

# Music lessons at Watson's part of many memories

by Jennifer Rowe

Music lessons at Watson's. A familiar memory for many people in Acton. Now in their 26th and final year in business, the Watsons estimate they have instructed well over 1,000 students in music.

Edwin Watson began his musical career early in life. As a young boy living in Nassagaweya, just off the highway between Acton and Rockwood, Edwin studied musical theory and played by ear until he completed elementary school.

At the age of 14 he joined his family on the farm and let his music lapse. During this time he played the piano in a small orchestra at parties. "Before the days of electronic instruments, an orchestra was a violin or a harmonica and a piano."

At the age of 21 he became ill with polio and was unable to return to a life on the farm. It was then he decided to take up music seriously. It was to become his way of life.

In 1938 Edwin married and he and his wife Florence taught private lessons to children. For six years he taught music with the East and West Flamboro school board.

It was after giving up teaching that Edwin and his wife commuted from their Guelph Line home to open the only music store in Acton. Their first location in 1953 was where Larry's House of Buys now stands. Mr. Watson explained that he had no previous business experience and was the only music store from Guelph to Toronto.

After hours and on Saturdays, Edwin and Florence Watson taught music lessons to countless children and adults. "I once taught a man old enough to be my grandfather," Mr. Watson said.

In the late 1950's, Edwin began to play the pipe organ at Eden Mills United church. The church had picked up the organ from a Jewish Synagogue, soon

to be demolished, and Edwin had worked many long hours trying to install the organ in the church.

It was at this time that he had to buckle down and teach himself to read music. Mr. Watson said that as a child he had an exceptionally good ear and never needed to look at a music book.

"If I heard a tune once then I could listen and play it without ever looking at a note," he said.

Mr. Watson played the organ at Eden Mills church for 18 years but had to give it up four years ago due to failing health.

Although they were kept busy through teaching, instructing lessons and running a store, Edwin and Florence still found the time to raise five children. One of their sons lives in Guelph, one in Kitchener and two in Belleville. Their only daughter Lenora is married and lives in Acton. Mrs. Vickery has followed in her father's footsteps and is now a music teacher at Brookville school.

Through his years as a teacher, Mr. Watson said he found that musical talent does follow a peculiar pattern. "Through the years I have found that musical talent comes out quite strong every third generation. In my travels around the schools I have observed and studied and found this to be quite true. I can't account for it, but it does happen," he said.

In his own family the musical talent has spread through to his daughter and two of her three sons. "Wade and Jamie are quite good at playing the guitar," Mr. Watson said. All of the Watson's children played the piano sometime during their childhood.

Through his 40 years of teaching Mr. Watson has found that private lessons are the most valuable to the student. "In all these years we have never had class lessons, always private. The only thing students pick up in group lessons are what the other



It has been five years since Edwin Watson played the pipe organ at Eden Mills United Church. As this reporter found out, he hasn't lost his touch. After 26

years of business at Watson's Music, Edwin and his wife Florence are closing up shop.

Photo by Jennifer Rowe

students don't know."

Mr. Watson said that guitars were scarce during the 1920s and organs were a church instrument. Mr. Watson said he built one of the first electric guitars.

and designed it from the knowledge I had of the guitar and the sounds I had heard." The guitar Mr. Watson built with the help of a friend, who designed the amplifier, sounds similar to a pipe organ.

Ten years ago the Watsons moved to their present home on Victoria Ave., Acton. At this time he took over the motor license vehicle business. He gave up the business a year and a half ago.

For six years, while his wife ran the store, Mr. Watson worked for Keates Organ Company. It was he who found out and informed Mr. Keates about the available rental space in Acton. Keates is now located in the Beardmore Industrial building.

His work with organs has included installation of the United church organ in Acton and Eden Mills, the Ebenzer church and helping to install the Christian Reform organ.

Commenting on the musical sounds of today Mr. Watson found it difficult to name a modern day artist with real musical talent. He feels there are very few real good guitar players. "They make noises not music, and noise is not music."

He said that whenever he hears a band he listens with a critical ear. The Acton Citizens' Band is a good band which works on the quality of their music, something that is becoming increasingly rare today, according to Mr. Watson.

Mr. Watson feels that the musicians of today are letting the quality be sacrificed for the volume. "Volume is a part of music but not all of it," he said.

Mr. Watson referred to the Beatles as good musicians but their style lacked soul. "The music today covers up the soul with noise."

From his own experience, Mr. Watson has found music to be a natural ability that must be educated. "If someone had natural ability and gets the proper training then they can become accomplished. If the talent goes uneducated then it is wasted."

# The Acton Free Press

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## Noisy scene at council but plaza meeting still on

Threats of ejection from the council chamber and an actual order to the clerk administrator to escort Henry Joseph, consultant for Landawn Shopping Centre from the meeting, created a short-lived but heated scene at Monday night's meeting of Halton Hills Council.

The eruption began when a letter from Ron Burnett, on behalf of the Acton Business Improvement Area, asked that a public meeting scheduled for February 14, in Acton, be postponed to the end of March.

Just as discussion got underway, spectators called out "We're from Acton, we should be heard."

Jerry Sprackman of Landawn Shopping Centre said the public should be allowed to talk. "You promised 300 people they would be allowed to talk," said Sprackman.

Joseph said they were asked to come to

the meeting by the clerk administration and they should be heard.

He insisted and kept talking despite Acting Mayor Roy Booth telling him he was out of order. Finally Booth said sit down or get out.

Joseph remained standing. At this point Booth asked the clerk administrator to escort him out.

Finally Joseph sat down.

When the meeting calmed down, Councillor Mike Armstrong said council had made a commitment to the people to have the public meeting February 14. He said if the consultant is not going to be ready it has nothing to do with the public meeting.

Councillor Marilyn Serjeantson said she too agreed the meeting should go ahead as planned, but was upset with the comments from the audience.

Councillor Walter Biehn opposed the February 14 date. He said "we are just going to get people saying they want more stores."

Councillor Ross Knechtel said it is not the function of council to limit competition, but it is their function to see a plan of the community is feasible. He said he had no objection to the meeting going ahead as planned. He pointed out a commitment had been made and misunderstanding would result from any postponement.

Booth said he was upset by the outbursts from the proposed developers, but felt the meeting should go ahead. "An eleventh hour change would only be stalling."

On the vote to postpone the meeting only Councillor George Malby and Harry Levy were in favor, so the meeting will go ahead on February 14.

## Sheridan opens first course here

For the first time Sheridan College is offering a course to be taught in Acton.

The course, which starts in two weeks, is titled Building Better Relationships. Acton resident Peter Marks is in charge of the course which is aimed at giving practical and proven keys to encourage greater understanding within a variety of family relationships.

Some of the topics to be covered are: ways to reduce stress, anxiety and depression, how to enrich a marriage by resolving conflicts, plan-

ning family goals and values, how to encourage responsible behavior in children.

Acton Trinity United Church is co-operating with Sheridan College in sponsoring the eight to ten week course. The course is held Wednesday evenings in the church.

Mr. Marks is a director of the Guelph Marriage and Family Life Association as well as being a consultant with the Addiction Research Foundation. He is also a former town councillor.

For information and registration contact Acton Community Services Centre 853-3310.

## Thieves grab church money

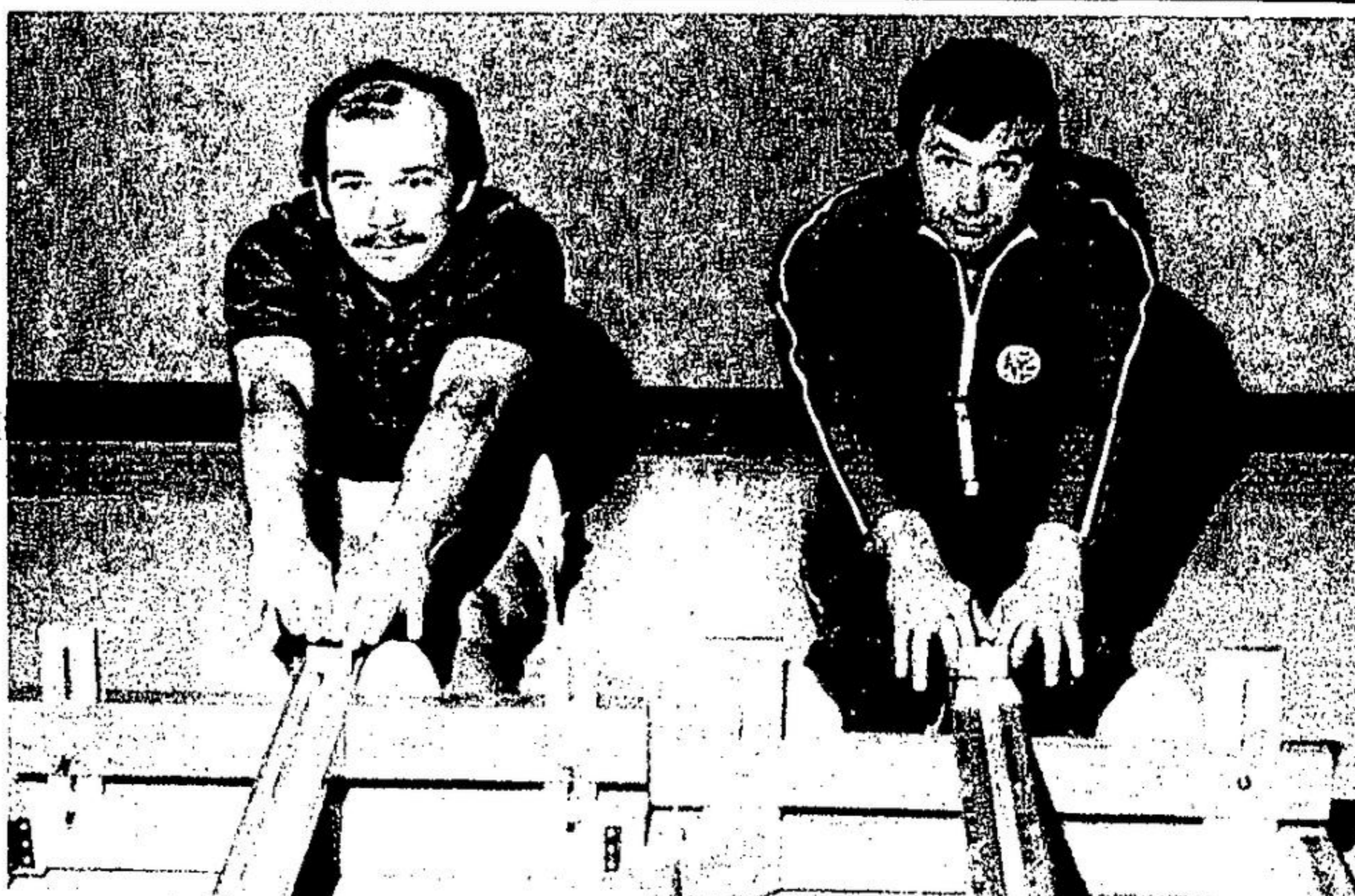
Thieves got away with \$350 in collection at St. Joseph's Church in the early afternoon. Thieves pried open a storage box. The money was in small bills and change.

About \$120 in cash was also stolen over the weekend during a break and entry at St. Joseph's school. Entry was gained into the building by breaking a window.

Monday one of the doors on the side of Morse Pro Hardware was tampered with. No entry was gained.

Police are also checking the theft of a \$250 Homelite chain saw from an R.R. 1 nursery and firewood business last week.

A window screen was removed and the window opened, however, entry



Row, row, row your boat . . .

Halton Hills Recreation Director Glen Gray (left) and Mayor Peter Pomeroy are limbering up and doing their exercises to help publicize Halton Hills' first annual Fitness Week from February 18 to 25.

Fitness week will kick off February 18 with a Regional Winter Carnival at Kelso and special events in both Acton and Georgetown. Photo by GORD MURRAY

## Chamber told

### Group effort key to saving downtown

Immediate action and a group effort by merchants of downtown Acton are what is required to save the area, according to Chamber of Commerce guest speaker Boris Shean.

Speaking at the Chamber's annual meeting, Mr. Shean told the group that the deterioration of the downtown area in Acton is similar to that of many other small communities. Mr. Shean revealed in his speech the findings of a grade 12 marketing and a grade 13 geography class during a survey for the Chamber in the fall of 1978.

From the facts presented in the survey, Mr. Shean drew conclusions in his speech and gave recommendations for a better, more unified Acton.

Mr. Shean told the audience of the need for an anchor store in the downtown area. In the meantime, he appealed to the merchants to make all of downtown a drawing card. Mr. Shean suggested creating a mall atmosphere through the use of trees, lights, controlled parking and common signs and awnings. "Create a mall image while retaining the charm of 'old' Acton," he said.

Mr. Shean said the survey concluded that

people like the convenience of shopping locally. Other fringe benefits included with local shopping are friendliness and personal service.

People completing the survey were dissatisfied with the variety and prices of local stores. "Price is still a great motivator. To keep people in town, compete with out-of-town prices. Let's add competitive prices to our image," Shean said.

He also suggested that merchants examine their

present advertising programs to be sure they are getting the most effective coverage and results.

Mr. Shean recommended merchants become involved with local groups and services that new Actonians are likely

to come in contact with, as well as creating some themselves.

Business Improvement Area president Henry Stachyra, told The Free Press he was extremely pleased with the speech by Mr. Shean. "We (the

B.I.A.) are looking forward for additional development in downtown. We have added parking and awnings. His speech gave us the encouragement that we were on the right track." (Continued on Page 3)



## Silver for Kevin

A series of triple jumps by Brian Orser was all that stood in the way of figure skater Kevin Parker in his bid for the Canadian Junior Men's Championship. Kevin, an Acton High School student, led Orser heading into the final freeskating program but dropped to second in the final standings. For story page B1.

## Heart campaign

—See Page 2—



Boris Shean

## Inland newspapers capture 22 awards

Sister newspapers of this newspaper, owned by Inland Publishing Co. Limited, are winners of 22 awards in the Ontario Weekly Newspapers Association's (O.W.N.A.) Better Newspaper Competition.

Leading the way is The Mississauga News, winner of six awards including best over-all newspaper in class 7, Ontario's largest circulation group for newspapers over 16,001.

Other awards for The Mississauga News in its class are: best sports pages, best local advertising, best classified advertising, and in the Premier awards category, best photo layout and best special edition (6,501 and over). All newspapers enter the Premier competitions.

Oshawa This Week is third in the same class capturing four awards. Included are best composition and layout, best editorial page and best tabloid front page in the Premier division.

The Brampton Guardian has the best front page and best photography in the same class.

The Georgetown Independent is the best newspaper in Class 5 (circulation 6,501 to 10,000) with five awards. In addition to best over-all, Georgetown Independent has the best editorial page, best sports pages, best classified advertising and best news and feature.

The Milton Canadian Champion is third in this class.

The Newmarket Era is third in Class 6 (circulation 10,001 to 16,000). It also wins best front page, best classified advertising and in the Premier division, champion correspondent for Marie Wheeler's column.

Last year Inland Publishing Co. Limited newspapers captured 14 awards.

The awards will be presented at the O.W.N.A.'s annual convention to be held March 1-3 in Toronto.