

District finals next

Steven Van Fleet, Diane Bousfield judged best Acton public speakers

Robert Little auditorium rocked with cheers and applause when Steven Van Fleet was announced the top public speaker for this year on Friday morning. A runner-up last year, capable Steven spoke on "The Atomic Bomb."

In second place was finalist from last year, lively Diane Bousfield, whose subject was "Music."

Both are in grade eight at the Robert Little school.

Other finalists judged Friday were Joanne Pavli, MZB; Robert McMillan, MZB; Jean Matanic, MZB; Barbara Pratt RL, and Ron McGuin RL. All are in grade eight.

Steven and Diane go next to compete in Mil. St. Martin's St. senior public school Wednesday evening, February 7.

Steven Van Fleet accepted the Dan Rachtin challenge trophy, which will have his name engraved on it, and the Acton Hydro Commission trophy presented by commissioner Will McEachern.

Each contestant received a span from the school board presented by principal Elmer Smith.

MZB teacher Earl Brears acted as chairman for the program. Judges were Eric Balthus, supervising principal of Excelsior school, Mrs. Fred Now of Acton and Joe Hurst, the town office manager.

As Mr. Hurst reported for the judges, he said there was a difference. He mentioned one speech was too short, which is about as bad as being too long. The judges recommended more attention be given to breathing.

He concluded his few words by announcing the winner, to roars of applause from the audience of pupils from both schools.

Prediction of their decision had come from the audience previously when they gave their heartiest applause to Steven right after his speech.

The contestants had drawn lots for the order in which they would speak. Chairman Brears urged all the student listeners to pay close attention. "Being a good listener is just as hard as being a good speaker," he said.

First to give her speech was Joanne Pavli, poised grade 8 student at the MZB school, whose topic was "Education." We acquire our basic ideas in early childhood, but more true knowledge comes from outside the school. She asked the audience to imagine children who had no opportunities for education. Education's function is to prepare us for complete living.

Second speaker was Diane Bousfield, grade eight student of the Robert Little school, the champion last year. In her talk on "music" she said you are sure to hear some music every day of your life. It is understanding without language. . . . she gave some edifying examples of music's powers to rally troops, heal and give encouragement.



SEVEN FINALISTS in the public speaking contest conducted at the Robert Little school are left to right: Barbara Pratt, Ron McGuin, Joanne Pavli, Jean Matanic, winner Steven Van Fleet with the Hydro trophy, Diane Bousfield and Robert McMillan. Steven Van Fleet and Diane Bousfield compete in the next level in Milton tonight. (Staff Photo)

The history of music asked another angle to her interesting talk.

Robert McMillan, grade eight student of the MZB school, held the close attention of the audience as he spoke on the subject of animated cartoons. They were developed over 100 years ago, even before the movies. For one second of a film, 24 pictures must be drawn, and the student explained the stages in making the cartoons, aligning the lip movement and sound track.

"Our fascinating tongue" was Ronald McGuin's topic. He's a grade eight student at Robert Little.

His intriguing information included the fact that the tongue is a vital organ that protects the stomach, and whose nerves can detect the peculiar taste of thousands of kinds of food.

Different types of tongues mentioned belong to the toad, ant-eater, cat family with bristles, and woodpecker.

Advice on control of the tongue is found in the Bible.

"Your career" was Joan Matanic's subject. This grade eight MZB student, whose native tongue is Yugoslavian, named her hearers as she gave advice on careers. You are never too young to start thinking about where you want to go. What is success? she asked. Money doesn't guarantee happiness. Make the most of yourself. There is no finer career than developing the best that is in you.

Sixth speaker was Barbara Pratt, port RL grade eight student whose sprightly talk was on witchcraft. How to cast a spell and how you become bewitched were part of her information. Over 300,000 women were killed as witches before 1782. One woman just this year was accused of witchcraft in Mexico.

Last on the list and first in the judge's eyes was Steven Van Fleet. He began his winning talk with the challenging question, "The atom bomb is here to stay - but are we?"

We must cultivate the science of human relationships. Mankind has attained remarkable feats but we have not learned to live without war. War is better at abolishing nations than nations are at abolishing war.

War, he declared, begins in the home where seeds of bitterness and prejudice are sown. Hold to old and great ideals . . . learn to love one another.

Steven made use of gestures and a wide range of inflections in his speech, delivered with the handicap of missing glasses and a sore foot.

Timer Jeff Cooper announced the time after each speech. Each one was within the five-to-seven minute limit except one, which was short.

In the Robert Little competition on Wednesday, 13 pupils competed from grades six, seven and eight. Of these, four grade eights were selected for the Friday inter-school contest.

From grade six, Ricky Rocher spoke on John F. Kennedy, Susan Shoemaker on the Mennonites, Debra Bousfield on Robert Louis Stevenson.

From grade seven Sheila Cheney spoke on her trip from Scotland to Canada; Bonnie Bristow spoke on LSD; Heather Strang on domestic dogs.

Other grade eight students were Cathy Hinton talking about the Bruce Trail, Cathy Ashley on photography and Glynis Johnson on great moments in medicine. The other four were Steven, Diane, Ron and Barbara, who were chosen to proceed.

The finalists in the M. Z. Bennett public speaking competition were Jane Withers, Debbie Drinkwater, Cindy Lee and John Rochester from grade seven; Jeanie Matanic, Joanne Pavli, Robert McMillan and Cathy Prystasz from grade eight.

Valentine's day began in Rome

Valentine's Day, next Wednesday, is unique with its emphasis on affection and love.

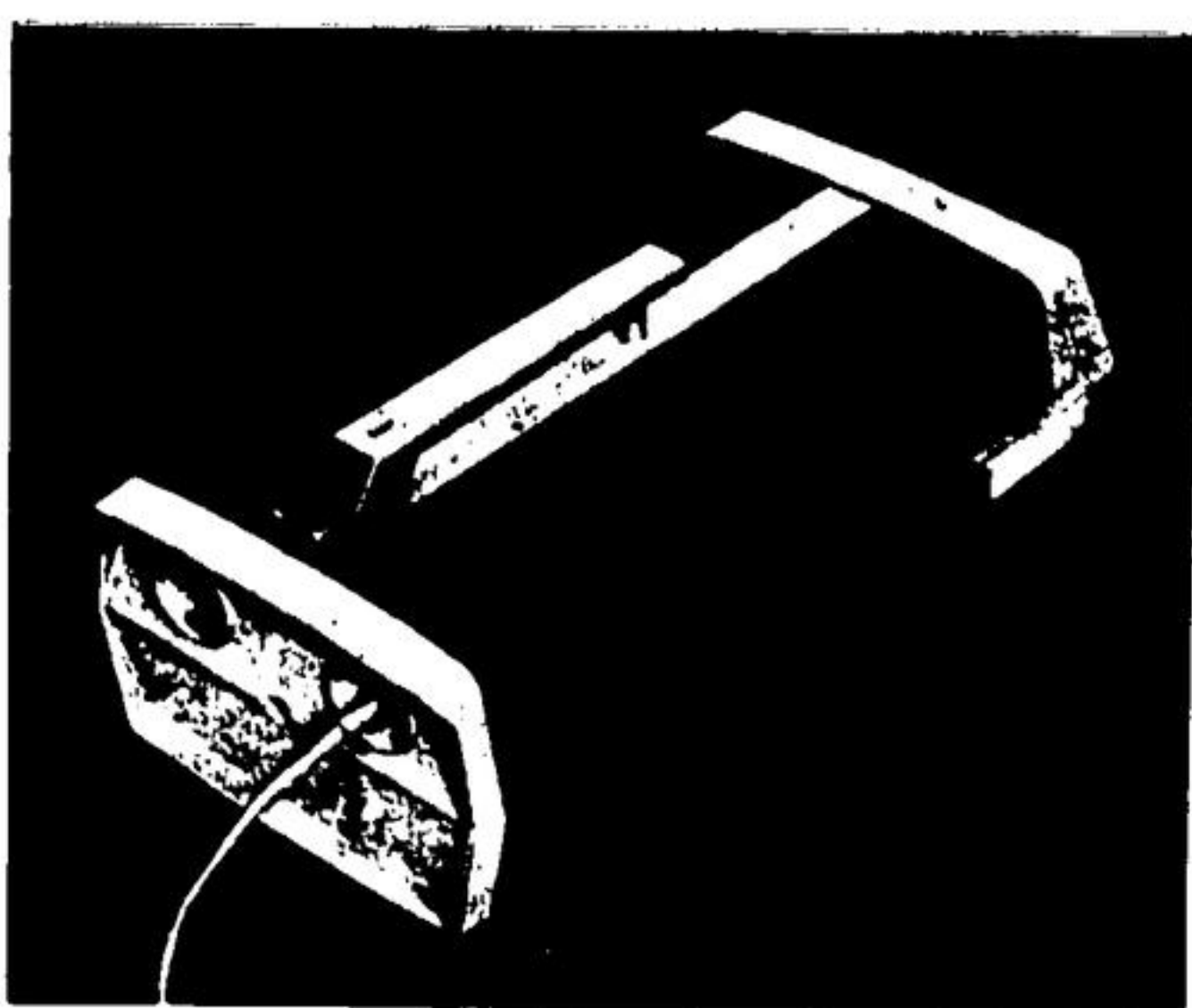
Perhaps its only black mark since the third century is the St. Valentine's Day massacre in Chicago when valentines consisted of lead bullets.

How did it all start? Where did the custom originate? Well, the first valentine was sent many, many years ago, in the third century A.D. to be exact, and the sender was a young Roman named Valentinus.

Valentinus, who was imprisoned by Emperor Claudius II for giving aid to Christian martyrs, according to legend, befriended the blind daughter of his jailer while awaiting his execution and restored her sight. On the night before he died, Valentinus penned a farewell message to the girl who had meant so much to him and signed it "from your Valentine."

Valentinus was put to death on the 14th of February and was buried in what is today the Church of Praxedes in Rome. Near his grave a pink almond tree, a symbol of abiding love, is said to have blossomed.

Thus the name of Valentinus has come down through the centuries as the word which stands for affection among friends and love among sweethearts.



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