

RALPH & PAULINE NORTON

Mentions in [The Daily Herald-Tribune](#), Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada



GRANDE PRAIRIE ROTARIANS Friday marked the 60th anniversary of the founding of the international service club with a banquet and dance at the Elks Hall. Doing the honors with the

anniversary cake, left to right, secretary **Ralph Norton**, president Jack Lyall and director William Beattie. (Staff Photo)

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(2) Announcements

Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Norton wish to announce the marriage of their daughter Carol Yvonne to Mr. Barry James Edgar, son of Mr. and Mrs. James Edgar of Grande Prairie. The wedding will take place May 15th, 1965 at 3:30 p.m. in St. Paul's United Church, Grande Prairie.



BEAN FEST — City Rotarians gathered at the highway bypass campsite, one of the club's major projects, on Friday for a luncheon of baked beans and four of the

hungry members enjoying it were Ralph Norton (left), Jack Deltombe, Ed Haberman and Dick Foster.



A front-end loader takes another bite as it digs out the basement for Grande Prairie's new movie theatre and billiard hall.

Movie theatre under construction

By **GRAEME CONNELL**
of our staff

Construction is underway on a new movie theatre and billiard hall in downtown Grande Prairie.

The two-storey and full basement building, to cost about \$200,000, is being built on a site just east of Windsor Motors on Richmond Ave.

Developer **Ralph Norton**, of the city, owner of the Gaiety Theatre and Recreation Billiards, said he plans to open the new theatre no later than Sept. 1.

The theatre which will be known as the Jan Theatre, will have seating for 300 people and will cater for cinemascope shows with full stereophonic sound.

The theatre would occupy the main floor of the structure while

the 22-table billiard hall will be located in the basement. The top floor will be used by Mr. Norton as office space.

The Gaiety Theatre will continue to operate but the pool hall, located at present further along Richmond Ave., will be moved to the new location.

Mr. Norton was given a development permit at yesterday's Municipal Planning Commission meeting subject to a six-foot setback requirement being turned over to the city and that nothing protrudes over the setback.

The plans discussed by the commission showed a canopy over the setback portion and members queried this in view of the city's pending new bylaw.

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Local theatre owner leases operations, moves south



Brian McIntosh and Ralph Norton seated discuss theatre operations.

Pincher Creek will be quite a change from Grande Prairie for city theatre entrepreneur Ralph Norton.

But despite his move from the northern to the southern part of Alberta, both the Jan Cinema and Gaiety Theatre will continue business as usual here.

Mr. Norton and his son Ken are taking up cattle ranching in the Pincher Creek area and the Bezanon-born businessman has leased both his theatres to the Edmonton-based Towne Cinema Theatres Ltd. company.

"I just feel more like the outdoor life," Mr. Norton said about his semi-retirement venture.

His career in the local show business world started in 1957 when he thought of building a theatre. He went to Gaiety owner Jack Bird for information on operations.

He got more than that. He bought the Gaiety.

Last October, he opened Grande Prairie's second theatre — the Jan Cinema.

Prior to his involvement in the theatres, he was in the lumber business from 1945 and construction from 1948. He left those operations in 1965.

He also owned the old Capitol Theatre which is now National Home Furniture's site in the city. It was formerly known as the Donald recreation centre and featured bowling lanes and a pool hall. The lanes shut down several years ago and the basement portion of the building was a discotheque for a time.

The pool hall operation was subsequently let go to Jim Rix and Gord Graydon of the city and relocated in the Jan.

Mr. Norton said he should be in Pincher Creek within the next two weeks and extended an invitation to his friends to visit him there. The ranch is located 17 miles southwest of the southern Alberta community.

"We'll continue Mr. Norton's policy of good entertainment," Towne Cinema official Bruce McIntosh of Edmonton said yesterday. "We officially take over both theatres tomorrow."

Manager of the theatres will be Mike Callbeck.

Towne Cinema is western Canada's largest independent theatre group with interests in Edmonton, Red Deer, Medicine Hat and Stettler as well as some B.C. operations.

Including associated companies, the firm is involved in 20 theatres.

Mr. Callbeck said there would be no changes in the basic operation of the two Grande Prairie theatres.

Jan getting ready to raise the curtain on a new look

KEVIN WILLIAMSON
Herald-Tribune staff

Roll 'em!

The date's been set for when the curtain will go up on the newly-refurbished Jan Cinema.

Presently under construction, the Jan will shut down for about a month Jan. 21, as workers complete two new screens and renovate the original main auditorium.

Gordon Imlach, manager of special projects at Landmark Cinemas, said recently the new "twin" screens will open Feb. 14.

Two weeks later, Feb. 28, the main auditorium will reopen. Imlach said there will be no post-facelift gala premiere.

"We want to get everything up and running. If we had wanted to do a premiere, we would have opened them all at once."

Construction began in July on the theatre, located on 100 Ave., at a pricetag of more than \$1 million.

Imlach said work, six months later, is progressing smoothly.

"We're humming along. We're proceeding according to schedule. The building already looks impressive from the outside."

The new Jan will boast a digital stereo sound system, plush new seats with cup holders, additional leg room, new projectors, sound and light baffling, improved accessibility for wheelchairs and a 40-foot concession stand in place of the current 15-foot one.

The hearing impaired can borrow headphones and listen to the show via an infrared sound system.

A "crying room" will also be available for parents, who can take their children out of the audience without missing the movie.

Once construction is finished, crews will then head across town to the Prairie Mall cinemas.

"We're not adding any screens, but we are upgrading the whole place: Carpets, lobby, screens."

By early spring 1996, he said city moviegoers will have five refurbished screens, "as nice as anywhere in Edmonton."

The additional screens will also impact on what films are shown in Grande Prairie and for how long.

"It will enable some films that haven't played in Grande Prairie to come up," Imlach said.

"Also, in the past we've only been able to play some films for so long, even though they were popular, to make room for more films."

Now films with longevity, like Toy Story and The Lion King, will open in the main Jan theatre and then, instead of exiting stage right, move into the smaller houses for another week or two, he said.

The Jan Cinema was built in 1971 by the Ralph Norton family of Grande Prairie, which leased the theatre to Landmark from 1972.

The company bought the

NAMES IN THE NEWS



NORTON

• Gaiety Theatre owner **Ralph Norton**, president of the Alberta Theatres Association, expected "strictly adult" films - no

one under 18 admitted - would begin showing in 1964. Grande Prairie might get four such movies a year, he suggested.

The Alberta Censor Board's draconian rulings had most recently banned Tom Jones, starring Albert Finney and Susannah York.