70 years of Minden memories

by EMILY STONEHOUSE
Editor

When you walk into a home that's filled with memories, warmth, and love, you just know. You can feel it.

Pictures of family members scattering the walls, a collection of baseball caps from over the years, thriving pothos plants hanging lazily out of their pots. "All these plants, they're all from my daughter," said Maxine Snell as she gave me a tour of the place she's called home since 1961.

Maxine celebrated her 87th birthday on June 21. 20 days before that, on June 1, she celebrated 70 years of living in Minden.

"It was June 1, 1953," she said, as she curled up in a blue armchair in her sunny living room, "I was graduating from the business college in Lindsay, and my teacher said she had a good job lined up for me, and told me to go talk to my parents. Well, I was 16 at the time, and I of course wanted to go to a city like Peterborough or Oshawa, but my mother said I'd love Minden, so I went."

She had been offered a position at the Canadian Bank of Commerce as the manager's secretary, before becoming a teller at the facility. The bank building she worked in has since been relocated to become the Sterling Bank, which is now on display at the Minden Hills Cultural Centre and Heritage Village.

"The bank had set up a place for me to board, with Mrs. Edith Welch, which was the house next to the LCBO now in Minden," she said. Maxine shared that she had been living in Minden for a while, when a certain mechanic caught her eye. "He would stare at me every time I'd go by!" As she got to know

Maxine Snell is celebrating calling Minden "home" for the past 70 years. She sat down with the *Times* to share her stories and memories over the years. /EMILY STONEHOUSE Staff

the mysterious mechanic, she shared that he would take her dancing, to the Dominion Hotel, or to the shows at the theatre.

His name was Oswald Snell.

Three years later, the two were married. "He just looked at me one day and said 'I got something for you' and it was a diamond!" she laughed, with a sparkle in her eye, and the ring still wrapped around her finger.

By 1957, the young couple bought their first home together, a log cabin on Bobcaygeon Road for $2000, cash. "We were just happy like two kids," Maxine giggled. She had her

first child, Lorne, shortly after, at the Minden Hospital, which was previously located across from the current Home Hardware in Minden.

As the couple expanded their family with two more children, Mary and Karen, they decided it was time to move. Maxine's father had worked at the mill in Coboconk, so all the wood was sourced from there, and it lines the floors and the walls. "I always wanted carpet, because that's what my brothers had, but Oswald wanted hardwood floors, and said they would be better for my allergies, and I am so glad he talked me into them."

The home still boasts that same hardwood throughout the space, with the floors holding the memories of children running, card parties, and birthdays.

As Maxine shared the many memories that have taken place in her hardwood-laden, cozy home, she eventually shared one memory that happened over Easter Weekend in the year 2000. The weekend Oswald passed away. "We had gone away for the weekend, and he said he wasn't feeling well, so

he stayed home," she shared, with a faraway look as she gently squeezed the blue armchair she sat in. "I can still see him here. This was his chair. This was where he would sit."

Maxine recalled the outpouring of love she felt from the community at Oswald's passing. He was a born and raised local Minden boy, so she had the support of friends, family, and coworkers over his long career in mechanics.

After his passing, Maxine dove into volunteering and community involvement. "I have been busy for a lot of years," she chuckled, "I'm a member of the Minden United Church and the Haliburton County Fair board. Also the Minden Auxiliary, and I do card parties at my home to raise money for them."

Maxine won the Senior of the Year award from the Township of Minden Hills in 2018, in recognition of her "outstanding contributions to the community," reads the plaque. "I thought I was there for my granddaughter, Jennifer!" Maxine laughed, "and then suddenly they're calling my name!" The plaque hangs in her living room, surrounded by family photos and growing plants.

Maxine now has five grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. She remains close with her whole family, planning phone calls, visits, and celebrations together. She believes the secret to aging well is walking all the time. "I am always walking, that's my secret. It's good for you!" the 87-year old shared. She also plays shuffleboard weekly at the Minden Curling Club, and has visits with her friends that include tea and cake.

The greatest part about chatting with Maxine Snell, was the rehashing of all the Minden memories. In this day and age, we are quick to hop online for a query, or reach out to a museum or municipal office to ask a question.

But the real keepers of the truth, the tales, the stories, are the locals. The holders of the memories, and a glimpse into the past.

As Maxine sat in her blue armchair and reflected on 70 years in Minden; her friends she's made, the memories she's created, the children she's raised, she looks content, comfortable, and happy.

It sounds like her mother was right all those years ago. Maxine Snell really does love Minden.