

# He ran after the medals at '36 Olympics

## Beardmore retiree Abbott Conway competed alongside Jesse Owens in Berlin

By PAUL DORSEY

Among the millions of television viewers who've been watching the XXIII Olympic Games from Los Angeles is an engaging Beardmore retiree with a special interest in the track and field competition.

At 70, Abbott Conway still gets plenty of use out of the long legs that carried him into Olympic competition 48 years ago. Then a law student at the University of Toronto, Conway was chosen to try for a medal in the 800-metre event at the 1936 Games in Berlin, perhaps the most talked-about Olympic gathering since the Games were reborn in 1896.

The RR1 Puslinch resident, who served as assistant general manager of the Beardmore Tannery in the years prior to his retirement, never won an Olympic medal, but the pride he can take in his participation grows with each new gathering of Olympic contenders.

And the memories grow in significance: the Nazi hierarchy injecting propaganda into casual athletic receptions, the black-uniformed SS forming an honor guard for Hitler's visits, renowned film-maker Leni

Riefenstahl shooting the classic "Olympia", nine medals for Canada, and of course America's Jesse Owens, perhaps the greatest track star of his time.

### REUNION

Well-read and well-spoken, Conway has no trouble recalling and retelling those memories, whether it's for the record with the press or in casual conversation with his children or his old team mates, as was the case recently when the Hamilton Central Library took the time to organize a reunion of former Olympians.

Conway tends to dismiss his own involvement in the Olympics and the Empire Games that followed two years later with a few words and a chuckle or two, but he loves to talk at length about other athletes from those days. The late, great Philip Edwards, who brought five bronze medals home to Canada from three consecutive Olympiads, holds a special place in Conway's recollections.

Conway was selected along with Edwards and Jack Liddle to represent this country in the 800 metres at the XI Olympiad. After the Olympic trials that same year in Montreal,

after a week-long boat trip to Europe during which the runners did their laps on deck and after the Canadian team marched across the Reich sports field giving the arm-extended Olympic salute, which too many people mistook for the Nazi salute, Conway failed to get past the semi-finals in his event.

### FIFTH BRONZE

Edwards went on to win his fifth bronze that year, deploying some of the best tactical field work Conway has ever seen. The black athlete's races were all thrillers, just as Jesse Owens seemed to do no wrong for the U.S.

"Jesse was an awfully pleasant fellow," Conway recalls. "There was always a lot of jostling among the other runners to see who would get down to start with him, because he was supposed to be the best there ever was."

Perhaps a little too much was made of Hitler's refusal to shake Owens' hand after his gold-winning performances, Conway says, since other American black athletes were accomplishing similar feats, but once the blacks started leaving the Germans behind at the starting line, he says,

everyone noticed that the Führer never came around with congratulations for anyone anymore.

Nevertheless, Conway notes, the German athletes dominated those Games, and each new victory was a signal for the 110,000 spectators who filled the stands every day to raise a deafening tumult each time the swastika flag went up.

"I think that whole Olympics was a great big con game," Conway says. "Hitler bought himself another two years with it. The German people were told to be specially nice to any English visitors. The staging of the Games was special. It was all very Wagnerian, with huge blocks of Nazi military people in the stands."

### STILL USED

Conway remembers the numerous German victories for the playing of "Deutschland Uber Alles", which is still used today, and "Horst Wessel", a song now irrevocably linked with the Nazis and a dangerous tune to be overheard casually humming anywhere in Europe.

He remembers Leni Riefenstahl filming

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The ongoing Olympic Games are bringing back a lot of great memories for former Beardmore assistant manager Abbott Conway. Now retired in rural Puslinch, he competed in track and field events at the XI Olympiad held in Berlin in 1936.

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**LEGENDARY!**

They're on the far side of 50 now, but Rompin' Ronnie Hawkins (left) and Bo Diddley sang together at the Acton Rock Fest Saturday with a youthful passion that reminded everyone what rock'n'roll was like when it was young. Their duet on "Hey Bo Diddley" capped off a nine-hour festival of top-flight acts including (in photo at left) England's Long John Baldry, now a Hamilton resident, and rising Toronto star Patti Jannetta.



## Rock fest loses money but who's complaining?

Attendance at Saturday's Acton Rock Fest fell short of expectations, but nobody's crying the blues.

The roughly 1,100 who did attend the nine-hour tribute of sorts to 1950s-style rock'n'roll in Prospect Park loved every minute of it.

The performers, from American guitar legend Bo Diddley to Canada's rockabilly rebel Rompin' Ronnie Hawkins, let organizers know they thoroughly enjoyed the reception.

Food, beverage and souvenir concessions, including two beer gardens, were the scenes of bustling crowds and line-ups throughout the day and concert-goers roamed casually from the wide grassy area in front of the stage to the booths at the rear and side.

Local young people recruited by the organizing Acton Minor Hockey Association (AMHA) had a busy day working on the gate, inside the arena where the artists' dressing rooms were located, and on and around the huge stage they helped erect.

Security staff beefed up by dozens of

regional police officers on foot, in cruisers and in a patrol boat on the lake ensured a hasty exit for the two or three overzealous fans who began creating minor disturbances in and around the beer gardens.

It was a hot and relatively hectic day for all concerned, but everyone, organizer Carol Robinson acknowledged, did a great job and had a great time without exception.

Proceedings started almost 40 minutes late atop the 12-foot high stage specially erected on the ball diamond nearest the park entrance, but from the Backbeats' rave-up opening set of rock standards to Hawkins' and Diddley's mutually-respectful duet on "Hey Bo Diddley", the pace never slackened.

In between were enthusiastically-received sets by Toronto's Paul James B nd, Grottybeats and Pearl City and Hamilton's Long John Baldry and a rousing finale involving Patti Jannetta and the Hawks.

Even after Hawkins wrapped up the show about 11 p.m., more than a hundred concert-goers headed into the community centre for a dance that finally capped off the proceedings.

The bad news, as it slowly became apparent Monday and Tuesday, was that the concert, six months in the making, lost almost \$5,000 when it was expected to raise upwards of \$60,000. That amount will still be raised in time to send 40 young Acton hockey players to Europe this December, organizers have vowed, but the concert hasn't helped a bit.

The main problem, Carol Robinson explained, was that most of the 2,000 advance tickets distributed among AMHA supporters for eventual sale went unsold. It was hoped that 5,000 tickets in all would be sold, with each concert-goer buying his share of food and beverages, profits from which also went to the AMHA. Another 1,500 people through the gate would have at least steered the event into the black, she said.

Apart from the holiday weekend and unsettled weather, Robinson said, a number of factors may or may not have contributed to the attendance shortfall.

Headliner Bo Diddley, managed in

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## Currie comes to visit

# Acton focal point of Grit campaign

by PAM DOUGLAS

Hailing from a small community herself, Halton Liberal candidate Oriana Currie is sympathetic towards Acton's desire to have a VIA train stop in the community.

"I would certainly do anything I could to have the people of Acton get their wish," she said, after the situation was briefly explained to her and this newspaper questioned the possibility of reinstating VIA service in Acton and other smaller communities.

Currie agreed that 50 passengers (the number of people in Acton who would use the service, reached through a mid-March Acton High School survey) is a substantial number.

Currie opened the Acton headquarters of the Halton Liberals Friday.

Halton-Burlington MPP Julian Reed, also present at the opening ceremonies, said the northern section of Halton riding will be the focal point of the campaign.

"In the history of provincial and federal elections, Acton has been the key to the win," he said.

"It's important to recognize where it (Acton) stands in the political spectrum."

In her opening remarks, Currie mentioned her endorsement of Prime Minister John

Turner's First Chance program dealing with youth job creation, equal access and opportunity for access to people of equal qualifications and former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's peace initiative.

"I think Canada's role is as a peace keeper and we're going to concentrate our efforts in that direction," said Currie when questioned further on the peace issue.

Canada is in a position to deal with both superpowers and should come up with a security system for the world.

"I don't see our need to increase our defense system," she said, adding that we should maintain and update the equipment we already have.

Currie is looking forward to implementing the First Chance program in the Halton riding, she said.

"I'm happy to see that the program appears particularly helpful for young women in that it will give them the chance to be trained for work in non-traditional, higher-paying fields," she said.

Reed added that Halton riding is, "privileged that people (like Currie) of this calibre offer themselves as a candidate."

The office is located in downtown Acton. The phone number is 853-3660.



Halton Liberal candidate Oriana Currie (centre) and Halton-Burlington MPP Julian Reed (right) opened the Liberal headquarters in Acton Friday. The office is located at Dawe Real Estate on Mill St.

## 'It's up to you and me'

# Green Party's candidate says he has 'a lot to gain'

Halton's first-ever Green Party candidate says he won't win the Sept. 4 election and will "probably come in fourth," but believes he has a lot to gain.

Chris Kowalchuk, 22, of Oakville will carry the standard of the international political party which prides itself on a platform designed to protect the environment and remove the threat of nuclear war.

Describing himself as "actively seeking employment as a Member of Parliament," the former bartender and Glen Eden ski lift foreman who studied ski area management at Humber College says he is "running for my life."

"We would eventually like to see Canada operate as a self-sufficient economy, with durable goods instead of planned obsolescence," Kowalchuk told this newspaper.

human-potential movement: we always tend to say it's somebody else's job, but it's up to you and me."

The Green Party, which has brought about significant political action in Germany and northern Europe, has about 50 candidates across Canada in this election, including six in the Metro area and one in Brampton-Georgetown. They claim a Canadian membership of 5,000.

About eight months ago, Kowalchuk was taking an active interest in the work of the World Federalists organization, members of which voted to keep the group non-political in its dealings with the Parliamentarians for World Order (PWO) an umbrella peace group seeking a United Nations consensus among international politicians.

Unimpressed with Halton MP Otto Jelinek's feelings toward the PWO, Kowalchuk decided he "could either do

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## Hawkins, Diddley duet a blast from the past

By MARK HOLMES

What happens when two legendary rock and roll greats are put on stage together in front of a crowd?

You get a show that knocks your socks off and that's exactly what superstars Ronnie Hawkins and Bo Diddley did to the enthusiastic audience at the closing of the Acton Rock Fest Saturday night.

Both Diddley and Hawkins had the audience reminiscing about the days when rock and roll was just evolving, and while some of the younger members of the crowd were a little unfamiliar with the lyrics, many were singing and dancing to songs that once rocked the continent.

While some people would say that the entertainers, who've been in the music

business for more than two decades, are too old, the feeding at Prospect Park was one of youthful enthusiasm.

Hawkins seemingly has defeated time as his voice came over the P.A. with energy that had the crowds packing the front of the stage.

Diddley, with his perfect, raspy blues voice didn't disappoint his fans either and when the time came for Hawkins to sing his best known song, "Hey Bo Diddley", the pair got onstage together to give the song their all.

It was a perfect way to end the musical extravaganza and everyone left the park with a smile on their faces, and some the world's best rock and roll ringing in their ears.