

Ties span ocean to bring cities closer

By MARTY KUSEL
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The link between Broomfield and her sister city, Broomfield, Kent, England, got a little closer this past week when an unofficial visitor stayed with local couples for a few days.

Tony Skinner, on his way to Florida to see friends, jumped at the opportunity to make the detour out west for an informal visit, and Broomfield couples opened their homes, showed him the town and hosted a barbecue in his honor.

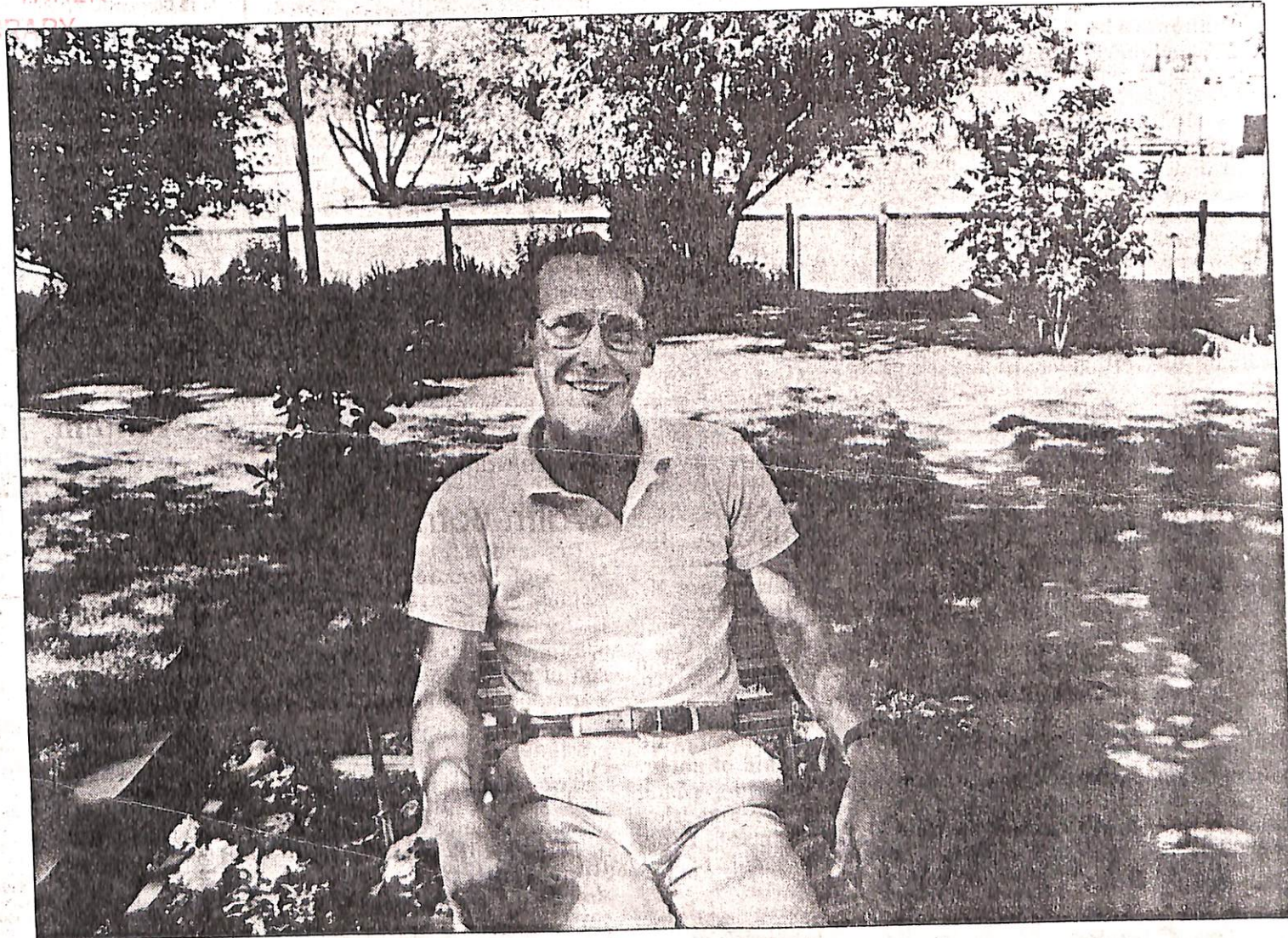
He explains that the "idea of twinning" with an American city came to him years ago when he was conducting some research on a local church and found a family with connections in Virginia.

When Broomfield residents Lucy Brown and Doris Kirsch made a detour in their 1987 trip to Europe to see Broomfield and to scout out the possibility of creating a sister-city connection, Skinner was out of town.

"I was annoyed to miss it," he said. When he got this opportunity, "I jumped in with both feet."

THE TRIP HAS given him the chance to meet this Broomfield's residents. "They're good people" — even if they "speak a funny tongue," he laughed.

He said he wants to see everything



Tony Skinner

he can live here, while we can't live here."

"It fascinates me the way people live — how it's all the same. You have the same worries, the same bills to pay. Yet it's a different environment."

IN RETURN FOR the hospitality, Skinner gave the couples a scrapbook of England's Broomfield to present to the city.

In it are photographs of the Broomfield parish, which includes a half dozen homes in England's Broomfield hamlet and the newer section of homes built since 1920. A total of "2,000 souls" inhabit the parish.

The parish system is "intricate," Skinner said. A parish generally has a church at its center, and a parish council has little power. A bunch of parishes together form another layer of government, one possibly more similar to America's municipal systems.

Calling Broomfield a city brings a laugh to Skinner.

"It gives me an amusement. In our terminology, a city has to have a cathedral."

The Broomfield parish has its Anglican church — where this Broomfield's city charter hangs — with its accompanying graveyard.

But it doesn't have a cathedral.

WHAT IT DOES BOAST is a genuine castle, Leeds Castle. Left to the country by the last owner, Lady Baillie, it is now a medical conference center that also is open to the public.

"It's a beautiful castle," he said. The scrapbook provides a detailed history of Leeds, which was first built

Sister city search began years ago

Colorado's Broomfield began its trek to find a sister city years ago.

The Broomfield Chamber of Commerce and the Broomfield Economic Development Corporation began research worldwide for cities named Broomfield.

They found three, all in England.

Lucy Brown, former city clerk and volunteer with the chamber, knew of the search. When she and resident Doris Kirsch knew they would be in England in May of 1987 and in the vicinity of the Broomfields, they offered to visit. The BEDC agreed and funded their additional expenses.

THE BROOMFIELD THAT paid off was the one in Kent.

After that visit, Brown and Chamber President David Smith pursued establishing sister-city status, with the Broomfield City Council's blessing.

When England's Tony Skinner decided to make a detour to the Colorado Broomfield during his

vacation to the United States, he didn't find the residents to be strangers.

Everyone knew of Brown and Kirsch's visit and communication between residents of the two cities has been maintained, especially since the cities have formalized their sister-city status.

England's Broomfield is 35 miles from London. Located in the southern portion of England, it doesn't see harsh weather although rain is no stranger.

BROOMFIELD IS A TOWN steeped in tradition.

The local Leeds Castle, first built out of wood in 857, provides some of that. One story tells of a lady, imprisoned at the castle, planting some of her favorite grapes in the vineyard.

"This is tradition, you understand." One of the cottages, now called Vine Cottage, supposedly has a vine from that original yard.

Another story revolves around the

bells that hang in the Anglican church. A Broomfield family used to cast bells, Skinner said. One of their original bells is there still. And one of the family members is buried in the church's graveyard. The tomb is dated around 1600.

"They're lovely traditions."

THE TOWN ALSO HAS adopted "modern" traditions. During World War II, Broomfield was the alley between England and France. A field acquired the name Searchlight Field because search lights were placed there to track German planes.

The London Philharmonic Orchestra plays each year on the lawns of the castle and features its traditional closing number, *The 1812 Overture*. The several thousand people who turn out for the concert have started bringing canelabras to the event.

"These are modern traditions — which are nice too."

in 857 and sits on a natural island surrounded by a lake.

The older part of Broomfield is dominated by the castle.

Also in the scrapbook is a piece from the 1087 Domesday Book. "This is history for us," he explains. The book listed the lands, owners and properties of England after William the Conqueror invaded in 1066.

Broomfield is listed in that piece. "Of the whole of England, we're included there."

Nevertheless, the recorded history of Broomfield is scarce. It was Brunfelle in the Domesday Book and was known as Bromfield before it became Broomfield somewhere around 1785.

Like this Broomfield, though, it took

its name from a plant.

Broom, Skinner says, is a tall plant with bright, yellow flowers. The town was located near a field covered in these plants.

Skinner stresses that he is not boasting with his tales and descriptive stories of that parish called Broomfield. It's just that "I'm proud of our heritage."