



25th

Anniversary

1954 • 1979



1954 CHARTER EXECUTIVE

Seated left to right: Wilbur Cudney, treasurer; Stuart Kirkland, Vice Gun; Bill McNear, president; Ed Lamarsh, Vice Rod; Bill MacDonald, Secretary. Standing left to right: Harold (Buck) Embury, small bore; Harry Findlay, conservation and progagation; John Embury, policy chairman; Julius Van Biesbrouck, hunting; George Crouchman public relations; Willard Downie, blue rock.



ANNIVERSARY

SOUVENIER EDITION

This edition is dedicated to the memory of club members who are deceased. These members are remembered for their faithfulness, dedication and loyalty which they untiringly gave to our club.

Their devotion to the community, the environment, the ecology, the conservation, the propagation of our wild life and most importantly, our youth, in order that their future activities as sportsmen and gentlemen could be maintained, will never be forgotten.

Their names will always be inscribed in our hearts and minds and on the honour role of the Rondeau Rod and Gun Club.

BOWDEN, (Bud) George
BOWDEN, Clint
CATO, Roy
CLARK, Tom
COUNTRYMAN, Patrick
CROUCHMAN, George
DENNIS, Jack
DENNIS, (Pop) Dick
FARREL, Lee
HEATHERINGTON, Russ
HILL, Julius
HORNICK, Art
JORDON, Reg
LABADIE, Harry
LaMARSH, Edward

LOBBESTAEL, Edward
MARSHALL, Bill
McINTYRE, Archie
McNEAR, (Pop) Fred
McNEAR, Bob
MORRISH, Bert
RAKUS, Louis
REYNOLDS, Ray
RICHARDS, Harry (Jr.)
SCHWEMLER, Lyle
SLOCOMBE, Jim
SMITH, Jack
THOMPSON, Gord
VERMEERSCH, Bob
VLASSCHAERT, Richard
WILSON, Walter

“ONCE UPON A TIME”

I decided to begin this story like a fairy tale, after spending several weeks reading the past history of our club. It is the history of a fairy tale come true. It is the story of a group of young men from the Blenheim district, who gathered together with an idea, an idea to form an organization, to promote the propagation and conservation of the wild life in this area, not only for today but for future generations to come. Their plan, through the cooperation of government authorities, was to restock game and fish in the area of Rondeau Bay, to promote interest in competitive shooting, including blue rock, small bore, pistol, and eventually archery. They also planned to give constructive instructions to youths in this district on the care and safe use of firearms.

This group of young men met at the home of Harry Pegg on Talbot Street West in Blenheim, 25 years ago and formed the nucleus of our club as it is today. Those present at that memorable occasion were: John Embury, Louis Rakus, Pete Ryan, John McNear, Willard Downie, Gordon Warwick, Stuart Kirkland and Harry Pegg. That evening, on December 1, 1954, marked the beginning of an organization of men that has held together for 25 years, an organization that has become well known throughout the county and is synonymous with the preservation of wild life and nature for future generations.

It seems only fitting to continue this story by recounting the minutes of those first meetings at which the plans were formulated and our constitution also formulated: On December 1, 1954, a meeting was held at the home of Bill MacDonald, Talbot St. West, Blenheim, for the purpose of forming a rod and gun club. Ten members were present.

A motion was made by Harry Pegg and seconded by Willard Downie, that Bill McNear be chairman of this organization.

A motion was made by John Embury, seconded by Pete Ryan, that Bill MacDonald be secretary treasurer.

A motion was made by Stu Kirkland, seconded by Pete Ryan, that each member present may sponsor two new members at the discretion of the other members.

A motion was made by Bill McNear, seconded by Pete Ryan, that a definite zoning area be established.

A motion was made by Pete Ryan, seconded by John McNear, that the club be named the Rondeau Rod and Gun Club.

A motion was made by Willard Downie, seconded by Louis Rakus, that the Rondeau Rod and Gun Club be publicized and that Harry Holmes be called upon for the article.

A motion was made by John McNear, seconded by Gord Warwick that the initiation fee be \$5.00, which may be paid within a period of six months. Amendment to the motion, by Pete Ryan, that on payment of \$5.00, membership cards be issued, which will allow member full voting and club privileges.

Second amendment, that all monies paid to be forfeited to the club in case of any withdrawal of membership.

A motion was made by Willard Downie, seconded by Gord Warwick, that the next meeting be held on Tuesday, December 7, 1954.

Meeting Closed.

There you have the nucleus for the forming of the Rondeau Rod and Gun Club. As you can see, from its very beginning it was bound to be a success. These men were well organized, dedicated and sincere, in their desire to organize and form a conservation club which would try and guarantee and preserve the future of this great land of ours. True Canadians, who had only one desire, which was to ensure that the youth of the future had the same opportunities as those which they were enjoying 25 years ago.

It would be a long, drawn out process to put into print all of the minutes of the past 25 years, but in reading through 25 years of local history and accomplishments of one small segment of our heritage, I am proud and I am sure from my observations you will be, to have been and remain a part of such a club. Words could not begin to recount the numerous deeds that this organization has given to the community and this land.

I am going to endeavor to recount the highlights of the past 25 years and I hope you will find these as interesting as I did, in digging them out. Throughout this story, I will mention different names and I do not wish to slight anyone. You must realize that on reading through 25 years of history, it is possible to overlook certain instances and also it is not possible to mention everyone who has contributed over the years. Literally, hundreds of people have been involved with our club, and their fleeting contribution has been greatly appreciated and has given, to our club, the push that has been needed to keep it going. To those of you who may not get mentioned, by name, a heartfelt thanks from your club. Deep down in your heart, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you contributed and can be proud to say that at one time you were an active member of the Rondeau Rod and Gun Club.

On January 11, 1955, the first election of officers was held and our club was off and running. The first officers were:

President.....	Bill McNear
Vice President Rod.....	Ed LaMarsh
Vice President Gun.....	Stuart Kirkland
Treasurer.....	Wilbur Cudney
Secretary.....	Bill MacDonald
Membership, Constitution and Policy Chairman.....	John Embury
Public Relations and Newsletter.....	George Crouchman
Small Bore	Harold Embury
Hunting Parties.....	Julius VanBiesbrouck
Conservation and Propagation.....	Harry Findlay
Blue Rock.....	Willard Downie

There you have the executive and their committee which were elected from the 29 members present at the first election. Of the charter members present at that time, three are still active in our club, they are, John Embury, Harold (Buck) Embury and Julius VanBiesbrouck.

A club such as ours, cannot progress without help and understanding from the community and surrounding district in which it hopes to function. The Rondeau Rod and Gun Club received this help and understanding throughout its formative years and right

at the present time, we function only with the help of those organizations and people who appreciate what we are trying to preserve for our area. Again, I will probably not mention all who have participated in our success, it would be easier to say, I cannot find where anyone has tried to hinder our progress and success. On behalf of the club, I wish to thank all of the service clubs and people of the community for their help and understanding.

On January 25, 1955, the Rondeau Rod and Gun Club started holding their regular meetings at the Blenheim Legion Hall and this was to continue, at no charge, until September of 1959. In 1955, the bean system was adopted for the acceptance of new members. Joe Stewart was nominated as fishing chairman and instituted the annual fishing derby, which is still carried on today. Things were really tough that year, a motion to pay someone \$2.50 a week, for cleaning, was turned down but a motion of \$2.00 was accepted. Gord Warwick started the youth movement and began teaching young people in safe gun handling and was able to obtain the use of the Blenheim High School rifle range for practice.

In 1956, there was a motion put forth, by Bill Fenton, to turn the McGeachy pond, on the outskirts of Erieau, into a wild life preserve. This became a reality in 1978. Land was leased at this time for blue rock shooting, at a cost of \$200.00 per year, \$25.00 down, the rest when we got it. Building fund was set up with \$600.00 and committee formed. Their job was to stay with this project until completed. The committee was: Pete Ryan, Julius VanBiesbrouck, Lorne Wright, Tom Brown, Bill Fenton and Bill McNear.

In 1958, building plans were formulated, land was purchased and Don Irwin was to supervise the building of our new club house. This was the year that weed control was started in Rondeau Bay under the chairmanship of Tom Brown. You can recall, in those days, you could hardly cross Rondeau Bay because of the weeds. Channels had to be cut, by machine, in order to go fishing. Today, you can hardly find a weed in the bay.

What a year, 1959, our own club house, built with our own hands and plenty of volunteer help. This was a milestone and we have been growing ever since, from 800 square feet in 1959 to nearly 5000 square feet today. Tom Clark was the president at the time. Each member was issued a key. Pat Countryman became our first maintenance chairman for building and property. Do you remember 1980? He flower fund was started. Up to five years dues collected in advance for building fund. Dinner dance held at Glen Gordon Manor, what a place, an outstanding profit of \$2.00 was made that evening. Crests were issued to new members in 1961.

In 1962, Danny Round started the children's fishing derby in Erieau. I sure remember that, fishing from both docks from eight in the morning till four in the afternoon. Good thing we had lots of help. We sure fed a lot of food to a pile of kids that day. Julius VanBiesbrouck and I were still trying to sort our prizes and declare the winners at eight that evening. The children's fishing derby still goes on, but there have been some changes made. A well was drilled in 1962, we finally got water. We are really growing, electric traps were installed, guest book set up, we could finally have visitors, what a year.

We bought a printing machine in 1963, raised the bar prices to 30¢ in 1964: What! 30¢, now whose complaining? Appointed Bill MacDonald, to obtain liquor license. Telephone was installed in 1965. Oh! Oh! Here's that cleaning again: What! \$5.00 a week? Really getting big time, 125 members now. Started a game farm and obtained a license to operate.

We must have had money in 1967, we built a vault, started horseshoes; I remember the horseshoes, never heard of any money. It was standard procedure to accept the treasurer's report as read and to pay our bills when the money became available. Chemical weed control was tried in 1968, by the Department of Lands and Forest. It must have worked, for there are no more weeds. Wild game supper, some of you will recall, advertised, all you can eat and then some, come on out, bring a friend, only \$2.00. Doug Campbell was pushing for a liquor license, we know he succeeded. Steward's committee formed to hire a bartender, write up of job was done by Bill Gardiner, Doug Campbell, and Harry Richards. These men came up with two people to do the job, Reg Jordon and Lionel (Blink) Rumble. Blink is still with us today, in fact, he is our right hand man. We sold the weed cutter in 1970, no more weeds. We got ourselves a Chaplain, raised the dues to \$10.00, no reflection on the Chaplain. Built a new addition, lounge, ventilating system and wired the building for sound. That's the year we had the big tent for the Chicken Barbecue.

In 1971, we admitted 18 year olds to our club as regular members.

Received a shuffle board, donated by Murray Knight. Attended a meeting to promote tourism in our area. Had our insurance raised to \$21,000.00. Dug our pond in 1972, used fill for backstop for target practice.

In 1973, Blenheim held its first summerfest, and Doug Campbell arranged for us to have a booth and sell fish and chips. We started our \$5.00 draw on meeting nights, to try and promote attendance. In 1974, there was a motion made to spend \$25,000.00 on further expansion, for an indoor range. The long sought after Family Day was finally started in 1975, by Danny Round, membership raised to 150 members, started new rifle and archery range and initiated Life membership. Blink Rumble was made an honorary member in

1976. The club sponsored a Pork Barbecue in 1977, using both the Czech Hall and our own club house to raise funds for the Blenheim Arena. Members' name badges were procured by Larry Pope and a rack was built by Bill Gardiner, so that members can be identified. We were really growing, time was when you knew everyone by name, now we have to check their I. D. The range was officially opened in 1978 and is receiving some use, we have the enthusiasm, we need the participation.

Well, I finally made it to 1979, our 25th anniversary year. The club is still on the move, a new patio is near completion, carpeting installed in range, you have to see this club to realize its progress. Stay away for one month, when you return you will wonder what has happened, things have changed. Continuing improvement, that's our slogan

and all by dedicated members, volunteering their time and energy to make a club that everyone is proud to be a part of. This club is one that you are proud to bring a friend to. It has sprung from a humble beginning, in one man's basement to what it is today, second to none in our whole area. I have not only been a participant over the years but I have been an observer. Naturally, mine is only one man's opinion, but it has been an interesting observation and there is no way that I can recall every incident or highlight, but I will attempt to show the reader that this is not only a working club but also a fun club. There was a time, one night at around 4 a.m., when the police, making a building check, discovered the door unlocked and the lights on. They proceeded to go inside to check things out and found someone curled up on the floor, sleeping. Having thought they had captured the culprit of a breakin, they rudely awakened the intruder, who immediately jumped up and ran to the kitchen, threw open the doors to the oven, turned to the startled officers, with a sheepish grin and said, "Thanks fellows, you were just in time, we got a dinner tonight and I was just watching my ribs."

From our early beginning, we had some time to wait until we could operate in a strictly legal manner. So we had to work from the garage or the car trunk, naturally we had some close encounters, but even through the big raids that some members will recall, we managed to survive with a few good laughs. Our yearly Halloween parties have been well attended by many people every year. Many a time we have been fooled by members and friends who have dressed for the occasion. Then there was the one member who always voted against, he just wanted to be different, we just never paid any attention. He was our best customer.

Then there have been the hunting parties over the years. What a get together these have been, everyone taking their turn at cooking their favourite recipes, raccoon, muskrat and beans. Boy, have we put a lot of beans away over the years, I didn't know there was that many ways to murder a bean.

The card parties have been something else; I don't think there is a club or group in this district that hasn't given us a beating. Don't forget, we beat some of them once, but the lunches and the get togethers have made it all worthwhile.

Election nights have always been big affairs, the competition over the years has always been great and well participated in. These couldn't be commented on without mentioning Gord Laurie and Doc McNeil who have acted as scrutineers for our elections for as long as I can remember. The Blenheim News Tribune has given much to our club over the years with pictures and news write ups, friends like this you need. You can't mention elections without going on to say, we have to install the lucky winners. For many years we could count on old "Buck" to see us through, lately he is giving some of the rest of us a chance and every year brings promise of something different.

We have, over the years, done almost anything to raise funds, dances, food booths, peddle peanuts and "Yes", raffles. John Embury started our first raffle with a boat and motor, way back when? Since then, we have raffled everything but the kitchen sink, colour T. V. 's, stereo systems, mink hats, guns, knives, fishing tackle, hams and last but not least, those beautiful glass turkeys. All of this has helped make us self sufficient and contributed with the help of all members to help us progress to where we are today.

In the past years, since we started our youth training and summer camp programs, we have averaged 33 boys and girls every year, even if we had to drive up and down the streets of Blenheim, finding young people who wanted to go camping. It seems to me they wanted a big crowd to practice their cooking on, this is probably why so many of the young people who grew up with our club outings have such strong stomachs, after eating that cooking, they could take anything. The members recall the camping trips long after they have gone by and many a meeting night you can hear them recalling their experiences, which even I wouldn't dare put into print.

I have to mention the banks, have we needed them, between our bank loans and bond issues. I can't remember a year when we haven't been in debt, it seems our club flourished on trouble, the farther we got in debt, the harder everyone seems to work. Just when it seems we are getting in the clear and everyone is starting to slack off, someone comes up with a brain wave that puts us back in the red and everyone starts into work again.

Now for the ladies, "God Bless Em", we might be bad boys once in a while, but when the club needs help, you can count on the girls. Just ask them, they will give their all, "Well not quite all." Parent drives, driving the kids around, setting tables, decorating the club, cooking, helping prepare food, like peeling two bags of potatoes, skinning a bag of onions, mixing stuffing for a half dozen pigs ("four legged, that is"), baking cakes and cookies, when our "Cookie Girl" gets on the phone, watch out. Thanks girls, you are remembered and very much appreciated. I know I haven't mentioned all the things you do to help our club, but I hope you get the general idea. We love you one and all.

On reading this account of our history, I am sure it will bring back fond memories of years gone by, to both present and past members. I could not begin to recall all of the pleasant things that have occurred over the last 25 years, but I am sure on reading through this account, you will have many fond recollections. Invitations are being sent out to all past and present members as we are planning a full day of entertainment. We are looking forward to seeing all of you at our new club, many of you will travel many miles, but on this our gala celebration, the trip will be worthwhile in meeting old pals, discussing the good old days and meeting new friends. In closing, I would like to leave you with these words of wisdom and dedication from our President:

Fellow sportsmen, we gather together in the common cause of sportsmanship and good fellowship. Our aims and objectives are the furthering of conservation and propagation. Let us all as sportsmen uphold these aims and try to guide the misguided towards our goal. Do not despise those who do not understand and practice our aims and objectives, but rather, through patience and understanding, lead them into our fold, to teach them to preserve nature for future generations. Let us take our youth by the hand and train them in the appreciations of God's Great Gift• nature. Through our youth movement, let us teach them the Do's and Don'ts of good sportsmanship, of conservation and propagation, so that they may become a part of our way of life. Let us extend our• selves to the utmost and take a boy or girl fishing, hunting, hiking or camping at every opportunity. Let us conduct ourselves as sportsmen and gentlemen

and no matter how bitter the pill, hold no malice towards your fellow man. Let us all join in the furtherance of our aims and objectives and leave pettiness to the misguided.

This is our story; it contains 25 years of nostalgia and information. I hope it has helped you recall many fond memories and friendships, I have only gleaned over the finer points, I'll let your imagination do the rest. I have felt it has been an honor and a pleasure to have been asked by my fellow club members to write this story, my only hope and desire is that it has met all of your expectations.

*Yours in Sportsmanship,
Danny Round,
Past President
1978*

PAST PRESIDENTS

*Bill McNear, 1954-1955
Wilbur Cudney, 1956 - 1963
John Embury, 1957
Julius VanBiesbrouck. 1958
Tom Clark, 1959
Tom Brown, 1960 - 1961 - 1966
Gordon Warwick, 1962
Walter Pepper, 1964
Bill MacDonald, 1965
Douglas Campbell, 1967*

*Harold Embury, 1968
Jim Gardiner, 1969
Kenneth Holdaway, 1970
Bill Gardiner, 1971- 1972
Tom Irwin, 1973
Larry Pope, 1974 - 1975
Percy Pickering, 1976 - 1977
Danny Round, 1978
Tom McNear, 1979*

HONOURARY MEMBERS

*Carlyle Martin
Jack Carpenter*

*Rev. Dr. Ronald Hunt
Lionel (Blink) Rumble*

1979 EXECUTIVE

*President- Tom McNear
Past President – Danny Round
Vice Gun - Alan Bedford
Vice Rod - Bob Gardiner
Treasurer- Stuart Mason
Secretary - Hugh Carrothers
Entertainment - Julius Van Biesbrouck
Blue Rock - Brian Owen
Membership - Larry Callow*

*Canteen - Percy Pickering
Conservation - Jim Gardiner
Sports - Larry Pope
Building - Bill Gardiner
Hunting - Dan McLay
Archery- Tony Moore
Property - Bob Mcilroy
Small Bore - Glen Spooner
Publicity - Barry Van Biesbrouck*