

HALTON'S PEOPLE

GDHS music teacher says he's "a lucky guy"



Harry Hamilton, band instructor at Georgetown District High School models one of the crazy hats presented to him over the 10 years he has taught here. His students also decorate his office with their own special art work as well as coaxing Harry to wear a cowboy hat or this derby painted fire engine red. (Herald photo)

By MAGGIE HANNAH
Herald staff writer

"I'm a lucky guy. My whole career has been lucky. Even getting this job was just through luck," says Georgetown District High School's resident band leader.

Harry Hamilton, 57, didn't even apply for a job when he was hired 10 years ago. One of his neighbours in Elobicoke was a teacher at the school and he knew there was an opening for a music teacher. He arranged an interview for Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Hamilton felt obligated to show up for it since the man had gone to so much bother.

"I wasn't even really interested in becoming a high school music teacher at that point," he laughs. "I was playing still and I was a travelling music teacher with the Toronto Board of Education. I didn't need it. I liked Mr. Furlong (the high school's principal) and he seemed to like me so I decided I'd give it a try. It was only a temporary contract anyway so I thought I'd try it and if it didn't work out I could quit the next year."

He liked it and the young people and by the look of the art work decorating his private office off his classroom it is obvious that his students like Mr. Hamilton too.

"The kids call me Harry and I don't mind," he says. "They could do lots worse things than call me by my first name."

Mr. Hamilton is teaching three of the five 70-minute music periods a day this semester. Although class sizes vary, one of them has no less than 52 or 53 students in it. It is not unusual to have students drop in to practise with the band during their lunch period or a spare period. It just shows how most of them feel about their music and their instructor.

Although the classes are big he finds them reasonably easy to control.

"When they're in here they're busy," he says, "and busy people aren't a problem."

ALL IN FUN
That doesn't mean there's no mischief, he added with a grin, but it's all in fun, not malicious. The fact that his students are taking music because they want to is another plus factor for him as a teacher, he feels. Youngsters who are really interested in something aren't hard to teach. It's the one who are being forced into a subject they don't want that give everyone a headache.

Mr. Hamilton's background as a professional musician shows why he didn't feel the need to become a high school teacher.

He did his first radio broadcast as a harmonicaist at the age of 10. At 11 he won a gold medal at the Canadian National Exhibition, and the next year he again won a gold medal at the C.N.E. for his harmonica playing although he was then in a class open to contestants up to the age of 16.

At 14 he won a silver medal in Toronto for his accordion playing and it was as an accordion player that he joined the musicians union. He had not turned 16 yet at that time. He started fooling around on the trumpet when he was about 20.

At around the age of 18 he began doing some arranging and selling his arrangements to dance bands. At about the same time he began doing a radio program from St. Catharines with two accordions.

One of these was a fellow who used the name Sharpe but is better known to the public today as Sam Shopsowitz of Shopsy's Delicatessen. He was a fantastic accordion player, Mr. Hamilton says, but he gave up his music to become a businessman when his father died.

When World War II broke out he decided to get in ahead of conscription because he wanted to go in the air force. When he enlisted they were

looking for musicians apparently and before he knew it he was in the air force band playing at recruiting posts and in Ottawa as well as at departure centres in the Maritimes.

"When I got out of the air force after 3½ years I was still getting calls as an accordion player," he chuckles, "although I had long since sold my accordion. Only a few people knew me as a trumpet player."

TRUMPET PLAYER

It was as a trumpet player that he became known as an adult musician, however, and he lists appearances on Chicho Valle's Los Cubanos and Latin American Serenade along with his membership in the Art Hallman Orchestra when they did the People's Credit Jeweller's show as part of his experience. He played trumpet and French horn with Hallman and also sang with the Hallman quartet.

He also sang with the Jack Duffy quartet and the Pat Riccio quintet. Other bands he played with which might be remembered are Mart Kenney's Orchestra, Barry Townley, Sunny Duncan and Walter Mishko's quartet. He also played the vibraphones with Mishko.

He only gave up playing professionally a couple of

years ago because of medical reasons.

"Two years ago was the first New Year's Eve I've had to myself since I was 13, he chuckles. "I found myself saying 'What am I doing here? I should be out there.' I'm as bad as an old fire horse, I didn't know enough to quit."

When he quit Mr. Hamilton had 1½ years' work booked up to do. He had also had surgery

for a nervous condition which spoiled his trumpet playing and later surgery put him in a leg brace and cut him off from the vibraphone since he could no longer stand for long periods. This is part of the luck in his career, he says, since he had no medical problems in evidence when he made the move to teaching but he would have had no great chance of becoming a teacher a couple of years ago when he had to give up playing.

During his years as a professional musician Mr. Hamilton also was studio director of Mason Music for seven years in addition to his evening work. When Mr. Mason died he left the company and became an itinerant music teacher visiting schools twice weekly for the Toronto Board of Education, another seven year occupation. He was also still playing professionally at that point.

He also sat on the board of directors of the Band Masters Association and ran a Canadian Youth Music Camp at Beaverton for the association.

The fact that he was teaching music and around it all day helped him when he had to give up playing, Mr. Hamilton says, but he still missed the

social aspect of the job.

Considering the life style associated with musicians and performers Mr. Hamilton has again been lucky in his private life.

He's still married to the same lady and they have three grown daughters.

"I'm very lucky," he says. "We had some very rough times in the beginning and Pinkey (her name's Lorraine but absolutely no one ever

calls her that) never once asked me to do something else."

Harry and Pinkey met in the seventh grade so she knew right from the start how much staying home alone there'd be if they married.

"She knew what she was getting in to," he chuckles, "because I used to have to call her up and break dates when we were going together."

Mrs. Hamilton has nothing to do with music but all three of their girls play the piano and some other musical instrument as well. The youngest has also done a lot of dancing and choreography for a few shows. Music wasn't part of Mr. Hamilton's family background either, he said. Neither of his parents were musical. He was an only child.

STORY PUBLISHED

During the last few years Mr. Hamilton says he has been doing quite a bit of writing. He recently had a short story published in Contact, a Canadian Writer's Guild magazine. Last month an Ottawa magazine, Stone Monday, published one of his poems.

"It's one of those magazines that goes to libraries and universities," he jokes. "Great for the ego but not so good on the pay."

One of his fellow students at York University told him during a writing course they were both taking that he would get into writing even more than he'd been into music. Mr. Hamilton suspects that he may be right. As a musician he only got involved in plays after the work was all done. Now he's wondering about writing a play.

Mr. Hamilton says that while the band does well at Georgetown High School he would like to see vocal music getting a better deal. Students don't seem too interested so it was dropped. No school in north Halton seems to have a choir and it disappoints him when he looks at the huge choirs in Toronto schools.

Attitudes are changing in the area, he says, and this may happen eventually too. He is just pleased that he so seldom has problems with parents telling their children what instrument they must play. He recalls one father who told his son that boys don't play flutes even though that was the boy's choice and another father who didn't believe girls should play drums. This is a rarity, however.

What pleases Mr. Hamilton most about his work is the number of his students who have carried on with their music after they leave him. "Quite a few of my students have carried on from here and are with groups and using their music to make a living," he says.

Even the ones who aren't musicians still stop by to see him and have a chat. The day of the interview no less than five former students home from vacation from universities dropped in to renew their friendship with a man who has a special place in their school day memories.

"When I first started teaching I was awed by it all," he jokes. "I kept wondering how a teacher should act."

Ten years later he's still teaching so he must have figured out the secret.

Regional reps eat and drink their way through \$945

Members of Halton regional council were red-faced last week over a \$945 bill to be picked up by the taxpayers for food and beverages consumed at a recent farewell banquet for outgoing councillors.

Former chairman Ric Morrow played host to 20 of the 24 members of his 1977-78 regional council Nov. 15 at the House of Palermo south of Milton, where, to everyone's subsequent surprise, each guest ran up a dinner tab that averaged \$45 a head. The bar bill alone totalled \$396.55.

Members of the new council were both angry and embarrassed when they got a look at the bill during a recent council meeting, where it was decided that the bill would have to be paid out of council's official functions fund. Mr. Morrow admitted that he had consider-

ed asking those who attended the banquet to contribute in the hope of alleviating the cost to the taxpayers, but noted that the lateness of the term provided no time for business sessions where such a decision would have to be made.

EACH ATE
For \$945, the council members, including incumbent Halton Hills councillors Mike Armstrong, Roy Booth and Russ Miller, along with former Coun. Pat McKenzie (former Mayor Tom Hill did not attend), each ate a \$12.50 roast beef dinner with cheeses, desserts and coffee, plus a long list of alcoholic beverages.

Headed by seven bottles of \$8 per bottle Italian wine, the list also featured 27 Scotches, 25 vodkas, 24 ryes, 16 gins, 16 martinis, 13 ruars, eight Bloody Marys, eight Courbois-

sier, seven Lowenbrau, four domestic beers, four Grande Marniers, three anisettes, two tia marias, a Kahlua and an Amaretto, with 50 bottles of mix.

The councillors clearly enjoyed their meal, since there was a \$120 tip added onto the dinner tab and a \$25 room rental charge.

New regional chairman Jack Rafis reminded council as the bill was being passed around for inspection that those who attend an upcoming council banquet for the official opening of the new regional headquarters will be required to pay their own way, a decision he claimed to have made even before the amount of the House of Palermo bill was revealed.

Expressing disappointment over the size of the bill, Mr.

Morrow recalled that the last time regional councillors gathered for such a feast, they each contributed \$25 and ended up incurring only a \$200 bill for the region. That meal took place at a Georgetown golf and country club.


Along with former Mayor Hill, other members of the last regional council who missed the Nov. 15 banquet in Oakville were Milton Mayor Don Gordon, Oakville Coun. McLean Anderson and former Burlington Coun. Dave Coons.

No injuries in rear-end collision

A rear end collision at Mill Street East and Wallace Street in Acton caused \$525 damage to cars driven by Jean Marion Jackson and Maureen Ingles, both of Acton. There were no injuries but charges were laid after the accident by Halton regional police.

Poor road conditions cause crash

A two-car collision on Meadvale Road near Longfield in Acton caused \$1,000 to cars Friday driven by Joan Hammond and Lissa McDonald, both of Acton. There were no charges laid by Halton regional police say road conditions at the time of the accident were poor due to the weather.

 **All Ex-Service Personnel and Their Dependents**

Are invited to take advantage of a free Legion Service.

MR. J. TRAVERSY
Prov. Service Bureau Officer
From Hamilton
Will Be At
CANADIAN LEGION BRANCH 120
A11-C0.P.M.

MONDAY, JAN. 8

To give skilled advice on veterans benefits. Anyone with questions on war disability pension, war veterans allowance (burnt out pension) treatment or hospital care is urged to call or write.

H.E. HALE
Branch Service Officer 877-3435.
Who will arrange an appointment

January Furniture Clearance Sale!

NOW IN PROGRESS AT BROWN'S

334 Guelph Street
Georgetown - 877-2828

• LATE TERMS • FREE DELIVERY • ON THE SPOT FINANCING

JANUARY FABRIC CLEARANCE

20% to 1/2 Price Reductions

Also! New Spring Fabrics Now Arriving

HUSQUARNA JANOME - WHITE - MORSE

Best of service at all times all at Your One Stop Sewing Shop

TOWNE SEWING CENTRE 877-4331

39 Main St. Georgetown

Now Available at

Halton Rapid Print

INSTANT PRINTING WHILE YOU WAIT
PHOTO COPIES UP TO 17"x48"

Special January feature

★ 8 1/2 x 11 copies only 10¢ ★

Halton Rapid Print

2 Main St. N. Georgetown 877-3123

SOMETIMES FLOWERS ARE THE ONLY WAY YOUR HEART CAN SPEAK

Whatever your message Call us Today and it's on its way

Fendley FLORISTS

82 Mill St. Georgetown 877-6901