

Day full of memories is town's gift



Well, howdy, podner!

Acton's gift to its two retiring principals is a day full of memories.

That day was Saturday, when plotting of a committee, aided by about 200 willing sub-plotters, culminated in well over one thousand people greeting G.W. McKenzie and Elmer Smith.

Principals Recognition Day began with a delightful parade of 200 children with the band, continued with a reception for 500 or so which packed the high school gym and cafeteria all afternoon, proceeded to a dinner for 370 and climaxed when 800 danced away the rest of the day in the community centre.

Involve many When a committee of teachers

and townspeople under Ed Leatherland first met to discuss what could be done to recognize the 82 years' teaching career of the two men, they agreed a possible presentation of a gift just didn't personally involve enough people. Their thinking expanded until last Saturday's program became a reality.

Class representatives were named for each grade eight year beginning with 1940 and letters were sent to former teachers and pupils. Mrs. Marlene Titan started all her art classes to work at "secret" decorations and everything proceeded neatly from then on.

General enthusiasm A slight drizzle fell on the parade, the band played inside instead of out at the high school, and some kept their coats on during dinner in the community centre.

These minor setbacks were overlooked in the general bubbling enthusiasm that pervaded the day.

About 370 sat down to dinner, a hot roast beef buffet, as wine corks popped to the rafters.

Dinner chairman was Father Mike Bennett '56. Former inspector Len McNeill said Grace. Rev. Laurie Dudy, expected to speak, was in St. Catharines hospital instead.

Mayor Les Dudy on behalf of all the town read a citation to the two retiring principals. It outlined their teaching careers over a total of 82 years directly influencing the lives of over 3,500 people in their schools.

He referred to the differences in the men and their schools but

their harmonious relationship and high standards.

G.W. McKenzie became principal in 1939 and Elmer Smith took over for him for three years during the war. Elmer became vice-principal until his own school was built in 1967.

Mr. Dudy mentioned Pat's involvement in the Y's Men's club including a stint as international president; scout hall and community centre; work on council and county council, industrial commission, parks board, library board, sports and church over the years.

Loud ovation Elmer was also an active Y's Man, had his own band the Merry-makers, later played with the Debonnaire and Acton Citizens Band. He was a prime force for the retention of the music festival.

The mayor's expression of the town's thanks was followed by a long and heart-felt standing ovation.

Afraid of it Replying to the ringing applause Elmer Smith shook his head and admitted "I was afraid this would happen. I would have been quite happy to quietly steal away! For the next 28 days you're going to have two spoiled kids in charge of your schools..."

He would have left after the war, he said, if Arlof Dills hadn't persuaded him to stay. He referred to the mutual respect



between the two principals that will endure, the excellent support of the schools boards. May we be spared to enjoy many years together, he concluded.

Taking his turn at the mike G.W. McKenzie bubbled with enthusiasm "This day has got to be the greatest." He recalled some highlights and memories and declared "I'm proud of you all!" He thanked the boards, parents, service clubs, his loyal staff.

We love Acton, he said, and we intend to do what we can to make it a better place for our boys and girls.

Fun gifts Kathy Sanford '56 introduced Rick Van Fleet and Don Coats who presented treasure chests made from wood originally in the

old school, to contain the mementos of the day. From the class of 1940 Dave Dills presented a ball and bat to Pat McKenzie recalling their games, and rake and paint scraper to Elmer recalling clean-ups. Kevin Broostad presented caricatures of Hopalong McKenzie and Supersmith. Mayor Dudy presented citation copies for the chests. Pictures and tapes will be added later.

Betty (Masters) Ashley and Sally (Wilson) Leatherland presented flowers to the wives. Elsie Syme had co-operated with corsages and bouquets for the day.

Six children Sharing their parents' limelight were Kathy (McKenzie) and Walt Tryssennaar, Listowel; Dave and Ann Smith, R.R.2, St. George; Brian and Dorothy Smith, R.R.2, Acton; Norm and Mary Ann Smith, Montreal; Vivian (Smith) and the Rev. Bill Nicholson, Grand Valley; and Julie, Western student, at home.

Praise was heaped on the decorations, designed by art teacher Marlene Titan. Kevin Broostad designed a special crest for the day which appeared everywhere.

Chandlers of cardboard and balloons hung from pop-can top chains and dozens of dangling silver foil whimsies made the arena delightful. The wooden gazebo was topped with a

revolving spunk of mirrors. John Krul spent hours cutting the glass. Jon Hurst made it turn. This will likely be left at the arena for future use.

Some of the decorations will apparently be used again this Saturday for the Harry Hibbs dance there.

A tent of pennants canopied the high school gym and old pictures formed a full gallery.

Ensnared in the twinkling gazebo in the centre of the arena floor, the Shaynes dance band is composed of former R.L. pupils Terry Churchill, Bernie Freuler and Lloyd McIntyre with Georgetown teacher Ann (Shortill) McIntyre as vocalist.

Dancers twirled counterclockwise around the band and, when the hour of one struck, showed no particular inclination to leave their groups of friends.

Gary Bateman headed the dance committee with much assistance from Harold Townsley at the arena.

About 1,000 chairs were trucked in from all three schools. Telegrams, letters and cards are still arriving at the Smith and McKenzie homes. They include messages from Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, M.P. Terry O'Connor, leader of the opposition Robert Stanfield, the Hon. George Kerr, Y's Men's international, Chamber of Commerce, former students Ella Jany in New South Wales, and Carol (Tyler) Wallis in Arizona.

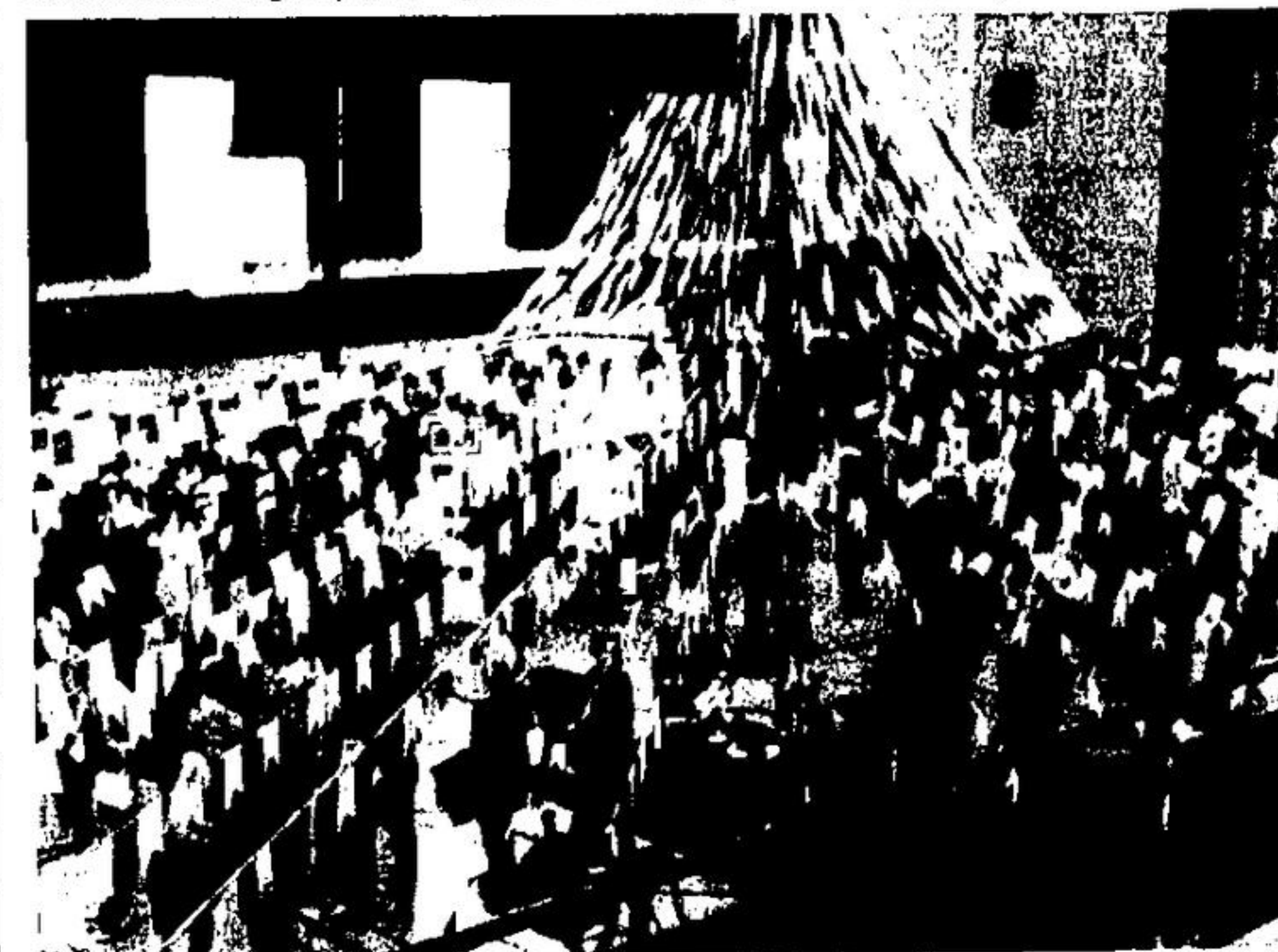


Shirley McKeown, Ann Mowat, Fred Crewson, Martha Orr, Margaret Young



Father Mike Bennett m.c.

Suzanne Sinclair and Mary Golem recognize former student Janet Allen



Canopy of fluttering pennants charmed afternoon visitors



Alumnus Terry Churchill

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