

Popular Citizen of the Year

Memorials pay tribute to Billy Middleton, 90

Three separate memorial services this week bear ample testimony to the warm regard Actonians had for former Citizen of the Year Billy Middleton, who died Friday at age 90.

As if the Acton Legion Hall wasn't already crowded enough with friends and admirers last May 6 for his gala birthday party, Middleton managed to make a few more, charming new acquaintances with his unique recollections of the old Town of Acton and inspiring them with his hopes for the future.



BILLY MIDDLETON

An esteemed member of the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 197, and the Masonic Walker Lodge, Middleton died at Guelph General Hospital, where he'd spent the previous two weeks.

He is survived by his wife Helen of Acton and brother Jim in Toronto.

Funeral services were held yesterday (Tuesday) afternoon at the Shoemaker Funeral Home with Rev. Don Matheson of Trinity United Church officiating. Pallbearers at the funeral which followed at Fairview Cemetery were all members of Branch 197: John Goy Sr., Vic Patrick, Pat Waldie, Ed Footitt, Harry Norton and Jack Ridley.

Middleton's memory was honored at special services at Walker Lodge Sunday night and at the Legion Monday night.

Chosen Acton's Citizen of the Year in 1965, Middleton was known as a proud Actonian, bemoaning its loss of municipal status with the coming of regional government and pledging his undying support for the community—and the Legion branch—he loved so well.

He was born May 6, 1894, in Brantford, one of Gavin and Marie Middleton's six children. He fought overseas throughout World War I with the Tenth Signals Brigade and liked to joke in later years about being wounded just two months before the Armistice.

He married Helen Oct. 11, 1920, in Stratford and the couple moved to Acton three years later. He worked as an operator for CN before taking on a new post in the

Canada Customs and Excise office, a job he held from 1934 until his retirement in 1959.

One of the soldiers fighting in Europe who received Middleton's packages during the Second War, John Goy Sr. recalled Monday how his old friend helped him obtain part of the old Acton post office for his warehouse as a memento.

He and Vic Patrick recently brought Middleton out to Goy Cartage to take his picture standing atop the stone window sill that was removed from the post office when it was torn down. It bears the inscription "Customs" and marks Goy's own customs port at the suffrage warehouse. The loss of the old post office was another black day in Acton's history as far as Billy Middleton was concerned.

Middleton served on the Acton public and separate school boards and during World War II helped form the Acton War Services League, dispatching gifts and supplies to Actonians fighting overseas.

Among the many community projects that shared his attention in later years was the construction of the Scout Hall, where he also served as a Scout leader.

Cradle Roll is taking care of tots



Knox Presbyterian Church's second annual Cradle Roll Tea brought a host of pre-schoolers and their proud moms and grandmothers to the church hall Sunday afternoon for a get-acquainted party. The tod-

dlers will take part in their own Christian education program during regular Sunday services, one of several activities organized by the church's Congregational Life Committee.

Mercuri acquitted on perjury charge

By ERIC ELSTONE

The last owner of the Dominion Hotel, Cosimo Mercuri, was acquitted last week of a perjury charge arising from his testimony during a murder trial two and a half years ago.

Mercuri, who is in penitentiary for second degree murder, was found not guilty by provincial court Judge Douglas Latimer last Wednesday in Milton.

The Crown alleged that Mercuri knowingly gave false evidence while testifying under oath in March, 1982. He testified that he did not have a sexual affair or close personal relationship with Heather Moreland.

Moreland, a bartender at the Dominion Hotel, told the court last week that she and

Mercuri did have a sexual relationship that started in 1977 and ended in the summer of 1980.

After the August, 1979, fire which gutted the hotel, Halton police followed Mercuri and Moreland to a Brampton area motel. An officer saw them fully clothed on a motel room bed. No sex was observed.

Under cross-examination by defence lawyer Rory Cornale, Moreland indicated that she did not hold a romantic view of the affair.

"For me, (the relationship) was relief from a gruelling work schedule and it was also to maintain a decent working environment, so I wasn't harassed or bullied. Basically, that's what it was for," she said.

She acknowledged that she knew he was seeing another woman at the time of their relationship.

The court heard that Moreland committed perjury during Mercuri's preliminary hearing. Court also learned that she recanted soon afterwards, in time to correct the impression she had given.

Moreland discounted Cornale's view of the role police played in getting her to change her preliminary hearing testimony. She also indicated that she does not know why she perjured herself in the first place, but recalled a sense of relief after having changed her testimony.

"The police were not the reason for my attempt to commit suicide," Moreland told the court.

Based on the standard set by the Supreme

Court of Canada—that for an accused to be convicted of perjury he must have made false statements under oath, known they were false and have intended to mislead the court—Judge Latimer found Mercuri not guilty.

"In the opinion of this court, there is no evidence of him intending to mislead the (Supreme Court of Ontario)," he said.

The Crown argued that based on Mercuri's testimony, the court could draw an inference.

"Perhaps he was trying to give evidence of being of good moral character and therefore he would not have set the fire," said the Crown.

Cornale reminded Judge Latimer that during the murder trial, Mercuri admitted having the affair with the other woman.

Mrs. Mercuri and her son were in the provincial court room during the perjury trial last week.

Mercuri was convicted of the second degree murder of hotel resident Howard Gibbons. He died when the hotel, located on Main St. N., beside Acton IGA, was completely gutted by fire.

Mercuri is seeking leave from the Supreme Court of Canada to appeal his murder conviction. That effort has been scheduled for next month. The Ontario Court of Appeal denied a similar appeal by Mercuri in February.

The Supreme Court of Ontario sentenced Mercuri to ten years in prison before he will be eligible for parole.

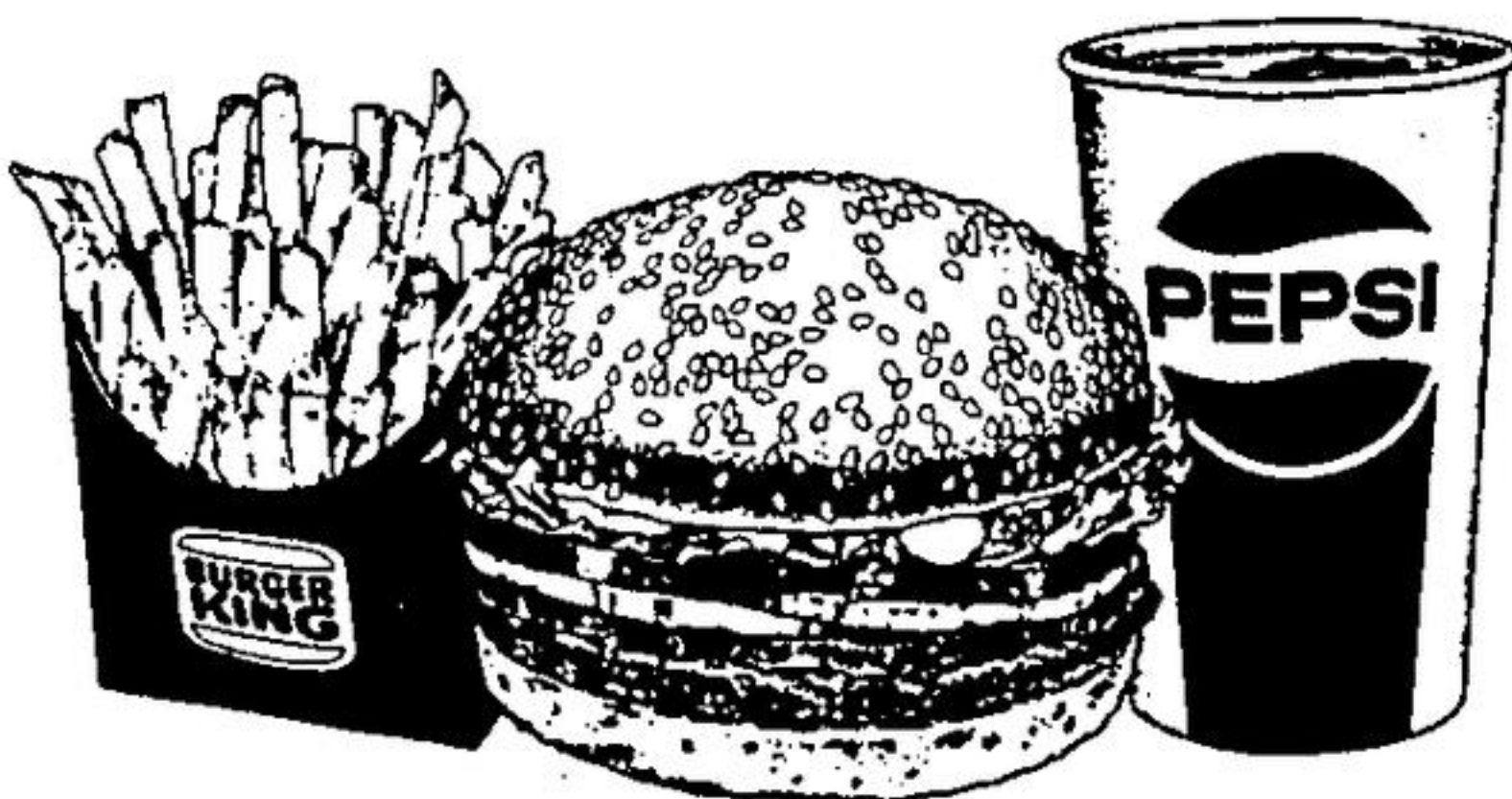


Relatively new to Acton's Knox Presbyterian, Rev. Craig Cribar sees social and educational activities for members of his congregation, even the little ones listed on the "Cradle Roll", as an important part of church functions.



"Those little voices we hear in church are the voices of the future," Rev. Cribar told parents and grandparents at the Cradle Roll Tea Sunday. Dressed up in their finest outfits, the youngsters sat quietly down to tea at their own tables while flashbulbs popped.

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