

Halton Hills' first mayor recalls career

By MICHAEL HOLLETT

Herald editor
The results of last week's Halton Hills municipal election not only saw a young challenger swept into the mayor's seat, it also marked the end, or at least interruption, of 12-year career in local municipal politics for defeated Mayor Tom Hill.

Mayor Hill's 12 years in local politics have seen many changes in Halton Hills, including the incorporation of Halton Hills itself in 1974. Municipal

politics changed quickly and dramatically during Mayor Hill's term which saw him go from being a councillor on the old Esqueving Township council to the first Mayor in Halton Hills' history.

Mayor Hill did not start out to be a politician but in 1966, at the age of 44, he got fed up with the township council's handling of some bad flooding in Glen Williams and he decided the best way to deal with the problem was run for council himself. In those days the

township council consisted of a reeve, deputy-reeve and three councillors. Mayor Hill succeeded an incumbent to win his first council seat in 1966.

SHORT TERM
Township councillor's terms only lasted one year in the Sixties so Mayor Hill successfully ran for a council seat three years in a row. He said his first surprise as a new councillor was that the township did not use all the money given to it by the Ontario,

Ministry of Transportation and Communications for road work. He said the township often returned portions of the grant to the ministry.

"I vowed that we would never send the money back, and we even asked for more every year," he said. Road conditions were a major issue in Esqueving back in 1966 and roads remain a major issue to this day, he said. After his three year stint as a councillor, Mayor Hill was

elected as Esqueving's deputy-reeve for two years, followed by a two term as reeve.

"I worked my way up the ladder to the top," he said. Regional government had not hit Halton while Mayor Hill was on Esqueving council, however, Halton County did have a County Council and, as reeve and deputy-reeve, Mayor Hill served on the council.

VARIOUS TIMES
At various times he was chairman of the manor board, miller and a member of the Children's Aid Society Board. "They used to say County Council was kind of a club but regardless of what people said, they got the job done."

The north end of Halton County got more roads than any township in Halton, Mayor Hill said.

In 1973, the local municipal politics scene took a dramatic turn and Mayor Hill - then reeve of Esqueving township - was in the middle of it. It was during 1973 that the Ontario government started to bring in regional government. Not only was the county of Halton replaced with Halton region but the new town of Halton Hills was created, encompassing the old towns of Acton, Georgetown as well as Mayor Hill's Esqueving township.

Mayor Hill said representatives from all three municipalities spent most of August and September of 1973 meeting to prepare for the transition of regional government. A priority was given to ensuring that members of each municipality's staff would not lose their jobs as a result of the transition.

Mayor Hill said that when he first learned of the creation of regional government, he was surprised that the matter was not taken to the public for their endorsement through a plebiscite.

ALTOGETHER NEW
"The region was something altogether new. You had to read every bit of literature you got so you would be up on every aspect of regional government."

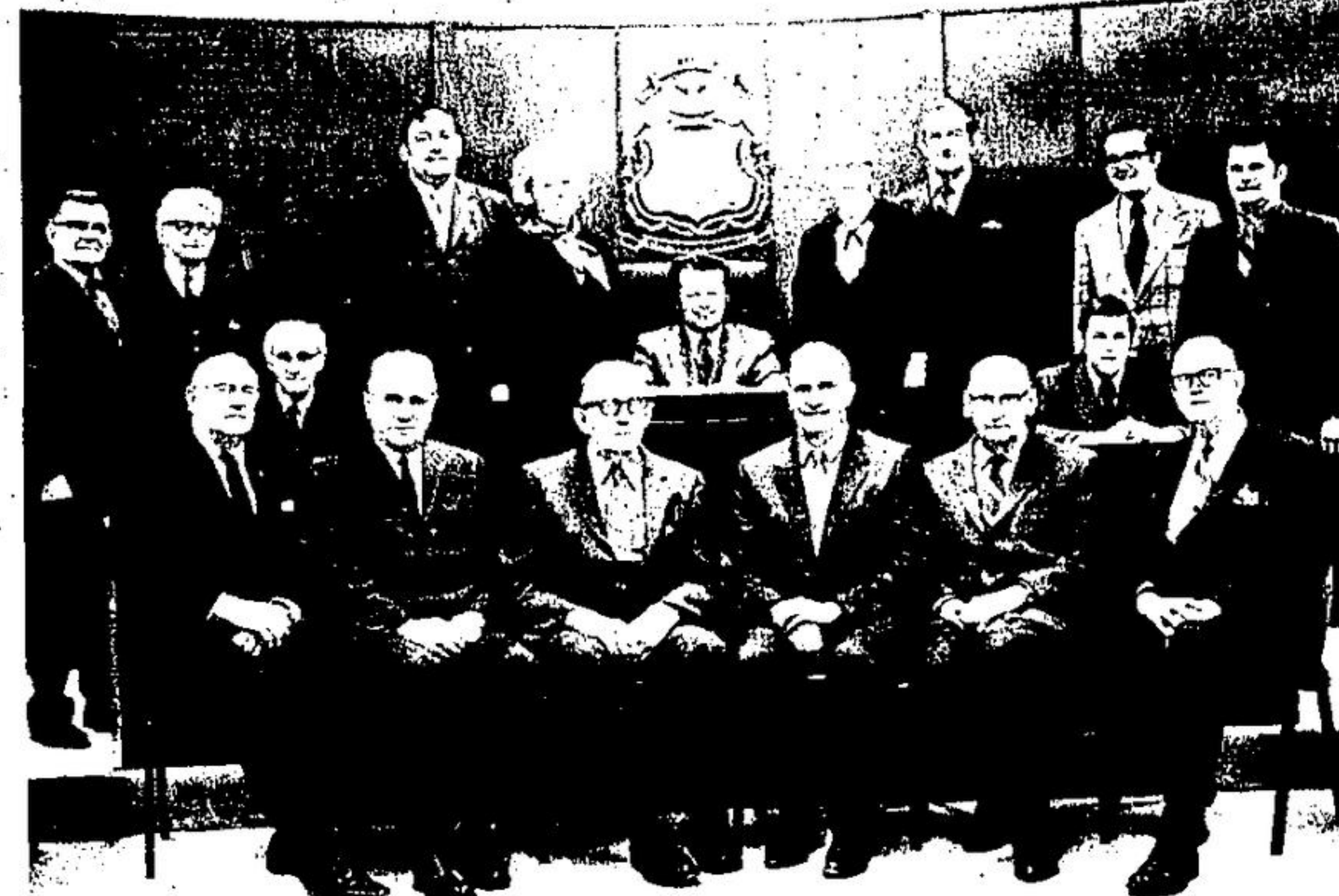
"I wondered how Esqueving was going to fare on the new town council with only three seats on a 12 member council."

With the creation of the new town, a new position of mayor



Mayor Tom Hill poses in his office in front of some of the keepsakes he has collected during his 12 years in municipal politics. Mayor Hill says he may run for a council seat in the 1980 elections.

(Herald photo)



Mayor Hill (on left near crest) poses with a pre-region county council.

Mayor's hometown was "rough, tough"

Halton Hills mayor Tom Hill served in local municipal politics for 12 years before his defeat at the polls last Monday night, but he has been part of the Halton community since 1920 - that's when he was born in Glen Williams, where he has lived ever since.

Mayor Hill describes the Glen Williams of his youth as "one of the roughest, toughest villages around but also the most neighbourly with a 'help thy neighbour' feeling that I think you couldn't get any better anywhere."

Mayor Hill says he remembers the village when there was nothing but "dirt roads and pot holes" and very few cars. Mayor Hill's father originally came from Kentucky before moving to Glen Williams via Toronto.

His father ran the Gladstone Hotel in Toronto before taking over the hotel in Glen Williams. Mayor Hill says his family is related to that of Thomas Jefferson, the third President of the United States - hence the mayor's name, Thomas Jefferson Hill.

At 6 feet, two inches and 220 pounds, Mayor Hill says his

father had little trouble running his hotel.

AVID HORSEMAN
Being from Kentucky, Mayor Hill's father was an avid horseman who both raised and raced the animals.

He passed his affection for horses on to his son who still describes himself as a horse lover.

Mayor Hill's father was the official starter of horse races at the Dufferin and Long Branch racetracks in Toronto when they had harness racing. He was often the official starter at the Georgetown Fair.

Mayor Hill left public school

in 1935 at the age of 15 to take a job with Smith and Stone. He went on to take jobs with Glen Apple Products in Glen Williams, the Credit Valley Bottling Company and Beaumont Knitting.

Mayor Hill then went to work for Domtar Paper, a company he stayed with for 31 years until the company left Georgetown and he was given an early retirement with pension.

When Mayor Hill took his first job and decided to forget about high school, Halton Hills along with the rest of Canada was in the midst of pulling itself out of the Depression.

He said of the Depression days in Glen Williams, "In those days if somebody had a problem a neighbour would help him out."

When asked if he ever thought of leaving the Glen Williams area, Mayor Hill said, "There was no use wandering away from here. Far away fields often look greener, but they weren't any greener than the ones at home."

ROUGH, TUMBLER
Glen Williams' rough and tumble character often showed itself in the relationship between the people of the Glen and Georgetown residents.

"I can remember when the boys of Georgetown couldn't get over the 'cut' hill if we didn't want them. And there was always a lot of competition when we played hockey."

Mayor Hill was an avid hockey player. He played juvenile hockey for Glen Williams and every Saturday afternoon he would make the trek into Georgetown for the weekly game.

"We would walk from Glen Williams to the old arena in Georgetown and back with our duffle bags over our shoulders in 20 below zero weather to play hockey," Mayor Hill said.

TEACHERS' SCHOOL
Mayor Hill explains that his Glen Williams upbringing definitely helped shape his personality.

"I'm a guy that says what I think and I have been that way all my life. They say you can attract more flies with honey than vinegar but when you have been raised one way it's hard to change it."

A widower, Mayor Hill still lives in Glen Williams with his daughter, Eleanor, a qualified high school teacher who now does supply teaching in Halton.

From his proud way of talking about his home town of Glen Williams, it's unlikely he will be moving from his rough, tough neighbourly village in the near future.



BEEF DINNER

St. Alban's Church in Glen Williams held a beef supper last Saturday afternoon and Corinna Stevens (left) and younger sister Cindy were on hand to help Vi Haines serve up the meals. (Herald photo)

Lawyer gives small claims court tips at legal clinic's Acton seminar

By PAUL DOHSEY

Herald staff writer
Be sincere, act promptly, prepare your case well and observe established protocol and your chances of winning the battle of the small claims court will be greatly improved, student lawyer Bob Benner told a handful of interested citizens in Acton last Wednesday.

The advice was offered as part of a series of seminars being sponsored by the Halton Hills Legal Aid Clinic. Mr. Benner, who is articling with the Georgetown firm of Nelson Baines and Steele, covered the many finer points of a citizen's involvement - both as plaintiff and defendant - in cases before the Halton Region small claims court, located on Steeles Avenue in Milton.

One of the many student lawyers who have cut their legal teeth in small claims courts, Mr. Benner explained that such courts essentially provide forums for citizens who cannot afford legal fees. Lawyers often become involved, however, when the stakes are high or the issues are complicated, he said.

BELOW \$1,000
According to Mr. Benner, small claims courts deal with financial disputes involving up to \$1,000. It has no jurisdiction over the disposition of wills and land or libel and slander suits, he said.

Mr. Benner advised those intending to bring action before a small claims court to do so in the region or area where the "cause of action" took place, particularly if the dispute stems from a traffic accident in which police officers were involved. Police are more readily available to testify in the area where they have jurisdiction, he pointed out.

Minors - those under 18 years of age - seeking to launch an action in small claims courts, Mr. Benner said, must have an adult, who is referred to as the plaintiff's "next friend," handle their case. If the case fails, the next friend is then required to cover court costs.

Similarly, if the defendant is a minor, the adult charged with conducting his defence is referred to as his "guardian ad

litem." Mr. Benner noted that women faced the same requirements as minors in courts until several years ago.

FILING CLAIM
In filing a claim with Halton small claims court clerk Bruce McNabb, Mr. Benner said, the plaintiff must list the amount of damages, a request for an unspecified amount of interest on the damages and the names and addresses of all persons, companies or agencies involved in the case. The basic facts, rather than the format in which they are presented, are what is important, he said.

Plaintiffs are required to pay a \$7 court fee if the amount of their claim is \$10 or less, Mr. Benner reported. Claims ranging from \$10 to \$20 cost \$9, from \$20 to \$50 cost \$9.75, from \$50 to \$100 cost \$13, from \$100 to \$200 cost \$15, from

\$200 to \$400 cost \$17.50 and from \$400 to \$1,000 cost \$19.50. There are additional charges required when the involvement of second defendants necessitate extra bailiffs and when court documents must be served, necessitating mileage expenditures.

Once the defendant is served with notice of claim, Mr. Benner said, there begins a 10-day period during which attempts can be made to settle the dispute out of court. Failure to reach a settlement or partial settlement within that time requires the defendant to file a dispute with the court clerk representing his intention to challenge the plaintiff's claim in court.

If a dispute is not filed within 10 days, the plaintiff can apply to the court judge - Mr. Justice John Roberts in Milton

for a default judgement which Mr. Benner stressed still requires the plaintiff to prove his case and the extent of damages. The defendant can still appeal the default judgement within 14 days and have a court date set to hear the original claim. There must be good reason, of course, why the dispute was not filed on time.

PROVE FACETS
Mr. Benner admitted that the rules of evidence and the procedure surrounding its presentation are difficult to understand in any court. He pointed out, though, that it is the plaintiff's sole responsibility to prove all facets of the case, either by testifying personally or offering documentation or witnesses.

"You can prove anything with only one witness, and that

witness could be yourself," he said, "as long as the judge believes you. The number of witnesses you have or your opponent has doesn't matter as long as your witnesses are believable."

Mr. Benner acknowledged that witnesses are not always ready and willing to become involved in the legal process. In that event, he said, they should be assured that all of their costs will be remunerated, but the party seeking their help must take care not to offer anything that could be construed as a form of bribe.

Subpoenas are important in such cases, Mr. Benner said, since scheduled witnesses who do not show up in court can seriously damage a case. Generally, he added, affidavit evidence will be accepted in small claims courts, but parties involved are advised to check with the clerk in their area first.

If either party has good reason to request a postponement of the court date, adjournments are usually granted automatically by the judge the first time they are sought, Mr. Benner said. The party doing so must be sure to inform his opponent of the adjournment as well as the new court date himself.

TRIAL DATE
When the trial date arrives, Mr. Benner explained, the failure of either party to show up leads to an immediate decision being handed down in his opponent's favor. There are no provisions thereafter for the absent party to re-file his claim and seek another hearing.

In giving evidence, Mr. Benner advised, refer to the judge as "Your Honor," stick to the facts of the case, keeping them clear, concise and orderly, present your most expert witness or strongest evidence first and use your own words, rather than referring to a written submission or even personal notes. Most importantly, he said, be sure to point out your opponent in court as being the subject of your complaint.

If your opponent's witness



Student lawyer Bob Benner and Peggy Balkind at a recent Legal Aid seminar in Acton. (Herald photo)

Continued On Page 24