

Express-O-Gram

Barns destroyed, cattle relocated in tornado aftermath

HAPPY 65TH TO JEANNE AND JOHNNY

A belated but heartfelt congratulations to Jeanne and Johnny on the occasion of their 65th wedding anniversary. Indeed they have much to celebrate with their daughter Judy, her children and their children.

The Jungs are known to most of the community for their landmark restaurant, The Capitol Café, downtown, where they served the community for over 50 years.

They have been family friends for many decades. Dad had an alter-office in his favourite booth at the Capitol. He would read his daily newspapers every morning over coffee there, joining the other regulars who included at times Dick Van Patter, Don Palmer, Judge Fred Barnum, and Judge Marietta Roberts among many others. Local families had regular weekly night-out dinners of Chinese food at the Capitol, once an exotic treat. The late Murray Hodgkin, former arena manager, another regular, noted they had the best coconut cream pie anywhere.

A highlight of young adult years would be to order a couple of eggrolls and a cocktail and perhaps slip a quarter into the mini-juke box which was mounted to the wall at the end of the table and had rigid, hinged pages inside, behind curved glass, columns of musical selections on each.

It was a great town cultural centre and the Jung family served their community faithfully for years, night and day, including Christmas Day.

We had great affinity for them and they for us, always interested in what we were doing and the family. I would guess they were the first adults we saw as friends on a first-name basis and have always been thankful for that friendship.

We hope the community has been a great home for them and join many others in wishing them the very best at their current home at Aylmer Retirement Residence, a few blocks further east of the restaurant on Talbot Street East.

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by Veronica Reiner
Local Journalism Initiative reporter

A tornado that touched down near Belmont on Wednesday, June 10, destroyed barns, felled trees and hydro poles, and forced the relocation of cattle. It was one of two tornadoes in the area that night.

Environment Canada confirmed that an EF1 tornado with maximum winds of 150 kilometres an hour touched down near Belmont at about 8:30 p.m., June 10.

“There was damage to trees and farm buildings,” said Gerald Cheng, a warning-preparedness meteorologist with Environment Canada.

The path length was 18 kilometres with a maximum width of 250 metres, which was considered “narrow.” The EF1 category covers tornadoes with winds from 135-175 km/h and is considered “moderate damage.” The scale ranges from EF0 to EF5, with EF5 the most devastating.

The Belmont-area tornado destroyed several barns, including the rear wall of a cattle barn at Pettit family farm Mistyglens Holsteins on Yorke Line.

The Crinklaw family’s barn on Harrietsville Drive in Thames Centre also suffered extensive damage. There was a downed hydro pole along Wilson Line and trees knocked over in the aftermath. No injuries were reported.

“Tornado damage is usually very localized,” said Mr. Cheng.

For the Pettit family, the tornado warning issued by Environment Canada came about 20 minutes after the rear wall of

their dairy barn was blown off. “There was no warning. Basically it was just like that,” said Tom Pettit, snapping his

fingers. “The wind came, then the rain came, and that was it.” The EF1 tornado touched down near Belmont at about

8:30 p.m., while the cell phone notification warning popped up just before 8:50 p.m. By that time, the Pettit family was

already trying to catch their calves, who were spooked by the storm.

About 52 cows were milking in the free-stall barn when the tornado hit. They were unhurt. The damage was mainly contained.

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Suzanne and Tom Pettit were surprised to find the rear wall of their Yorke Line dairy barn completely ripped off by the EF1 tornado on Wednesday, June 10. The main structure will be torn down to the cement and replaced. Demolition

work began on Monday, June 15. The siblings have run Mistyglens Holsteins since 1999. Dozens of cows were sent to a neighbouring dairy farm temporarily. (AE/Veronica Reiner)

Municipal beaches to open June 22

by Rob Perry
of The Aylmer Express

Central Elgin Mayor Sally Martyn announced Thursday, June 11, that municipal beaches in Port Stanley, as well as in Bayham, Malahide and West Elgin, would reopen to the public on Monday, June 22.

In a coordinated move, Grand Bend will also reopen its beach on the same day.

Mayor Martyn said that was to keep any one community from

being overwhelmed by visitors. If only Central Elgin opened, she said in a news conference at the village’s Main Beach, “We’ll have all of London in Port Stanley.”

“We want you to enjoy our beach but do it safely,” she continued. Only beachgoers from the same household should congregate together and stay at least two metres from anyone else.

Washrooms would be open, but would be cleaned only 2

times per day, so beachgoers would have to use the facilities at their own risk.

She encouraged anyone coming to Port Stanley to bring hand sanitizer and even sanitizing wipes.

“We’re asking you to clean up after yourselves,” she added.

Visitors should only go onto the beach if they saw a vacant space at least two metres from anyone else, she said. The municipality would use a website

and portable signs to alert visitors as to how crowded the beach was at any given time.

“You must wait until you have a space to go to,” she stressed.

Volunteer firefighters would patrol the beach as “champions,” encouraging everyone to follow pandemic precautions, she added.

Fire and Rescue Chief Chris McDonough said the use of the firefighters, who would be paid for their time, was an alternative to physical separation systems that had been considered for the beach, but which were either unworkable or too costly.

He expected patrols would be limited to weekends from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. to start, with firefighters working in four-hour shifts.

Elgin Warden David Menzies, mayor of Malahide, in his own announcement about the planned re-opening later on June 11, warned that if pandemic precautions weren’t followed, beaches would be closed again.

Long-term care home outbreak believed caused by lack of discipline

by Rob Perry
of The Aylmer Express

Southwestern Public Health believes an outbreak of COVID-19 at Secord Trails, a long-term care home in Ingersoll, was probably the result of staff members taking off masks in a lunchroom or other gathering space.

The outbreak affected eight staff members but no residents, Southwestern Medical Officer of Health Dr. Joyce Lock said.

Staff members appeared to have been careful around residents, she said, but in some circumstances, such as in a lunchroom, had to take off their protective face masks to eat a meal.

Too many might have been in the room at once, or workers might have sat too close together, she said.

“This situation was a good learning experience for

everybody,” Dr. Lock said. It demonstrated how easily and rapidly COVID-19 could spread if precautions weren’t

followed at all times, as they should be.

“In those moments when we let our guard down, we put ourselves at risk,” she continued, adding all eight staff members have since recovered.

Visits to resume June 18 at long-term care homes

by Rob Perry
of The Aylmer Express

Ontario Premier Doug Ford announced Thursday, June 11, that visits to long-term care homes would be allowed to resume starting Thursday, June 18, but on a “cautious” basis, along with retirement homes and “congregate living” facilities for children, persons with developmental disabilities and those sheltering from gender-based violence.

The province restricted such homes to only “essential” visitors, such as those delivering food and other supplies, in March.

“We’ve been able to keep the vast majority of homes outbreak-free,” Premier Ford said. “This decision, hard as it was to make, was the right decision.”

He was grateful to family members who had given up visits to loved ones. “Your sacrifice will not be forgotten.

“As a result of everyone working together, as a result of

our collective efforts, as a result of our collective sacrifices, today we’re ready to take an important step forward.”

Premier Ford said, “We need families to be able to see their loved ones,” so visits could resume on June 18, as long as the home involved wasn’t in a COVID-19 outbreak.

“These settings are still vulnerable, so we must remain vigilant.”

Long-Term Care Minister Merrilee Fullerton said, “We are seeing the infection numbers stabilize in our long-term care homes, and that is thanks to the tireless efforts of staff, our hospital partners and the Canadian Armed Forces.”

To prevent infection getting into those homes, she said, residents would be limited to one visitor per week, and only in an outdoor setting.

Indoor or outdoor visits could be conducted at retirement homes, she said, with the maximum number of visitors being left to facility manage-

ment to decide.

In either case, she said, visitors must have had a negative medical test for COVID-19 within the last 14 days, pass a screening questionnaire, wash hands with soap and water on arrival and departure, wear a mask and stay in designated areas.

Homes must also have a system for scheduling visits.

Children, Community and Social Services Minister Todd Smith said that those residing in homes for persons with developmental disabilities, in shelters for victims of gender-based violence and in children’s residences must also have tested negative within the last two weeks, submit to a temperature check on arrival, wear masks and conduct visits only outdoors.

He asked all visitors “to please take these guidelines seriously and listen to the staff on site.”



Clockwise from bottom right, Central Elgin Mayor Sally Martyn was joined by Fire and Rescue Chief Chris McDonough, Councillor Dennis Crevits, Cr. Colleen Row, Elgin Ontario Provincial Police Constable Troy Carlson and

Deputy Mayor Tom Marks Thursday, June 11, as she announced Port Stanley’s beaches, along with other municipal beaches in Elgin County, would re-open to the public on Monday, June 22.

(AE/Rob Perry)

COVID-19 back in Elgin

COVID-19 has returned to an Elgin County municipality, with a single new case confirmed by medical testing in Dutton Dunwich, Southwestern Public Health reported on Tuesday, June 16.

St. Thomas continues to have two ongoing confirmed cases.

In Oxford County, three ongoing cases are reported in East Zorra-Tavistock, and one in Tillsonburg.

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tained to the rear wall of the barn, and did not affect other structures on the property. The front of the structure, an office, was unscathed.

"It looks pretty good from the road," noted Tom.

"It's amazing that the cows in there were fine," added Suzanne Pettit. Suzanne and Tom are siblings who have run the farm, Mistyglens Holsteins, since 1999. Total cattle on the farm before the tornado was about 160.

It was Tom's 14-year-old daughter, Maddie, who first spotted the twister, but Tom was slow to believe it. After seeing debris flying around a neighbour's property, he realized she was correct. He scrambled to herd his family towards the basement to take cover.

"We're just lucky it didn't go through the barn," said Tom. "If it had, we would have lost all the cows."

It was not a restful night for the family, who were concerned that the barn could collapse and hurt the cattle. Luckily, the barn remained upright. About 56 cows are now safely housed at their neighbour's farm, the Verhoofs, who also run a dairy operation.

The close proximity allows the Pettits to easily check in with their cattle. The calves remain on the Pettit's property. While the cattle are safe, the structure is a different story.

After visiting with the insurance adjuster on Friday, June 12, the Pettits learned that the structure had twisted and was completely compromised down to the cement. The barn was constructed in May 2012, and the family plans to rebuild the same structure to replace it.

"We're hoping the milk-house area won't have to be completely gutted but they really won't know until they start tearing things apart," said the Pettits. Demolition work began on Monday, June 15.

One silver lining was the outpouring of community support following the situation. Friends and community members helped cut down damaged trees, clear brush, and mend fences so that the heifers could get back on the pasture. Toppled equipment was set upright.

"The support has been fantastic... we have some great neighbours," said Tom.

"It went as smoothly as it could have gone," added Suzanne.

A second tornado touched down in Glencoe, southwest of London, Wednesday night at about 7:50 p.m. The Northern Tornado Project (NTP) of Western University survey team was in the field most of Friday to conduct analysis and assess the damage.

"The max winds are estimated at 130 km/h, which is the top of EF0," said David Sills, executive director of the NTP.

The preliminary conclusion is a mix of tornado and downburst damage over a 25 km by 3 km area.

According to the NTP analysis, the tornado started near Newbury Station and ended just east of Strathburn, travelling just a few kilometres south of Glencoe.

"The damage was mostly to trees though there was significant damage to a very old barn and some damage to sheds and homes," said Mr. Sills.

There was a larger area of light downburst tree damage, and no known injuries or casualties. The NTP will finalize the analysis for this tornado after looking at satellite imagery, but it is expected to not change significantly.

The temperature in the London area that night was up to 24C, and 33 millimetres of rain fell. Although these were the first tornadoes reported in the province this year, Mr. Cheng said such events were not uncommon.

"We do get reports of tornadoes in Southwestern Ontario every year — it is the Tornado Alley of Ontario, unfortunately," he said.

"Especially from late April to early October, there is a chance of it, because we do get a lot of thunderstorms in the area, and some of these thunderstorms are severe."



1. The EF1 tornado tore through the Crinklaw family barn on Harrietsville Drive in Thames Centre the night of Wednesday, June 10. Maximum winds were up to 150 kilometres per hour.
2. Large pieces of the roof could be found among the trees on the Crinklaw property on Harrietsville Drive in the aftermath of the storm on Wednesday, June 10. The two tornadoes that touched down, here in Belmont and another in the Glencoe area, were Ontario's first reported tornadoes this year.
3. Many people helped to clean up the debris at the Crinklaw family farm on Harrietsville Drive just east of Belmont the morning of Thursday, June 11. Part of the barn was destroyed. Large pieces of the barn roof were scattered along the property, and their trampoline was mangled.
4. An emergency road closed sign was put in place along a portion of Wilson Line (between Belmont and Dorchester roads) after the tornado touched down on Wednesday, June 10. Along the path was a downed hydro pole and many felled trees.
5. This group of felled trees was found along an empty property along Wilson Line on Thursday, June 11. An emergency road closed sign was placed on both ends of a portion of this road, from Dorchester to Belmont roads.



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