

Last Post for music festival?

By Eric Elstone
There will be no North Halton Music Festival this year and, perhaps, never again. After last May's music festival in Acton, the organizing committee decided to suspend the competition for a year, according to M. Z. Bennett public school principal Doug Magwood.

North Halton schools have sent choirs and duets to the festival for 51 years.

Organizers of the festival are soon to meet Halton Board of Education's Program Director Robert Dixon and assistant co-ordinator of arts Joan Clark.

The festival group will be looking for some direction from the board, said Mr. Magwood. "We'll inform them of the history of the music festival and the status of the music festival," he said.

Financially the festival has no worries. It's running in the black, according to the school principal.

The decision not to hold a 1980 festival came after considerable discussion. "We then

decided on several steps to lead ourselves to a final decision in a year's time." That decision, on whether the festival continues or ends, has to be made by November, according to Mr. Magwood.

The school board's music department has not promoted getting behind music teachers—the festival, he said. The board's contribution to the festival goes as far as paying to bus participants and having a trustee bring greetings from the board, he said.

Last year's edition of the music festival was one of the smallest in a number of years: eight schools of a possible 25 competed.

Acton, Georgetown and Milton schools—public, separate and private—are eligible. The private school is usually the Georgetown District Christian School.

Attendance of choirs at the festival has been dropping off slowly for a number of years.

"We had a good festival, a successful festival," said Mr. Magwood referring to last

May. It was, however, a little disappointing for organizers when three categories had no entries and there were two or three categories with only one entry.

The main reason for the lack of promotion of the festival is its competitive aspect, said Mr. Magwood.

Competitiveness bothers principals and some music heads. "It's different in physical education, you compete against the clock or teams. But when you compete in singing, they feel competition should not be stressed," Mr. Magwood said.

Timing is another reason for the falling off of support. Traditionally the festival is held early in May. "More and more now it competes with school trips."

"Many people feel now, concerts given by families of schools or in-concerts at the school level are more important than competitive music festivals, and that's hard to argue."

A principal, for example in Georgetown, must weigh the merits of the competition with other school activities. The principal could

have an operetta for two nights and attract about 1,000 people. Or he could have teachers spend time rehearsing a choir to sing, mainly to an Acton audience.

Not many Georgetown people have time to go in the day time to hear the concert, said Mr. Magwood.

Some very loyal schools do both activities. McKenzie-Smith Middle School produced an operetta—Rana's Pond—and two weeks later they were in the festival, he said.

Arguments in favor of continuing with the North Halton Music Festival centre on it being a tradition for more than half a century—with no affiliation with other groups for money.

There is an organization of adjudicators of music festivals, which indicates festivals are alive and well in the province, he said.

"I see it as just another way of getting children involved with music," said Magwood.

South Halton used to participate in all Halton music festivals.



Looking back at 1979

Denny Andrews of Acton received the Star of Courage last January from Governor General Edward Schreyer for risking his life to save his cousins in icy Newfoundland waters. For a look at the news of 1979 see Page B7.

The Acton Free Press

One Hundred and Fifth Year — No. 26

ACTON, ONTARIO, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 2, 1980.

Eighteen Pages — Twenty Cents

Acton men face murder charges

Police, fire marshal investigate hotel fire

Murder charges face three men in connection with the Dominion Hotel fire in Acton.

Hotel owner Cosimo Mercuri, 41, Michael McCristall, 46, and Leonard Cripps, 54, all of Acton were remanded in custody until January 7 in Milton Provincial Court Monday, according to police.

Halton Regional Police arrested the trio last Friday afternoon. They spent the weekend in the Hamilton detention centre.

Hotel resident Howard Gibbons, 58, died of asphyxiation in the August 19 blaze which levelled the century old Main St. establishment. An adjuster estimated the replacement value of the building to be \$400,000.

Halton Regional Police and the Ontario Fire Marshal, in a four month investigation, determined the hotel was deliberately set on fire.

The three men face the charge of second degree murder which is punishable by life in prison.

Police state that a preliminary hearing will determine if there is enough evidence to warrant a trial.

Halton Regional Police Chief James Harding disclosed at a press conference Monday at Oakville that accountants

were hired to check the hotel's books. Superintendent George Moore said the hotel was insured but the amount remains as evidence for the trial. "It was a very delicate, very tough investigation," according to Moore.

District One policeman Bruce Richards and Sgt. Ian Algar figured heavily in the investigation. Six other Halton officers and two men from the Ontario Fire Marshal's Office also took part in the investigation.

A passerby turned in the fire alarm about 2:30 a.m. Sunday, August 19. He had seen smoke billowing from the three-storey building. Minutes later when police arrived, a large crowd had already formed.

Another hotel resident suffered smoke inhalation, and he was released from Georgetown and District Memorial Hospital after examination.

Firefighters were on the scene for about 13 hours. Two Georgetown trucks were called to the scene.

The body, which was discovered on the first floor, was removed the day of the fire.

Mr. Mercuri, who spoke of rebuilding the hotel, recently started co-managing the Blue Horizon Inn in Fergus.



Cosimo Mercuri, left, Michael McCristall, centre, and Leonard Cripps, not shown in photo, were charged with second degree murder in connection with last August's Dominion Hotel fire. Halton Regional Police laid the charges after a four month investigation. Mr. Mercuri and Mr. McCristall are shown in the picture talking to a policeman the Sunday morning of the fire.

Liberal nomination draws two candidates

There is one definite candidate for next week's Liberal nomination race, with at least one other possibility.

Bill Perras, this week, announced his candidacy for the federal post. Al Wilson, an Acton High School teacher is hoping to run, but must clear matters with the Halton Board of Education before he can declare his candidacy.

Former Halton Member of Parliament Frank Philbrook will not

be seeking re-election. Mr. Perras says one of the reasons he is running is because he believes in public service. He is currently serving on the Oakville town council and has always felt that participation in the Parliament of Canada on behalf of the riding is the highest form of community contribution.

As a father of a young Canadian family, he says, he is concerned about the way Canada has been embarrassed on

a day-to-day basis by a mismanaged and rudderless Clark government and would like to influence the important decisions in the critical new decade.

Mr. Perras is a 30 year old Oakville resident. Nomination night is set for Monday at Blakelock High School, Rebecca St., Oakville.

The constitution of the riding association provides that candidates seeking the nomination must submit their intentions in writing to the riding executive 72 hours prior to the nomination proceedings and that only paid-up members of the association 72 hours prior to the meeting may vote, with the exception of the current membership renewals, which will be accepted the night of the nomination.

The successful candidate will run in the February 18 federal election.

Worms on lawn Christmas eve

Mother Nature decided to take a vacation over the holiday season having completely forgotten it was supposed to be winter in this part of the country (Don't anyone remind her, though).

The unseasonably mild

weather and noticeable lack of snow have been playing tricks

Mr. Hallway, Mowbray Place, called the Free Press offices Christmas Eve to tell us he found dew worms all over his front lawn.

Contest winners

The Acton Free Press Christmas Coloring contest had another successful year, with 34 entries in the various categories. Sarah Franklin and Tommy Gibson tied for first place in the four-year-old category. Five year class was won by Nici Haessler. Jennifer

Yaworsky was the six year old winner.

In the seven-year-old group, Susie Pucz placed first. Mardie Patterson won for the eight year olds, and Cheryl Genoe for the nines. Lesley Mathieson won the ten-year-old category. No 11-

year-olds entered the contest.

Santa Claus was the official judge of the annual contest. His work over the Christmas holidays was very much appreciated.

Winners will be notified in the near future of their prizes.

Balmy weather saves

Mother Nature has saved Halton Hills taxpayers \$39,000 in the last two months, with the balmy November and December weather.

At the end of December last year, the town had spent \$53,000 on winter control, including snow plowing, snow removal,

sanding and salting, while this year only \$16,000 has been spent.

On the total winter control budget for 1978 weather conditions resulted in the town overspending by \$34,700.

The budget total for winter control was \$176,900, but the town

actually spent \$211,600. In 1979, the same budget, totalled \$225,000 but only \$145,000 was spent, for a total saving of \$80,000.

Town budgets run from January to December, so the heavy snow months are included in the '79 figures.

Sixth Line

Keep fighting gravel pits in courts if necessary

Residents of the Sixth Line are determined to continue their fight against wayside pits in their area, and will if necessary obtain legal advice on the possibility of taking action against the province.

The committee of Sixth Line residents, informed of an approaching tender for an extension of Highway 400, and the

listing of three wayside pits, Odriceo, Vincent and Cohoon, feel this is unacceptable to them unless the MTC gives them assurance all wayside pits in the area will be taken off the list as available sources for aggregate for all future road-work.

Committee member Ron Johnson emphasized the environmental

aspect, particularly the possibility of depleting wells in the area must be investigated, and the amount of gravel in the pits established.

The residents are asking a reply to a letter setting out these conditions by January 7, when Halton Hills council will be asked by the MTC to approve the listing of the three pits.

Two other pits in the area, the Pitatti pit and the Spitzer pit are not listed as sources for the Highway 400 extension south to Eglinton. The extension is not a major thoroughway, but a four lane road.

On the list of aggregate sources for the Highway 400 job are 24 pits, but only the three in Halton Hills are wayside pits, said Johnson. "The others are commercially licensed pits."

"We are not giving up and will keep fighting until all the Sixth Line pits are taken off the lists," commented Ian Somers, another member of the Sixth Line committee.

The residents have set as their goals, the closing down of all Sixth Line pit operations as soon as possible, proper controls during final operations, and the rehabilitation following closure.

Cash, car stolen

Halton Regional Police have not yet apprehended two suspects in connection with a Mill Street theft, Saturday, December 29.

Police say thieves entered the Mill Street home and stole \$1175 cash as well as the homeowner's car.

Boxing Day crash kills Guelph man

A 23-year-old Guelph man is dead following a single car crash Boxing Day near Rockwood. Stephen Hunter died in Guelph General Hospital after being thrown from his car just east of Wellington County Road 29 at 6:30 p.m.

Guelph Ontario Provincial Police say the Hunter vehicle was travelling on Highway 7, when it crossed the ditch, struck a hydro pole, rolled over and landed on its side.



Clowning around! Several clowns were in attendance at the Acton Legion Christmas Party recently, entertaining the youngsters until Santa arrived. Jim Pink and Dave Lewis were clowning around with Joann Lewis and Samantha Brakenridge before the jolly gentleman arrived.



Lesley Mathieson was one of the winners in the recent Free Press Christmas Coloring Contest.