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New school is named for Sam

When S.A. (Sam) Cawker started his teaching career in a one-room school more than half a century ago, he never dreamed that one day a new, modern school would be named after him.

Mr. Cawker, 83, told the Star he was "delighted and honoured" when he learned last week the new elementary school now under construction in Port Perry will be called the S.A. Cawker P.S.

That name was the runaway favourite among the nearly 500 Scugog residents who took the opportunity to cast their votes for the name of the new school.

The other names considered were North Port and the Jimmy Frise School.

Scugog board of education trustee Bobbie Drew, who helped tally the phone-in vote, said S.A. Cawker was favoured by "over 80 per cent."

The decision needs to be ratified by the Durham Board this week, but Mrs. Drew said she's confident there will be no opposition to the choice for the school's name.

As for Mr. Cawker, who retired from teaching in 1968 and now makes his home near Nestleton, he was tickled pink at the news, and said he's looking forward to the official ceremonies when the school opens on Simcoe Street North this fall.

Born and raised in Port Perry, Sam attended Toronto Teacher's College and took his first job at the one room school (S.S. 7) just south of Caesarea.

There were 48 students in his school in grades 1 through eight, and the salary that year was \$1,000.

After a couple of years working with his brothers in the hardware business in Toronto, Sam turned to teaching once again, this time for four years in Millbrook.

In 1934, he accepted a teaching position at the elementary school in Port Perry, and stayed there until 1968 when he retired as vice principal.

Looking back on his many years as an educator, he said the most satisfying aspect of the job was seeing a child work hard to "make it through," especially those children who may

have had difficult times at home.

But there were lots of headaches and frustrations too. He said it always saddened him to see students with good potential flounder or drop out.

Times were tough in the Depression Years of the "Dirty 30's." His salary was \$900 annually (he was glad to have the job)

But the Depression was very tough on young children as well. He recalls vividly one youngster whose family had moved east from Saskatchewan.

"The boy was so skinny. You could see every rib and the bones in his shoulders sticking out."

The boy's father landed steady work in Port Perry, put food on the table and within months, that youngster was healthy and happy again.

But the image has stuck in Sam's memory ever since.

Sam worked many years in Port Perry with the late R.H. (Roy) Cornish, a man he said was not only a colleague in teaching and education but a close friend as well.

"We did a lot of fishing and hunting together, and for three summers during the war worked as carpenters in war work."

"We made better money (on war work as carpenters) than we did teaching," Sam recalls with a laugh. "I don't know what we would have done without it."

During school hours, especially in the presence of students, they were careful to address each other as "Mr." not by their first names. And the same with all the staff members.

While he has many enjoyable memories from a teaching career that spanned more than four decades, Sam said he's not quite sure if he would want to be starting over again in a one room school at \$1,000 per year.

But he'd jump at the chance to start a teaching career in 1989 and says teaching is a great profession these days for any young person to consider.

And he'll be watching with interest as construction progresses on the new school that will carry his name.