

HALTON'S PEOPLE

Former teacher unofficial mother hen

By MAGGIE HANNAH
Herald staff writer
"Entrez. Fermez la porte et assisez-vous, s'il vous plait."
Those words were the introduction first year students entering the brand new Acton High School in 1954 got to a large, grey-haired lady who was the school's unofficial mother hen and eventually its vice-principal.

While none of the students knew exactly what Marion Reed was saying to them they did know that French was the only second language available in the school apart from Latin, and if they had any hopes of eventually going on to university they'd need all the help this stern-looking lady could give them. They walked

in, closed the door and sat down. Gradually the strange garble of sound began to mean something and after four or five years of daily sessions some of the more interested and industrious students could even speak French.

Looking back on those early days when there weren't even desks, just stacking chairs and enough texts to go round if some students shared, one student recalls how hard it was to learn French. But more vividly she recalls Mrs. Reed's struggles to make the basics of the language simple enough that they could be used as a base and built on.

Mrs. Reed was also one of

the few local teachers in the school. She was the second daughter of one of Norval's oldest residents, Col. Noble, and she tells proudly how her grandfather bought the mill in 1867 and her father moved to Norval when he was a year old. The Norval mill ground flour oatmeal and cornmeal as well as animal feed. Her grandfather bought it from the Provincial Bank of Ontario who had taken it over because the previous owner had gone bankrupt. Her grandfather died in 1908, the year after Mrs. Reed was born.

Her mother was also a Norval native and among the family treasures she has "an immense bible" which was given to her parents because they were the first couple to be married in Norval Presbyterian Church. When the Presbyterians and Methodists united in 1924 the family went to the United Church.

Col. Noble earned his title with the 20th Halton Rifles during World War I but he had begun his military involvement with the unit while it was still a militia unit, Mrs. Reed says. He lived to be 96.

The Noble family moved to Toronto in the mid 1920s because the eldest daughter, Ethel, was ready to start medical school and Mrs. Reed was almost ready to start University of Toronto where she studied modern languages. The Noble children all attended Brampton High School and

Mrs. Reed says they boarded in town, going in on Monday and returning Friday night.

"That's why Mother wanted to move to the city," she chuckles. "She said she couldn't stand rattling around in this house all week while we were all away at school."

Although they moved to Toronto Col. Noble never sold the farm. He had a man hired to look after his cattle and the colonel drove out from the city every day in his old Dodge car.

Mrs. Reed lost her younger brother in 1931. Mrs. Reed graduated with an Honours B.A. in 1929 and decided to go to France with a good friend Madeline Laking who had won a scholarship to study at the Sorbonne in Paris. Although her friend stayed for two years because of her scholarship Mrs. Reed only spent one year there.

ENJOYED IT
"I enjoyed it," she says of her year in Paris. "We had living quarters where the madame spoke beautiful French and I liked living over there and being among the French people."

Mrs. Reed worked at Bigwinlon at Huntsville to earn money for her tuition at university and recalls that books were expensive even then.

"The first year I waited on tables carrying those big trays over my shoulder," she recalls. "Then towards the end of that first summer they asked me to take on the position of

hostess at the dining room door. I held the position for the next three years."

While she no longer had to worry about the heavy trays she was now worrying about her hair and her grooming instead, she says. Waitresses uniforms were black with a white apron and stiff white collar and cuffs while in the evening they wore white. The hostess wore the opposite colours.

It was while she was working at Bigwinlon that Mrs. Reed met her husband, Bert, a widower with two young children. She went on to take her teacher's training at the Ontario College of Education in Toronto and taught French in Kitchener for a couple of years before she decided to get married.

"I was getting kind of old by then so we decided to get married in 1934. We waited four years to get married and still we wound up in the middle of the Depression," she chuckles.

"The Reeds raised four children, Prudence, King, Julian and Laurie."

Mrs. Reed can vouch for how hard times were at that point when she explains how her husband's job disappeared while they were away on their honeymoon.

Mr. Reed was an artist and the advertising company he worked for folded up while they were away so he had to go job hunting as soon as they returned.

"He used to say 'If I can do a painting a week I can keep us eating,'" she says. "He got working for another advertising firm and once things were settled down there was no question that he could do really well."

The Reeds went to Montreal when Mr. Reed found work there and during the war he was one of the men loaned to the government to help with troop morale for the province of Quebec. Although he helped with entertainments for the troops and continued to do business for his firm on weekends Mr. Reed also made mysterious trips to New York.

"He never talked much about those trips," says his son, Halton MPP Julian Reed. "He was always vague about them. But if you stop to think about it people just weren't making trips like that then."

"Maybe he was up to something we didn't know about."

CHARCOAL PORTRAITS
Mr. Reed specialized in charcoal portraits and he was the artist responsible for the first portraits in the Hockey Hall of Fame at the Canadian National Exhibition grounds in Toronto.

Mr. Reed was also a writer of many things including radio scripts. Mrs. Reed collaborated with her husband on one series featuring Girl Guides who performed heroic acts. Her interest in the Guiding movement gave her the impetus to research the stories and her husband turned them into polished scripts for a program sponsored by an oil company.

Although Norval had had a Guido company when she was a girl she joined the Ranger group when she was older and found it to be such an enjoyable experience that she wanted to share it with others. When Norval eventually got its own Guido company Mrs. Reed was its first Captain.

Through the years she held various posts including District Commissioner and Lone Guide Commissioner for the province of Ontario. It was even due to her involvement with Guiding that she qualified herself as a St. John's Ambulance instructor and eventually taught courses in first aid at Acton High School as well as to her Guides.

"She was the camp commandante at Doe Lake (a special Guide camp) for a couple of years," her son chuckles. "She was so busy with Guiding that Dad used to threaten to write a book entitled 'I Married a Girl Guide'."

Mrs. Reed was also an active member of the Norval Women's Institute and took her turn working on the branch's Tweedsmuir history of Norval. She was also active in Norval United Church and belonged to the choir. Her music goes back to her youth, her son says, when she sang with some of the big choirs at the Canadian National Exhibition.

"That would be going back to the 1920's," he says, "when they treated the big choirs something like the Scottish Tattoo today. They had no electrical amplification system so they had to rely on numbers. Some of those choirs



had 2,000 people in them. She had no musical degree but she was a fairly accomplished musician. She had a big voice."

In addition to teaching French and later German, Mrs. Reed taught physical education to most of the girls at Acton High school. Students might have had a little more respect for her struggles to get them through the basics of volleyball, basketball and square dancing if they'd known how her own youngsters put her through the wringer trying to teach her to ski.

"It was while we were still in Montreal," Julian says. "I think it was the year I learned. My older brother and sister already knew how to ski and they decided it would be just the thing if Mother learned too so they took her along. She really thought she could do it but she was already getting fairly well on to start something like that. I remember she came home black and blue from head to foot. I guess she fell down every bump she saw. That was the last time she ever tried that."

RECALLS PARTIES

Contrary to what might be expected Julian Reed says his family were never big on politics. He recalls his father talking about voting for both the major parties at different times and he doesn't see his mother as a particularly politically minded woman either.

One of her former students, however, recalls very vividly how Mrs. Reed cornered her on stopping to think of the consequences of various political theories after the student made a speech on behalf of the

CCF party (the forerunner of the NDP) at the demand of another teacher.

An English teacher decided that fourth year students should represent the three major parties that would be battling the 1958 election and designated three students to be the candidates. After appropriate research each student had to deliver a speech of a specified length over the school's public address system and the next day the students all voted. It was after the speeches were made that Mrs. Reed took the students aside and asked some probing questions on how such government changes would be financed and made her subtle point on how responsibilities must be met even by large groups like governments.

"Mother is pretty much a one to one sort of person," Julian says, "and that would be her approach if she thought it was needed. The student must have done a good job of convincing her of her sincerity if she took the trouble to talk to her about it because Mother just wasn't particularly politically minded."

Mrs. Reed lost her husband with a heart attack just before Christmas 1957. She was teaching at Acton at the time and she continued there until the early 1960s. She spent a short time at East York Collegiate but returned in the late 1960s. In 1971 she fell and broke her hip and took an early retirement because of her health. Parkinson's disease was diagnosed the next year and she is presently in Toronto General hospital taking treatment.

Mayor appoints budget committee

Mayor Pete Pomeroy has appointed a four-man steering committee of town council that will handle preparations for the adoption this spring of Halton Hills' 1979 operating and capital budgets.

Councillors Ross Knechtel of Ward 1, George Malby of Ward 2, John McDonald of Ward 3 and Harry Levy of Ward 4 will meet specially as an ad hoc committee to review

and recommend to council all matters related to the two budgets.

Mayor Pomeroy, a self-professed critic of the current system of having council installed for two-year terms, failed Monday night to persuade council that the budget steering committee should itself stand for two years and consider matters related to both the 1979 and 1980 budgets.

Lions seek nominees

The Georgetown Lion's Club has set a tentative deadline of January 20 for nominations for the Citizen of the Year.

A nominee for the Citizen of the Year award should be someone who has given outstanding service to the community over the past year, or over many years, in any and all fields.

Mr. Sykes suggested anyone wanting to nominate someone for Citizen of the Year should write a letter describing why they think their nominee is deserving of the award, and give it to a member of the Lion's Club, or drop it off at Sykes' Bakery on Main Street.

Citizens appointed

Town council Monday night appointed six Halton Hills citizens to fill positions on four local boards and committees for three-year terms that will expire Dec. 31, 1978. They are: Rick West of Wesleyan Street in Georgetown, Wayne Ruse of Storey Drive in Acton and L.L. Hartford of RR3 Georgetown to the Halton Hills Committee of Adjustment; Michael Ross of Chelvin Drive in Georgetown to the Halton Hills Parking Authority;

Norman Elliott of Elmore Drive in Acton to the Halton Hills Public Library Board (re-appointment); Pamela Sheldon of RR3 Milton, recommended for appointment to the Halton Region Land Division Committee, subject to approval by regional council.

"It seems like we drag our feet on the budget every year," he said. "I'm just trying to get things speeded up. I don't agree wholeheartedly with the two-year council term system anyway."

DEFENDED COMMITTEE
Mayor Pomeroy first defended his proposed council format against Coun. Marilyn Serjeantson's contention that the budgets are important enough that council should collectively examine and finalize them. The mayor pointed

out that each ward was to be represented on the ad hoc committee, meetings of which would nevertheless be open to any and all council members. Any decisions which the committee makes, he added, must then be ratified by the town's general committee and then council.

Coun. Levy agreed that a two-year term for the committee was a good idea, saying that the committee's simultaneous examination of budgets for two calendar years would provide badly-needed continuity and offer a liaison that he said the town's finance department would "appreciate."

Coun. Roy Booth said he could agree with the concept proposed by Mayor Pomeroy but found it to contradict council's previous decision to drop its committee system altogether, with the single exception of the general committee. Having the budget committee sit for two years, he argued, creates yet another standing committee of council.

Recreation advisory committee abolished after five stormy years

Town council has abolished its recreation advisory committee after five years of operation that witnessed several stormy confrontations between committee members and councillors.

The decision was made Monday night during a closed-door session of council in which appointments were made to four local boards and committees. When it came time for council to consider applications for membership on the

recreation advisory committee, however, council voted to inform the committee's incumbent and prospective members that their efforts and intentions are appreciated but no longer necessary.

The advisory committee was to have taken on a slightly new format this term, applying for the first time to Halton Hills as a whole. For the past two years, only Wards 3 and 4 (Georgetown) have supported a recreation advisory commi-

tee to provide a liaison between the public sector and the municipal recreation department.

A recreation advisory committee for Wards 1 and 2 (Acton and Esqueping) was disbanded in 1976, largely due to a lack of public interest. Both committees had been formed when Halton Hills was amalgamated in 1974, replacing the standing recreation committees that existed in Acton and Georgetown.

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