annual event. This year's Pasture Party will be held Aug. 25-27.

Contributed photo

es are paid, are split between local charitable organizations, volunteer fire companies, rescue squads, Virginia Defense Force, scholarship and charitable work within the surrounding communities.

Local businesses contribute to the support of the Pasture Party from providing free transportation to logs for the sawmill to everything in between."

As secretary-treasurer (transla-

tion: the guy who takes care of the details), Mac MacEwan has been working all year on this event.

During the three days of the Pasture Party, he'll man the Mac Shack, right in the middle of the pasture, where he'll dispense everything from advice to 2007 Old Iron Calendars.

When it's all over, Mac might take a little time off before he gets to work on next year's show.