

# 'The Party Line' poetress returns to rhyme

LIBRARY

And so it was natural that when Ken Armstrong, another community-minded Clarksonian, decided to start a small paper for the area, he should call on Bernice for an intimate column about people.

She was ready and willing — and what better title for such a column, where people were tempted to answer the rural telephone with a "Good morning everybody"

That they should become involved in community activities was inevitable for Ross Millard — as Bernice described him — could no more keep his talents to himself than he could indulge in levitation. He was a singer, writer, producer, organizer — and an extrovert.

## THE PARTY LINE

Once settled, they were happy in Clarkson—almost ridiculously so—for they fitted into the community as if it had been built around them.

They came and saw, and rented what Bernice describes as the 'loveliest cottage' hidden away in some deep woods not far from where Birchwood and Clarkson road now intersect. Next door to them J. F. B. Livesay, who had organized and directed the activities of Canadian Press, had his six-acre estate. A near neighbor was Mazo de la Roche.

The real beginning, as far as Bernice Millard is concerned, was when she and her husband moved to Clarkson in the late forties. Her husband was Ross Millard, the well known radio personality, who died in 1964.

You meet a woman, distinguished in her field, who is both delightfully friendly and charming. You find that a lot of her ideas mesh with yours, that you have been through similar experiences, and you get such a kick talking to her that you clean forget about the story.

... the problem again, I thought.

You go to meet somebody, intending to write a strictly factual story about them. And then what happens?

MILLARD, Bernice



Bernice Millard

The paper ran for three months, then pressure of his regular business compelled Ken Armstrong to give it up, much to the distress of the subscribers, some of who, tackled Bernice.

"Couldn't you continue running it as a little weekly bulletin?" they asked. "There's a real demand locally for the kind of news you have been providing..."

Barkus was willing. Bernice called together a town hall-type meeting where she found enthusiastic support for the venture, and thus encouraged, she started her news letter — The Party Line. That was in 1951.

She ran the paper alone until 1955.

"It was wonderful," she told me. "Never was a paper so enthusiastically produced and received. On press night 15 or 16 of us would gather at Cliff McNair's, who did the printing for us, and distribute it to the subsc-

ribers..."

Bernice Millard has all the qualifications which go to make a good newspaperwoman — foremost of which, perhaps, is a lively sense of humor. After leaving high school and taking a couple of years at art college, she worked as a commercial artist, supplying drawings for Eaton's catalogue. Her specialty was shoes — all kinds of them.

## SHOES, SHOES, SHOES

After leaving Brigid's, the house which handled Eaton's catalogue, she became a freelance illustrator, still doing shoes — but mostly for Simpson's.

Perhaps she found illustrating shoes too pedestrian a task — I do not know — but whatever the reason, she decided to take a two-year non-credit course at University studying psychology, philosophy and literature. It

## by Arthur Lowe

was then she began to write and among the things which appeared under her name in various periodicals were short, humorous poems.

The perceptive editors of this journal, occasionally recognizing a good thing when it is thrust under their noses, will carry on where The Party Line left off. Beginning this week with a tribute — we think — to a gentleman named Pierre, The Mississauga News will carry a weekly poem by

Bernice.

In 1955 Bernice decided to lighten her load by shedding some of her responsibility for The Party Line.

In 1957 they sold their house and moved to Arizona, but the change of climate appeared to benefit Ross very little and the upshot was they returned to Clarkson after some months and Ross had the satisfaction of living his last years in the country he had come to love.

Upon their return to Clarkson they discovered that The Party Line had been mismanaged to a point where it had lost its proud standing with both readers and advertisers.

"There was nothing I could do to bring it back," Bernice said, "and I never really understood the reason for its failure."

In due course it folded, but the lady who was its inspiration will henceforth share her inspiration with the readers of The Mississauga News.

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