



THE NEWS

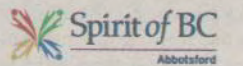
ABBOTSFORD · MISSION



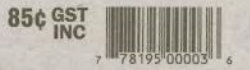
HOMETOWN HEROICS

It was Abbotsford native David Van der Gulik to the rescue for the Heat, scoring the decisive goals in a shootout in San Antonio and in overtime in Houston **A17**

TUESDAY
JANUARY 5, 2010



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Government 'abuse'



Bob Geddes 'survived' Woodlands Institution. Now he's being denied compensation for the abuse he suffered there. **A5**

JOHN VAN PUTTEN Abbotsford News

Bob Geddes of Abbotsford is among 1,600 former residents of Woodlands Institution in New Westminster who were part of a class-action lawsuit against the provincial government. A settlement is being reached, however, some 500 people will be excluded from compensation, including Geddes.

LASTING IMPACT

Charity organizations have played a large role in helping a family deal with the aftermath of a crash **A14**



NEW YEAR'S SURPRISE

The arrival of their New Year's baby was not expected by an Abbotsford couple **A4**

TRAGEDY STRIKES

Three people were killed in accidents before and after New Year's Day **A11**

Letters **A9**
Sports **A17**
Viewpoint **A8**
CityLiving **A14**
Classifieds **A19**

Hallmark Communities
RETIREMENT LIVING

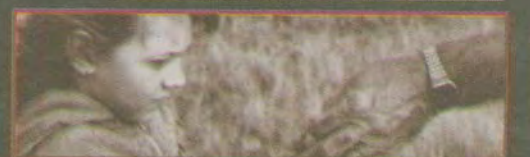


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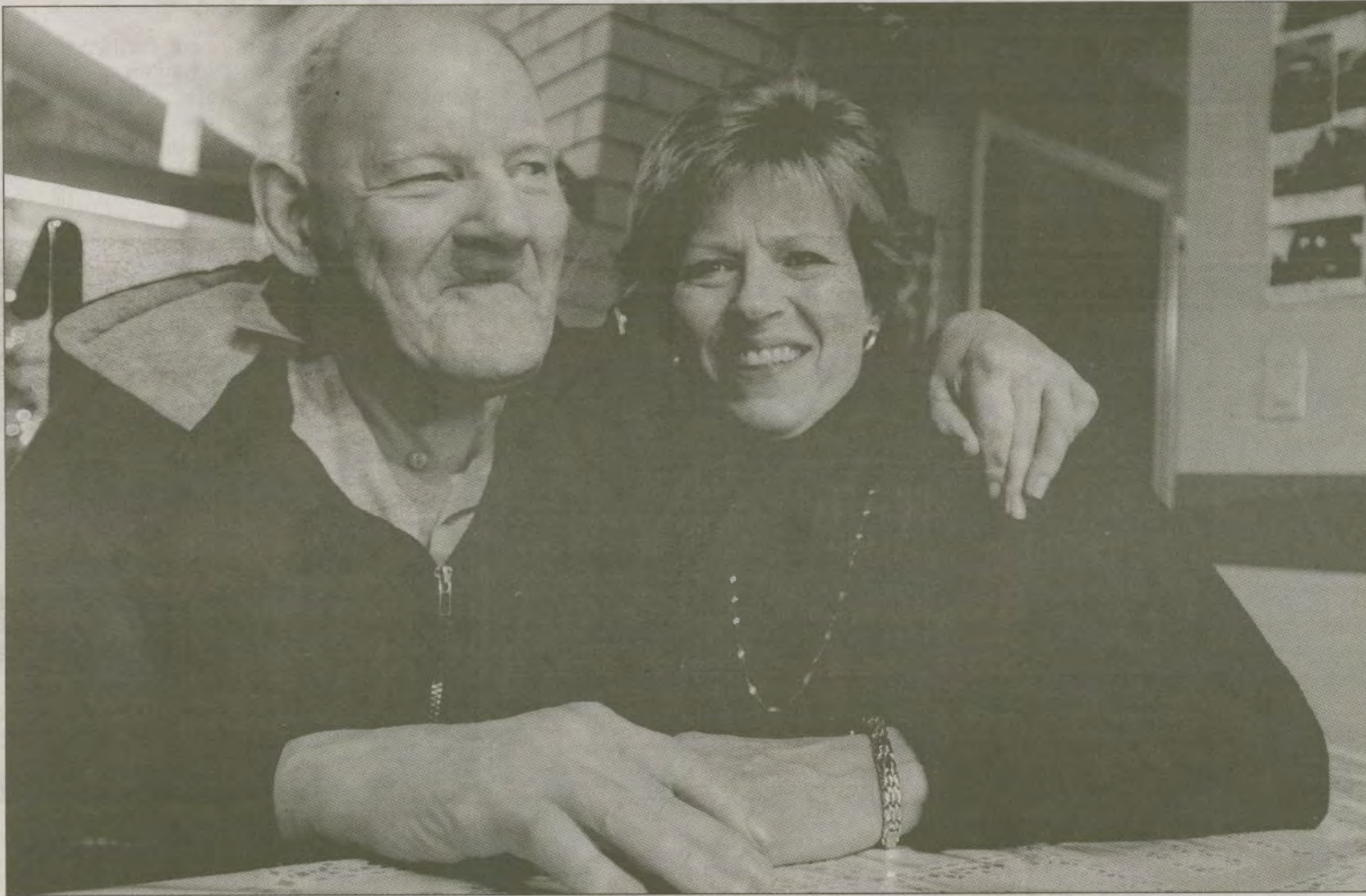
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JOHN VAN PUTTEN Abbotsford News

Bob Geddes with Arlene Schouten, a supporter of the We Survived Woodlands group.

A survivor's story

Woodlands victims denied compensation for suffering

Vikki HOPES
Abbotsford News

Bob Geddes spoke up when he witnessed the abuse and injustice. For that, he was locked up in a room with no one to talk to and nothing to do. He pounded on the door, demanding to be released, but his pleas were ignored.

There was no toilet in the room, and Bob had to relieve himself in the corner. He slept on the hardwood floor until a staff member brought him a mattress.

This lasted for a month, and it happened more than once.

Bob, an Abbotsford resident, is among about 1,600 former residents of Woodlands Institution in New Westminster who were part of a class-action lawsuit against the B.C. government for abuses they suffered while in care.

He is also among the 500 – about 50 from Abbotsford – who were disqualified from compensation in a proposed settlement announced by the provincial gov-

“ It really hurt me – more on the inside than the outside.

Bob Geddes

ernment on Dec. 14. The settlement eliminates anyone affected before Aug. 1, 1974, the date on which the Crown Proceeding Act came into force.

It is consistent with an October 2005 B.C. Court of Appeal decision that said the province cannot be sued for alleged abuse that occurred prior to that date.

Romance began in institution

Woodlands wasn't all bad for Bob Geddes. It's where he first met his sweetheart, Annie Clemson, another resident.

Their love story was detailed in the Abbotsford News in December 2005.

The two formed a friendship in Woodlands, but went their separate ways for a few years until meeting up again in Abbotsford at a dance.

They fell in love and became engaged,

but Annie's caregivers brought an end to the relationship. For the next 30 years, neither one loved another, and Annie continued to wear her engagement ring.

The pair were reunited in the late 1990s and were married on Dec. 16, 2005 at Evangelical Free Church in Abbotsford.

Annie died of a stroke just two days before their first anniversary.

Bob misses her every day.

Bob lived at Woodlands, a facility for those with developmental and physical disabilities, from 1952 to 1963, starting when he was 16. He is now 73.

The precise nature of his condition is not known, but he was likely born with cerebral palsy. His parents brought him to Woodlands believing it was the best place for him.

“My mom and dad thought I was too hard to handle,” Bob said.

They were likely impressed with the on-site school, and told that qualified staff would know how to best address Bob's special needs.

It wouldn't be until 2002 that a clear picture emerged of Woodlands. That was when the B.C. Ministry of Children and Family Development commissioned a report, entitled The Need to Know, which detailed the physical, sexual and emotional abuses suffered by residents.

Bob was hit and kicked, and witnessed others being hit with

Continued on A6

News Bytes

ENVISION MAKES TOP 50

For the eighth straight year, Envision Financial has been named one of the 50 Best Employers in Canada. Envision placed 42nd in the annual Hewitt Associates' survey, which is published in the Globe & Mail's Report on Business. The survey allows employees to determine what companies make the list. Staff members are asked to complete an online questionnaire touching on a number of topics including how well employee opinions are valued, the company's commitment to career development and the effectiveness of its leadership. According to Envision Financial's president Bev Brown, despite last year's tough economic conditions, Envision staff continued to go above and beyond for the organization's member-owners.

TREE DISPOSAL

Now that the holidays are over, there are alternatives for disposing of Christmas trees. Clean trees may be dropped off free of charge at the Abbotsford-Mission Recycling Depot (33670 Valley Rd.) throughout January from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays. Curbside pickup can be done on scheduled yard-waste collection days, and must meet yard-waste requirements. Pieces can be bundled or placed in yard-waste containers or Kraft paper bags. Another option is Communitas Supportive Care Society. Pickup can be arranged by calling Valley Organics Recycling at 604-504-7758. Minimum \$10 donation.

WATTS HERE

Surrey Mayor Dianne Watts is the guest speaker on Jan. 13 at the monthly meeting of the Business and Professional Women's Club of Abbotsford. Doors open at 11:30 a.m. at Cascade Community Church, 35190 Delair Rd. Cost is \$15 for members and \$20 for non-members. RSVP to 604-897-1690 or visit bpwabbymission@shaw.ca.



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Government 'retraumatizing' victims

From A5
belts and tied up. Like many of the residents, he had all his teeth pulled out so that he wouldn't bite himself or others. He once had to scrub

baseboards from one end of the hall to the other, on his hands and knees. Bob was transferred to a facility in Kamloops in 1963, and eventually came to Abbotsford.

He now lives in the Evergreen Home, run by Communitas Supportive Care. Histimein Woodlands still affects him. "It really hurt me - more on the inside than the outside.

I couldn't stand it. I couldn't take no more of it," he said. Arlene Schouten, Bob's representative and a supporter of the We Survived Woodlands group, said it is shameful that 500 people are being denied compensation. "What the govern-

ment's doing is abusive. They are retraumatizing (the victims)." A previous proposal from the survivors asked for an out-of-court "common experience payment" of \$15,000 per claimant. That was rejected, but Schouten said the

government has likely spent hundreds of thousands in the seven-year court battle. Now, if the B.C. Supreme Court approves the settlement offer, those who qualify will have to go before the courts to have their compensation determined. This will cause

them further trauma, Schouten said. Bob said the victims have been through enough. "How can they (the government) do this to us? We suffered enough. "Why can't they let us get on with our lives?"



FREE HEARING TESTS

ABBOTSFORD: January 7, 8 & 12
MISSION: January 7 & 14

This Community Outreach Program is to increase awareness of hearing loss. The audiometric hearing tests are free for those over 45 years old.

COMMON HEARING LOSS SYMPTOMS

lack of speech clarity • asking people to repeat themselves
difficulty with background noise & hearing on the phone

Should a potential medical condition be indicated a medical referral & complete report will be forwarded to your physician. If you suspect a hearing loss, we urge you not to go untreated. Book your free test today!

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Yoga & Creativity Workshop

"The Art of Dynamic Being"
10 week course ~ Jan 13 - Mar 17
Wednesdays 6 - 8 pm

Learn simple practical tools to enhance your inner creative potential.

Cost: \$260 Plus cost of the book 'The Artists Way' by Julia Cameron



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