

Clarence Rognvaldson retiring from teaching

by Jennifer Rowe
After 19 years of teaching others, Clarence Rognvaldson will be leaving Acton high school. Although he is retiring from teaching his desire to learn is still strong.

Known as Sonny to many, Clarence Rognvaldson was born and raised in Manitoba at Lake Winnipegosis. He studied in Manitoba and had planned to continue his education at the University of Manitoba, when a tragic fire left his family destitute and he was unable to do so.

During the depression Clarence worked at a variety of jobs including one in a grocery store for three dollars a week, farming and winter commercial fishing.

In 1937 Clarence returned home to Winnipegosis to work for his father in their welding, general repairs and construction business. With his father being a jack-of-all trades, Clarence was exposed to many different maintenance areas.

In 1940 Clarence left home to join the Air Force. "I had plans of being a pilot like all other young men and winning the war single-handed, but I ended up being a mechanic."

While in the Air Force and in Toronto at the time of his mother's death, Clarence met the woman who was to be his future wife, Dorothy Jane Kerman, an Oshawa girl working at Sick Children's Hospital, married Clarence in August of 1942.

After spending five years in the Air Force in Canada, Alaska and England, Clarence returned to a small town in Canada that he had visited during his time with the Air Force. It was 1945 when Clarence Rognvaldson and his wife Dorothy came to live in Acton.

Clarence was hired by Baxter Laboratories (now the Dills Printing and Publishing building) and became maintenance department head. He was in charge of all the various maintenance procedures in the building.

During his working years, the drive to finish the education that was interrupted earlier never left him. However the responsibilities of a wife and children were the main concern in his life at this time. Clarence and Dorothy Rognvaldson have two daughters, Janet and Nancy.

In 1956 a policy change took place at Baxters and the plant moved to Alliston.

At this time Clarence with the help of his family decided to pursue his long hoped for dream of returning to school. He finished his grade 13 which was an Ontario University requirement and was accepted to McMaster University as a full-time day student.

His wife Dorothy was behind him every step of the way and went out to work at Dills Printing and Publishing Company to support the family. Clarence stresses that his education was definitely a family affair and would not have been possible without the support of his wife and two daughters. "They all shared the hardship without complaint."

While going through McMaster taking Arts and Philosophy Clarence had no dreams of becoming a teacher. "I wanted an education to open doors to the highest levels in industry. I had the technical experience but I needed the intellectual qualifications." It wasn't until his last year that Clarence thought of teaching.

In September 1959, under principal Ted Hansen, Clarence Rognvaldson began teaching history and geography at Acton high school. He feels that during his time in the geography department he helped to build it from a bare room to a busy active centre.

In 1967, Clarence left the geography department and headed into Industrial Arts. He stayed in the shop section at Acton High on Acton boulevard from 1967 until 1977 when he moved to the new high school on Cedar Road. The Industrial Arts area is one of the best-equipped areas in the new school.

During his time at Acton high Clarence has taught both his daughters. "A teacher should be able to teach anyone. Students who want to learn will learn from any teacher."

The Rognvaldson name is known in many more places than Acton. In 1930 when depression hit and the fishing trade was slow, Clarence's father, who did boat building and repairs, also suffered economically.

The tragic fire in his shop left him financially distressed and so he submitted an entry in a spinning wheel design

competition. He took an existing design and modified it to make it more portable and lightweight. After winning the competition his design was put into practice when the T. Eaton company marketed it. The wheel was advertised in the Eaton's catalogue and orders were given to Mr. Rognvaldson who constructed and shipped them to customers.

Clarence and his brothers worked with their father on the wheels which grew to be very popular. When Mrs. Rognvaldson, Clarence's mother, became ill the family closed off the business in the West and moved their parents to Toronto.

The spinning wheel was known as the Manitoba wheel because of its western origin or the Icelandic wheel because of the Icelandic name Rognvaldson on the bottom of each one. They were requested even after the family left Manitoba.

Mr. Rognvaldson made the wheels in Ontario after his wife died with the demand rapidly growing. With two wheels still on the bench partially completed Mr. Rognvaldson died at the age of 90 in 1969.

Customers of the un-completed wheels asked Clarence to finish them for them. So under the condition that these were an exception Clarence finished them. Requests from his wife and daughters for wheels started the trend growing and Clarence continued to construct them in his spare time. With the business growing and a teaching career to think about Clarence discontinued the spinning wheel business.

About 1970, Clarence and his brother Gordon went back into business and began taking orders for spinning wheels. They further modified the wheel making it look more appealing and practical.

Clarence says that the spinning wheel market goes in cycles. At the end of the War for about 15 or 20 years there was not the same interest and enthusiasm for the craft. After a period of time people find they need some kind of craft involving their hands. "Too much leisure time results in emotional and nervous problems for some people."

The recent trend towards going back to the traditional crafts for a sense of achievement as well as entertainment has boosted orders in the spinning wheel department. Clarence says he and his brother can hardly keep up with the orders.

A recent letter from a Rognvaldson spinning wheel fan sums up the Rognvaldson wheel when it says "the craftsmanship in these wheels represents the care and love put in by the Rognvaldsons. This makes them things of beauty and a joy forever."

When asked about the changes he has seen in the school, Clarence feels many things have happened over the last 19 years and not all for the good.

"It is more difficult to teach now and harder to feel satisfied as a teacher." He feels the change in student attitude is directly responsible for this. "The students don't value education."

He feels that students used to value education as a necessary tool to later success but now because of the changes in our society, both values and economically, this attitude has changed.

Discipline also has changed over the last 19 years. The discipline for good workmanship and doing what they are told by the students has vanished in many cases. He feels students should do what they are told not because the teacher says, but because it forms a part of their total destiny.

Clarence feels the attitude changes and problems in the school cannot be blamed entirely on the home or the school. He feels the pressure of the total environment has helped bring on a change.

"The home in the good old days, as they are called, 1920-1940's is not the model home. They had their problems just as we do now, only now there are more people and consequently more problems."

Clarence feels strongly that some of the changes in our society may be the root of many problems. He feels television has caused a decay in the quality of education, communication and the ability to communicate.

"For many students they become passive blotting paper for everything that comes out of the idiot box." Clarence still feels the book is the best way of learning. He feels that people must be selective in what they watch because the abuse and addition of this media can have harmful effects.

On the lighter side of things Clarence has retirement plans of travelling with his wife both in and outside Canada, Scandinavian countries, Europe, Austria, Switzerland, Germany, Greece and the Mediterranean areas.

He hopes to try a little fishing and hunting and work on his spinning wheel business.

For years Clarence Rognvaldson has made it possible for students to learn how to drive through the driver training course and hunt through the hunter safety course. During his retirement he will stay on as instructor for both these courses.

Clarence and his wife are looking forward to spending some time visiting their daughters who are both married with children of their own.



CLARENCE ROGNVALDSON is retiring this June as high school teacher. Friends will gather Thursday from 4 to 6 at the Legion to wish him well in his retirement.

Their eldest Janet, is married to Robert Taylor and they live at Elliott Lake with two daughters. Nancy married Gerard Coquard, and they live in Montreal with a son and a daughter.

Clarence says happily, that he is looking forward to his retirement and this is one reason why he took it one year earlier. He has enjoyed every minute at Acton High and has no regrets about his teaching career during the past 19 years.

He has nothing but kind words and warm feelings for the staff of Acton High both past and present.

Once again his yearning to learn from everyday life is apparent when he says he has learned something from every student, teacher and

person he has dealt with. "It's a hell of a poor day when I don't learn something new."

Since the days of high school when Clarence Rognvaldson wanted to pursue his education at University, and through those hard years when he worked to do it until now when he prepares to retire that desire to learn has never left him.

Clarence Rognvaldson has helped many students not only through practical teaching and marking but through example. It is his turn now to enjoy life to the fullest and to take it easy doing the things he wants to do.

A retirement reception will be held at the Acton Legion on Thursday, June 22. Friends are invited to drop in between 4 and 6 p.m.

Local contractor critical of Govt. insulation program

One Georgetown insulation specialist is not happy with the federal government's Ener-Con-Sulation program. Bill Patterson, proprietor of Patterson Insulation, Georgetown, says the program is government interference with private enterprise which can do the job of insulating better—and cheaper.

If the Government can insulate homes for less than contractors then why don't they get into all businesses such as plumbing, heating and others, he asks. He feels the government is taking the bread out of contractors'

mouths with their offer of free labor for insulation jobs. "The free labor isn't free," he says, noting it bugs him that he had to lay a man off in a slack time while the help hired by the government program relaxes in large Brampton offices and still gets paid.

This is still a free enterprise system, Mr. Patterson says and he believes the Government's fumbling attempts to help the deprived insulate are costing taxpayers far more than if private enterprise did the job.

He says private enterprise can insulate an attic about \$40

above cost of insulation while the government's program would take two men at least 10 hours each calculated at \$6 an hour would cost \$120 above the cost of the insulation. Then there is the overhead cost of knocking on doors and advertising by flyers.

The Government program offers free labor for certain people who qualify for insulation. They must pay for the cost of material.

He suggests the program should be tendered as the Provincial Government does if the free enterprise system is to be preserved.

Read labels

Attention swimming pool owners—be sure you read the instructions on pool chemical containers, and follow them.

The warning was issued this week by Halton Region Fire Prevention Committee, after a container of calcium hypochlorite became contaminated and burst into flames, causing extensive damage to a garage where it was housed. The pool owners were not aware of the caution on the container label, which warned the chemical may set itself afire if contaminated.

Tax date still stands

There will be no change in penalties on farm taxes due June 28, this year, rather than July 30 as in previous years.

Only Councillors Russ Miller, Pat Patterson, Roy Booth and George Malby favored the foregoing of penalties for the month of July for farmers listed under the Farm Reduction Program.

Patterson had raised the question previously claiming the farmer depended on the July wheat crop to pay the bank for fertilizer and other necessities. He claimed there had been no notice of the change.

Councillor Marilyn Serjeantson made a motion exempting anyone who wants to defer payment until July 30 be allowed to do so, without the month's penalty. She claimed everyone has to budget. This was defeated.

Clerk Administrator Ken Richardson said it would require an amendment to the bylaw.

Councillor Peter Marks pointed out the maximum it would cost a farmer, who borrowed for the month, would be between \$3 and \$5. He said that would be for a highly taxed farm, and put

the normal amount around \$1.50 to \$2.

Councillor Walter Blehn pointed out it would be less even to pay the penalty for a month.

Councillor Russ Miller explained under the Farm Reduction Program a bonafide farmer receives a 50 per cent reduction in taxes. He claimed there are over 800 farmers on this role.

Blehn said, "Can you imagine the commotion it would cause to pass that bylaw, when the people who have already paid their taxes find out?"

The clerk-administrator asked how the people would know, and wondered if each taxpayer would have to be notified.

The motion lost and the tax date will stay at June 28, with penalties after the due date.

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