

Quinte Personalities: George McRae

Let the music play

By Jack Evans

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George McRae is only one trombonist — not 76 like in the Music Man song. But he's played in at least 76 or more parades — and he's still going strong.

For the past 18 years, McRae, 72, has joined the ranks of smugly satisfied retiree immigrants to Prince Edward County, enjoying with his family their home on the Glenora Road just out of Picton.

"We got to know the county by camping here before I retired," he said.

Born and raised in Ottawa, McRae says he fell in love with band music the first time he saw a parade as a child. From there, it led him into a career as musician and educator, serving two jobs most of his working life, head of music at Malvern Collegiate in Toronto and professionally active in several dance and marching bands after school hours.

For many years he was a member of the Artillery Militia Band in Toronto, by which he came to be involved in the annual



Intelligencer photo by Crombie MacNeill

George McRae loves the county and his music.

Santa Claus Parade there, and for the past 15 years he has served as virtual bandmaster for all of the bands in the parade, scouting prospective new bands and arranging for return visits of others.

Locally, McRae has been active in helping to organize special concerts such as the annual Band Gala in Bridge Street Church in aid of Christmas Sharing, featuring massed bands and the Belleville Choral Society. He continues to play in the Brass and Reed Band for 8 Wing, Trenton, and with Stan Wiggins in The Commodores Orchestra and various other groups and events around the area.

He also played with the Eastern Ontario Concert Orchestra for a couple of years previously.

"We've made many friends in the county and Belleville area and we're really enjoying it here," he said. "Our daughter and grandson also live in Picton now."

To help keep his lungs in shape, McRae enjoys tennis and gardening. As a back-up instrument, "I also play the piano," he said.

McRAE, GEORGE

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