

Heijdens, R

(2)

# Make a joyful sound

Intell Sunday p. 3  
April 29/01

STORY BY HENRY BURY, THE INTELLIGENCER

money to take lessons from a renowned organist in The Netherlands.

"The organ is the instrument I love because you can do so much with it," he said.

Heijdens and his family emigrated to Canada in 1951 and the lessons continued, under such tutors as Dr. Charles Peaker, a renowned church organist and teacher at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto.

Within three months of settling in Thornhill, Heijdens had his first organist's job at Morningside Presbyterian Church in Toronto.

"It didn't go very well because of the language problems. My poor English was detrimental to holding the job there," he laughed.

Ironically, his first full-time job in Toronto was as an apprentice at a pipe organ factory for Eaton's.

He held other jobs as draftsman, insurance sales and bookkeeping-accountant before moving to Orillia to accept a church organist's position. That's where he also got involved in teaching music in the elementary students.

He subsequently earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in music and well as some specialist and supervisory certificates in music. A year later, he got his teaching certificate.

Heijdens' first teaching job was as supervisor of music for the Orillia school board.

He moved to Bowmanville to become that school board's music supervisor and played the organ at an Oshawa church.

With the formation of the county school boards in 1969, he was appointed music consultant for the Northumberland portion of the Northumberland-Newcastle board.

He came to Belleville in 1972 but it had nothing to do with teaching. He took over as organist at St. Andrew's Church and next year will mark 30 years in that role.

Heijdens also joined the former Hastings County Board of Education initially as a resource teacher in music and later as curriculum co-ordinator for the arts.

He retired in 1993 after almost 20 years with the board but has maintained his involvement with the board's choral groups.

Heijdens continues to study choral music and conducting. He attends workshops, clinics and symposiums on choral music both in Canada and abroad.

"You have to keep up with the times and you can always improve yourself. If you do that, the choirs improve as well."

He owes everything to music.

"Music has provided a good living for me, provided me with a lot of satisfaction and prestige and I'll be doing it until the day I die."

Still, there are days he wants to get away from it all. So he boards his 28-foot sailboat and sails the Bay of Quinte.

"When I'm sailing, I forget about all the other things, even music."

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