

'Unofficial ambassador' marks milestone

BY TIMOTHY VON BOETTICHER

The Georgetown Gemini

Charles Ronald Joyce, unofficial "Ambassador of Good Will" to downtown Georgetown, turns 65-years-old today.

What is remarkable is not that he will be 65 but that a person with his condition, Downs Syndrome, has lived such a long and fruitful life.

Known to most as "Ron,"

he is a familiar figure to those who frequent the downtown core.

Ron was born in Bronte, Ontario to Olive Lorraine and James Perce Joyce. During the Depression, although it broke her heart to do so, Olive Lorraine made the difficult choice to send her disabled son to an institution in Orillia, where he learned manners and discipline, but not without incident.

Joyce's brother Jim, and his wife Anna, had difficulty remembering exactly when Ron moved from the institution to a series of group boarding homes in the Orillia area, but they believe he was in his mid-30's.

Jim recalls that these were difficult years for Ron. "People were using him. I wouldn't say abusing, but he was shovelling snow and becoming a housekeeper. When

he got to Georgetown, it was excellent."

Ron was very heavy when he arrived in Georgetown 15 years ago and was prone to fits of distraction. Were it not for the excellent care by the staff of North Halton's Association for the Developmentally Handicapped, Ron might not have survived.

"People with Down's didn't usually live very long because they were not well taken care of," explains Jim.

Ron works at the ARC industries in Hornby, and has no plans to retire. It is his job that keeps him happy, according to his brother.

"He likes the fact that people look to him to do it. Responsibility is very important to him. He likes to feel that he is an important cog there," offers Jim.

Ron's birthday will be celebrated in the backyard of his new home on Main Street. For the first time in his life, Ron does not live in a group home situation.

He wants all the people he knows to come and celebrate with him. By special request, the menu will include "ham and pineapple and spaghetti and delicious pie" for his birthday dinner.

"I like that," he says.



PRESIDENTIAL BEARING! Seven past presidents of the Georgetown and District Memorial Hospital Volunteer Association gathered at the annual meeting to wish new president Ellen Phillips good luck in the coming year. From left: Ellen Phillips, Phyllis Stevens, Barbara Phipps, Inez Crichton, Dorothy Bodnar, Bev Goss, Brenda Beamont, Vi Haines. (photo submitted)

Cell phone stolen

A cell phone was reported stolen from a 1991 Chev Cavalier between August 11 and 12. The car had been parked on Main Street South. There were no signs of forced entry, although the car had apparently been locked. The phone was worth \$500.

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