

# ecfwa

Eastern Canada Farm Writers' Association

Summer 2003

# the nib

## Canadian Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow takes firm roots

By Kim Waalderbos

Fresh off a successful first year, the University of Guelph's Canadian Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow (CanACT) club has laid the groundwork for reaching even greater heights.

CanACT, the first international chapter of the U.S.-based National Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow (ACT), was kick-started in late January when a group of about 25 University of Guelph undergraduates became inaugural members. Since then, it has hosted seven interactive evenings with industry professionals as guest speakers, while establishing and maintaining a consistent membership of keen, young agricultural communicators and successfully securing endorsement from the university community.

### inside the nib

Prez Sez	2
Photo tips	2
New horizons	3
Niblets	4
AGM highlights	4
CFWF 2004	4

Members of the Eastern Canada Farm Writers' Association accounted for five of seven speakers. Cathy Chamberlain of Growmark, Michael Chapman of Timeline Communications, Andrew Douglas of *Country Guide Ontario*, Dennis Guy of the Ontario AgRadio Network and CanACT faculty advisor Owen Roberts, wearing his "Urban Cowboy" *Guelph Daily Mercury* columnist hat – along with *Guelph Tribune* editor Chris Clark and Macmillan Marketing account executive Tova Davidson – were instrumental in providing budding professional agricultural communicators with role models in the industry.

At the CanACT wrap-up meeting in April, a new slate of officers was elected to lead the direction of CanACT in the coming year. CanACT was fortunate to secure endorsement and start-up funding from the Students' Federation of the Ontario Agricultural College, and



Inaugural CanACT members met at the University of Guelph in January.

continues to draw interest from both Aggies and non-Aggies alike.

This summer promises to be memorable for CanACT members participating in the ACT annual conference in Kansas City, Missouri. Held in conjunction with the Agricultural Communicators in Education (ACE) conference, CanACT members will have the opportunity to learn from and network with numerous industry professionals.

For more information, check out the CanACT website at <http://www.uoguelph.ca/~canact> and the National ACT website at <http://natact.ifas.ufl.edu/>

*Kim Waalderbos is a second-year Aggie, and 2003-2004 president of CanACT.*

# Prez Sez...

John Greig  
ECFWA President

.....  
Editor  
Ontario Farmer  
Publications



Times are never dull in agriculture reporting. Foreign animal disease, nutrient management legislation and trade are filling the pages of our publications in the usually content-starved planting time period.

These issues have given communicators more work too, as they attempt to engage the general public.

Crises in agriculture challenge the industry, but they also challenge farm writers. This is our chance to push ourselves professionally, to try some new things with hard news coverage.

Few of our members, other than those in broadcast, report the agriculture news daily. For the rest of us, the weeklies, or the monthlies or the twice-yearlies, fast moving issues like the BSE case in Alberta require some creativity. Not only do we risk not having the latest news as it is going in the paper, but by the time the paper is printed and on the streets a few days later, the situation could drastically have changed. And that's for those of us working on weeklies.

As a professor once told me, competing with the dailies means

you just have to do it better. The key to this in agriculture reporting is to focus on and serve your community of interest. Give them the news they didn't hear anywhere else. Take the time to tell the whole story. That's where we in the less-frequent agricultural media can excel.

Pushing ourselves professionally has become a greater part of ECFWA's mandate, mostly on the back of the increasingly popular professional development seminars. This year we hope to bring the number of seminars back up to three. Let an executive member know if you have ideas you would like to see at those seminars.

The next year and a half will be a busy one for the organization, with our first bus tour in years and the newly commenced planning for the 2004 Canadian Farm Writers' Federation convention in the Windsor area.

We have a dynamic new executive with a nice balance of journalists and communicators, "experienced" and new faces. I'm looking forward to seeing what we can accomplish.

## Seminar highlights: Timeless photography tips

Earlier this year, we held a professional development seminar on "Moving beyond the head shot" with Guelph photographer Ross Davidson-Pilon. Here are some tips to keep in mind, from the session.

1. Put your subjects at ease. It only takes one 60th of a second to snap a photo.
2. People are more at ease with something in their hand.
3. Look for three-dimensional pictures with something in the foreground and background.
4. When you move people closer together it begins to elicit emotion – you might get a smile so be ready and in focus.
5. Develop hand signals to help orchestrate people in shots.
6. Try to have your background figured out before everyone arrives.
7. Remember the rule of thirds, divide the scene but don't put the horizon in the middle.
8. Once you get beyond the technical part of photography, focus on what you really want to communicate with the picture.
9. You don't need a fancy camera to take great pictures.
10. Zoom lenses are great but don't spend too much time zooming and miss the opportunity for the picture.
11. Tips on freezing shots:
  - 1/125 can freeze walking,
  - 1/200 can freeze running,
  - 1/500 can freeze a race car.
12. Don't be afraid to take chances with digital!

### 2003 ECFWA Membership Cards

They're late...but they're on their way. Watch your mailbox.  
Any questions, contact Jane Robinson or Karen Lewis.

# New horizons for Michael Chapman

By Carrie Corlett

Well-respected agri-television personality Michael Chapman has signed-off *Town & Country Ontario* as a full-time writer/producer. After 26 years as a communicator with the Ontario Public Service, Chapman retired from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food (OMAF) in March.

He and his partner Chris Szabo have teamed up to form Timeline Communications, specializing in communications planning, writing, media training and video production.

"I'm very excited about venturing forth into the private sector, putting my years of experience in a variety of communications positions to work," says Chapman.

Chapman's career has its roots in radio production. In 1972, he worked as an announcer and news reporter for an FM station in his home town of Sault Ste. Marie before moving to Toronto to attend university. He graduated from Ryerson in 1976 with a degree in Radio and Television Arts.

He joined OMAF in 1977 to design a radio studio for the ministry's broadcast services unit, then located in Johnston Hall at the University of Guelph. Two years later, he was broadcasting from the same studio he designed. Chapman produced a radio program called *Farm News*, which was syndicated to over 40 radio stations across Ontario. He produced and hosted a number of other programs, including *Agri-Pulse*, an up-beat magazine show; *Table Talk*, focusing on consumer news; *Growing Together* with gardening tips; and 30-second pub-

lic service announcements on farm safety.

In 1987, Chapman returned to Toronto to work as manager of the Queen's Park Media Studio in the Provincial Legislative Building. Two years later, he became communications coordinator for OMAF's relocation to Guelph. Chapman regularly produced videos and wrote "Memos-on-the-Move" to keep ministry staff up-to-date on the progress of the new government building in Guelph and the relocation process. He also produced a video about Guelph and arranged guided bus tours for ministry staff.

With the ministry's relocation project completed, Chapman became a writer/producer with *Town & Country Ontario*, a weekly half-hour television program produced by OMAF in Guelph. Over the past five years, he has produced more than 200 stories for the television program, as well as many video productions on a variety of agricultural issues.

Chapman has received many awards for his work from such organizations as the Canadian Farm

Writers' Federation and the international organization, Agricultural Communicators in Education (ACE), who awarded him the Broadcasting Award of Excellence and the Outstanding Professional Skills Award.

Chapman pioneered an OMAF / University of Guelph partnership project to teach students of the agricultural communication class about television writing and production. In this landmark project, students produce news stories about university research projects for broadcast on *Town & Country Ontario*.

His colleague on this project, agricultural communications instructor Owen Roberts, praised Chapman's dedication and teaching abilities. "This has been an extremely successful pioneering exercise and I believe it's brought real value to the class," says Roberts. OMAF agrees, and has confirmed that Chapman will continue with this project in the fall.

Chapman's colleagues at *Town & Country Ontario* wish him well and hold him in high regard. "I think he has journalism in his blood," says producer Fred Forster. "To me, it's the way he networks, his people skills, his facility for making everyone feel that they have something interesting to say, a story to tell – and that he truly finds everyone interesting."

## ***ECFWA 2003/2004 executive***

**President:** John Greig, *Ontario Farmer*

**Past-President:** Andrew Douglas, *Country Guide*

**1st Vice-President:** Carol Pilley, Ginty Jocius & associates

**2nd Vice-President:** Marilyn White, *Canadian Poultry*

**Secretary-Treasurer:** Karen Lewis, *Adculture Group*

**Newsletter Editor:** Jane Robinson, *AdFarm*

**Directors:** Frances Anderson, *Ontario Farmer*; John Beardsley, CKNX Radio; Chrystal Boudreau, Fleishman Hillard; Jamie Reaume, *The Grower*; Lilian Schaer, *Ontario Pork*

## ...Niblets...

Joanne Bregman married Harvey Osborne on May 3. She and her husband live in Teeswater, and Joanne can be reached at:

19 Brownlee St. S., P.O. Box 299  
Teeswater, ON N0G 2S0

Michael Chapman can now be reached at Timeline Communications (see story on page three):

120 Country Club Drive, Unit 12  
Guelph, ON N1E 3K7  
timeline@sentex.net

Veteran farm writer John Schmidt recently published *From Barnyards to Boardrooms* – a chronicle of the Ayr, Ontario native's 60-year farm writing career. To order a copy, send a \$25 cheque (payable to John Schmidt) – including your mailing address – to either address:

John P. Schmidt  
40 Scott Street  
Ayr, ON N0B 1E0

or  
John T. Schmidt  
RR #1

Standard, AB T0J 3G0

Postmark your CFWF awards entries by Friday, July 25 for your chance at the spotlight and some prize money! For more info, contact Jane Robinson at (519) 763-1957 x 228 or jane.robinson@adfarmon-line.com

## Annual meeting highlights

### ECFWA struts its stuff in Stratford

The ECFWA annual meeting shifted to Stratford this year, and judging by the turnout, the move was a good one. There were three key events during the day in late April: revising the constitution, "What do you make of the media" farm panel, and the luncheon guest speaker author Barbara MacLean.

We can all proudly say that the ECFWA constitution has entered the 21st century, thanks to the efforts of sole committee member Bernard Tobin. It will be posted on the cfwf.ca web site for future reference and late-night browsing.

All ears were perked and pens ready when the three members of the farm panel began listing the agricultural publications they regularly read, why they read them and what they think is missing. Some interesting food for thought for all types of ag communicators in the audience.

The warm lunch buffet was rounded out with the words of Barbara MacLean – sheep farmer and author of *Lambsquarters: Scenes From A Handmade Life*. MacLean shared her experiences of learning to farm, and then writing about it, as she read a number of passages from the book.

A new executive was also voted in, and a complete listing is on page three.

## Can't wait for Windsor

### CFWF 2004 set for southwestern Ontario

The CFWF annual conference is coming to the Windsor, Ontario area in the fall of 2004. Conference co-chairs Gary Struthers and Adele Pelland are ready to roll. If you're interested in joining a committee – programs, sponsorships, tours, etc. – please contact Gary (gary.struthers@ofa.on.ca) or Adele (adele.pelland@omaf.gov.on.ca). It's a great opportunity to volunteer, get to know more of your ECFWA members and help show the rest of the membership a great slice of agriculture, Ontario style.

*the nib* is published for members of the Eastern Canada Farm Writers' Association.

Please submit information to the editor:  
Jane Robinson  
Phone (519) 763-3293 ~ Fax (519) 763-2615  
E-mail: writers@mgl.ca

Check out the CFWF web site at [www.cfwf.ca](http://www.cfwf.ca)

#### ECFWA 2003/2004 Executive

*President* • John Greig  
*Past President* • Andrew Douglas  
*1st Vice-President* • Carol Pilley  
*2nd Vice-President* • Marilyn White  
*Secretary-Treasurer* • Karen Lewis  
*Newsletter Editor* • Jane Robinson  
*Directors* • Frances Anderson, John Beardsley, Chrystal Boudreau, Jamie Reaume, Lilian Schaeer