

Quinte Personalities: Gerry Boyce

Belleville's 'Mr. History'

By Jack Evans

The Intelligencer

From the blast furnaces of Hamilton to the air-conditioned council chambers of Belleville might be one way to sum up one of this city's well-known residents, Gerald (Gerry) Boyce.

Boyce might also lay claim to the title of Belleville's "Mr. History," the result of many years teaching the subject in Belleville Collegiate Institute plus his many hours of research and writing on local history topics over the years.

But, despite his scholarly reputation, Boyce, who has been retired as an educator since 1989, is still the same man enthusiastically jogging along local streets and roads.

"I average 10 to 12 kilometres three times a week," says Boyce, whose usual route is across the Norris Whitney Bridge and into Prince Edward County.

As a student, to help pay for his education, Boyce recalls working the blast furnaces at Stelco in high summer. Later, his father, a professional musician, moved to Belleville as organist at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, where Boyce met his bride-to-be, Bev, and settled into Quinte area lifestyles.

That included working as an announcer at Radio Station CJBQ in the early 1950s until he finished college and other studies, starting as a teacher at BCI in 1957.

As a young newcomer, his interest in history led him to an inaugural meeting of the Hastings County Historical Society the same year, where

he

became a charter member and, within a year, president, a position he has held at least three times over the years.

He also traces his interest in local history to his parents having originated in the Napanee area.

As a "labor of love" project

in Canada's Centennial, 1967, he wrote "Historic Hastings." For that, "I got a color television from the county," he recalls.

Other books, also about local history have followed over the years: "Hutton of Hastings," the life and letters of the county's first warden, William Hutton;

"St. Andrew's Chronicles," in 1978, a Belleville Centennial project; and "Eldorado - Ontario's First Gold Rush" in 1990.

Early in his career, Boyce, as a free-lance writer, contributed a lengthy series of articles on local history to this newspaper. "I guess I wrote about 150 articles on a weekly basis," he said.

Then in 1991 he made a successful bid for city council, and served two terms, quipping, "partly as an alderman and partly as a councillor."

Since taking up running in 1990, Boyce has taken part in several marathon events, ones he considers successes just by finishing them. "I get a high from running," he said. "You wonder what you are doing when you first start though."

His hallmark is completing the 26-mile marathon at Ottawa once. He also takes part in other regional marathon events.

The Boyces' four children are all doing well in their respective careers and Gerry and his wife, Bev, are basking in the joys of their first grandchild.

He is still involved in historical research and writing, especially on a large donated collection of valuable historic photos.

Intel Aug 30/98 p. A6

1 of 2

BOYCE, Gerry