

Crown Attorney P. K. McWilliams Handles 15,000 Cases Annually

Peter K. McWilliams, Halton County's Crown Attorney, probably has the busiest and at the same time the smallest office in the county administration building on the Base Line.

The "business" of the office is attested to by the fact that the energetic 40 year old crown attorney prosecutes an average of 15,000 cases a year and presides over an average of one request a week in addition to many other duties.

And all this activity is centered in an office that until just recently housed all the county's bulky exhibits.

Heavy Load

But it takes more than cramped quarters and a Herculean work load to faze the youthful crown attorney.

Besides a natural penchant for work, Mr. McWilliams brings to his job a formidable educational background and a family legal tradition that stretches back to his grandfather.

He enrolled in Harvard University at the age of 16 and graduated in 1942 after serving a three-year hitch with the U.S. Navy as a radar technician.

Graduation from Osgoode Hall in 1953 was followed by five years with the legal firm of K.R. Dick in Milton.

The McWilliams family tree is heavy with lawyers. His mother, a grandfather and an uncle, all practised the profession.

In fact, the crown attorney and his mother were both declared Queen's Council at the same time at ceremonies last year in Toronto. Mrs. McWilliams retired last year from the provincial government after many years of legal service.

Major Case.

By his own admission, the prosecution of the Bill Major conspiracy case was the highlight of his nine years as Halton's crown attorney.

Bill Major, two brothers and a sister were indicted after a long and sensational trial for their involvement in a province-wide conspiracy to defraud elderly people.

"It is the type of case that will become more and more common as criminals become more organized and mobile," he commented.

A number of other cases have gained publicity and sparked controversy.

His successful prosecution of both the driver of an auto and the passengers on a joint charge of criminal negligence causing death last year at the Supreme Court Assizes in Milton made Canadian legal history.

Brewers Retail

He was also the first crown attorney to prosecute the Brewers Retail Company for supplying liquor to minors.

His meticulous research and preparation for the "Corvair" inquest last year brought widespread attention.

It is estimated that he and his staff spent three months investigating every aspect of the auto fatality that resulted from the crash of the controversial General Motor's product.

The inquest drew a virtual

G. M. "braintrust" of lawyers and engineers from the U.S. to defend the Corvair model.

On the more humorous side of his career was the time a judge ordered him out of a court-room. The ladies were turned on the judge later when a Supreme Court order demanded his apology to Mr. McWilliams.

Appeal Court

Another time he defended the same man in an appeal court that won both cases.

"Generally speaking," he said, "the prosecution of driving sentences is the most important part of my work because the loss of life, injury and property damage far exceeds that of all other criminal offenses."

"For the one or two murders in Halton every year," he added, "there are anywhere from 24 to 40 traffic fatalities."

Mr. McWilliams has severely criticized certain aspects of Canada's criminal code from time to time.

Blood Tests

In particular, he has pressed for mandatory breath, blood or urine tests for survivors of accidents that cause death or serious injury.

As the law now stands police or medical authorities need the consent of the survivor before tests can be conducted.

Another sore point is the lack of uniformity concerning the age when a young offender of previous good character can be held criminally responsible.

He would like to see the criminal code amended like it has been in England so that a youth under 21 may, if the court wishes, be conditionally or absolutely discharged instead of criminally prosecuted.

He feels that the courts are forced to resort to extra-legal means because of the present law unless they want to burden a youth who obviously won't be a repeater with a criminal record.

Law Reform

Speaking generally he felt that eventually Canadians would see a thorough reform and revision of criminal law as it now stands.

"We are living in an age of great change in our attitudes toward law and of the problems of crime and its concepts of criminal law and penology are in a state of flux."

Besides handling prosecutions in courts throughout Halton County, inquests, and local appeal court cases, the crown attorney is responsible for a host of other duties.

Advises Police

Some of these include advising the police as to investigation of offenses, laying of charges and application for warrants and summonses, advising the justice of the peace as to bail and the like and placing before the court criminal records of all accused.

But as Mr. McWilliams said, "I'm glad of the opportunity to be of service to the county."

Only a very young 32 when the Attorney-General appointed him to the post in 1958, he feels that the trend now is to

AREA FREE OF RABIES

The Georgetown area will enter the new year without the threat of a rabies outbreak which was present the past couple of years.

The Department of Agriculture's Health in Animals Division at Brampton reported yesterday that there has been no rabies case in the Georgetown vicinity for several months.

Two years ago and last year at this time several incidents of rabid foxes and dogs in this area were reported to the Health in Animals branch.

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Alli's Toothy-Grin Wins Him A Home

Even an alligator can develop an appealing look in his eye. Popular pet types such as badger, gold fish and baby turtles, a young ten inch alligator at Richardson's Crest Hardware won a home for himself this week when he was purchased by Mrs. Jean Getty of Jean's Variety Store at the corner of Water and Guelph Streets.

Mrs. Getty said the children wanted the little reptile with the big grin for a pet. She said she would keep him in a tank in her variety store window for a while.

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Witnesses Plan Visit to Guelph Circuit Assembly

Volunteer workers numbering between 150-200 will handle the complete operation of Jehovah's Witnesses' circuit assembly in Guelph this week end. They will be assigned to twenty-one different departments caring for duties ranging from administration to cafeteria-feeding and from installation to sign-painting.

"We normally find that one out of six convention attendees register for volunteer service," says Charles Topping, presiding minister of Jehovah's Witnesses in Brampton and head of all volunteer workers at the upcoming Guelph assembly. "Such willing response to assistance is a unique feature of all our assemblies. Large or small, we firmly believe that such labours of love are part of our serving God with everlasting life in view," Mr. Topping adds.

Each of the 21 departments are administered by a servant in charge and an assistant. Working crews are assigned by Mr. Topping in proportion to the size of the department and the workload to be done.

town congregation are invited to be present. Mr. Frank Milton, 5 Gibbons Place, is assigned to the Equipment and Trucking Department which handles all the freight for the different departments. Mr. Robt. Bieck of Georgetown is working in the Checkroom and Lost and Found department. These are two examples of the services rendered by the twenty-one departments connected with Volunteer Service.

Several other members of the local congregation will share in the program of volunteer work.

DRIVING FAULTS

Our professional drivers — the truckers — say that the driving faults of the average motorist are headed by a failure to signal properly; failure to dim lights; tailgating; excessive speed; ignoring stop signs and traffic signals. Since motorists have almost three times the number of accidents per 100,000 miles as the trucker does, maybe we should listen to him and straighten up and drive right.