

J. Janz

JOHN JOSEPH JANZ, 1919-1972

BY DAVID R. M. HATCH*

It was with shock and a sense of great personal loss that the friends of John J. Janz learned of his instant death in a truck-school bus collision on May 24, 1972.

Mr. Janz was born on October 23, 1919, and with the exception of service during World War II, he had spent his entire life at Souris, Manitoba. He was extraordinarily community minded and was second to none in involvement in community activities in the Souris district. The old adage, "if you want something done, give it to a busy man," was never more true than in Mr. Janz's case.

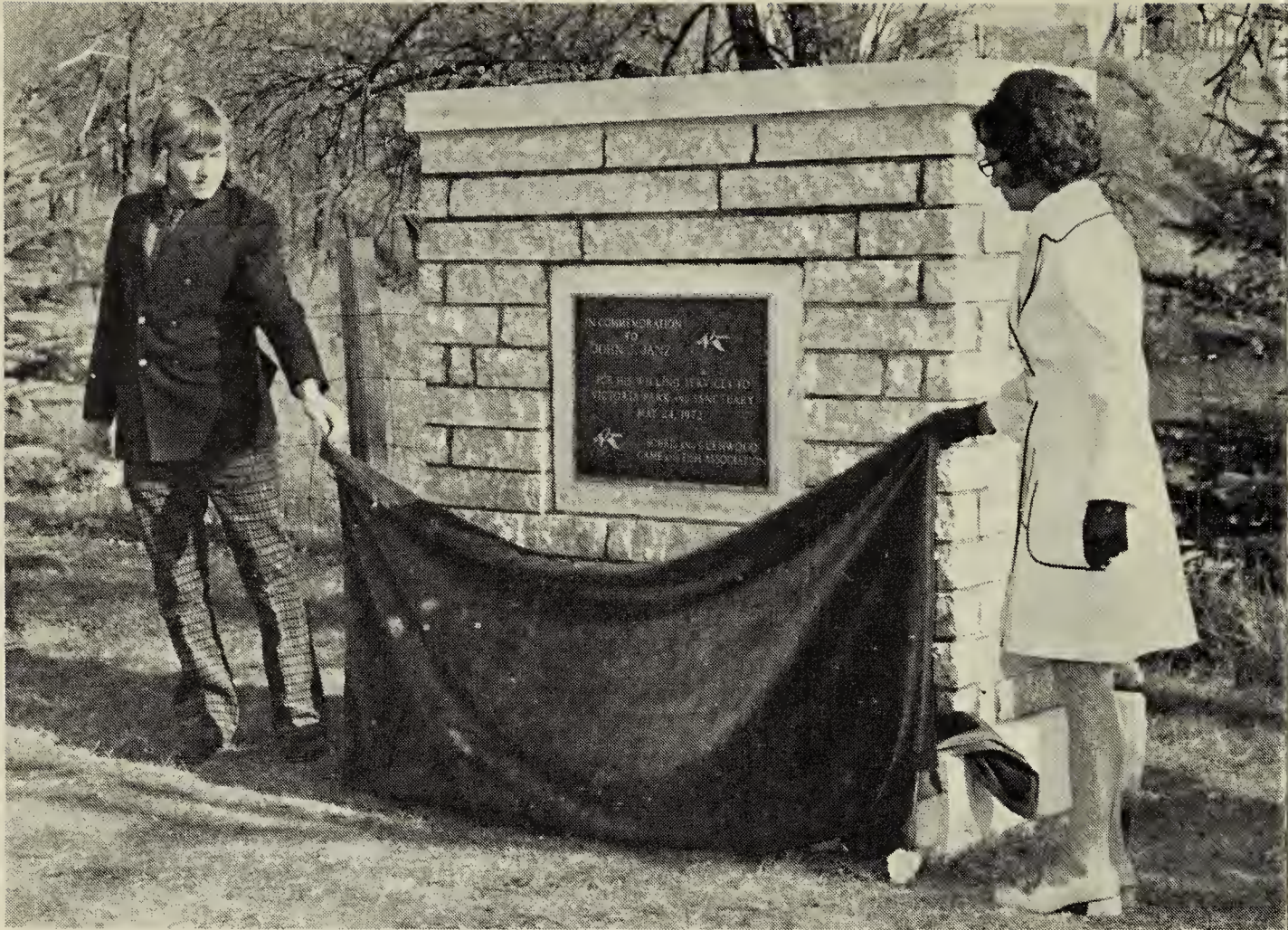
For many years, Mr. Janz operated the Marshall-Wells Store in partnership with Mr. Denny Russell. He then left the hardware business and commenced joint operation of Souris Rock and Agate, a lapidary firm, founded with one of his brothers in 1962. This business grew and helped to make Souris one of the major tourist attractions in south-western Manitoba. At the time of his death, Mr. Janz was treasurer of the West-Man. Tourist and Convention Association.

I best knew Mr. Janz as an aviculturist. He had a great love of nature and this fact prompted him to want Souris to have a nesting population of Canada Geese within the town. With the backing of the town council, he acquired some Canada Geese and established them in Victoria Park. This flock prospered under his guidance and was extremely successful in producing progeny. The town council is now letting part of each year's offspring become free flying, while retaining the remainder of the geese to maintain the local population and to help to re-establish the species as a nesting bird in areas where it was formerly extirpated. It was continuous care and a great deal of work on Mr. Janz's part that made this flock successful. Canada Geese now fly in and out of the town and nest within 100 yards of the main street. This is an achievement of which no other town or city in Manitoba can boast. Mr. Janz through his untiring efforts made this feat possible by doing nearly all of the work involved in the project single handedly. The Canada Geese of Souris are a lasting, living tribute to him.

On October 22, 1972, I had the pleasure of participating in a memorial service dedicating the sanctuary portion of Victoria Park in Souris to the memory of Mr. Janz. A large crowd was present to hear the tributes and see the unveiling of the cairn naming the sanctuary the John J. Janz Memorial Sanctuary. The sanctuary, situated on Plum Creek at its junction with the Souris River, is located in a magnificently treed and peaceful area and is a fitting tribute to this man.

Mr. Janz was a man of many and varied talents. He was a respected horticulturist and a gifted musician, the saxophone being his specialty. He enjoyed photographing wildlife and obtained some excellent slides of Snow Geese in the Souris area in April of 1972. He also was a superlative landscape painter.

*Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature,
190 Rupert Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 0N2



Mrs. John J. Janz and Randy Janz Unveiling the Cairn

He is survived by his wife Olive ("Marnie"), one son, Randy, at home; two daughters, Mrs. K. (Dawn) Bowie of Winnipeg and Sandra at home; his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Mark W. Janz; two sisters, Mrs. G. (Judy) Hale of Souris, Mrs. A. (Katherine) Evans of Winnipeg; five brothers, Lloyd of Cranbrook, B.C., Douglas, Mark E., Donald and Turney, all of Souris.

He leaves behind a saddened community, but one that will always be grateful that he lived and worked in it. He made a lasting impact on his town and his associates and his life is an example for us to follow. He showed us how we could live in harmony with our environment and how one can instill an appreciation of nature in others. May the Canada Geese always fly in and out of Souris as an everlasting tribute to him.

