

**HALTON'S PEOPLE**

**Rough road to council seat for Marilyn Serjeantson**

By MICHAEL HOLLETT  
Herald editor

For Halton Hills ward four town councillor Marilyn Serjeantson, one of the few women councillors in local municipal history, the road into politics was not entirely smooth. In fact, the biggest 'bump' she encountered was being defeated in her initial bid for a council seat back in the 1976 election.

Mrs. Serjeantson came third, losing by a frustratingly slim 100 vote margin to Peter Morris and Mike Armstrong.

"I was disappointed but the people I was running against were well-known. But when you come so close you always think if you worked harder you might have won."

Shortly after the election, Mr. Morrow was appointed chairman of the Halton regional council and Mr. Armstrong was bumped up into the vacant ward four regional council seat. Mrs. Serjeantson assumed that, based on her third place finish, she would be appointed to fill councillor Armstrong's vacated area council seat. She says there was precedent for the move, however, council decided instead to open nominations and hold a by-election for the ward four seat, only three months after the initial election.

"It seemed inconsistent to appoint the regional councillors and not the area councillors. I'm sure that part of the reason was that I was a woman and not that well-known," she says.

Mrs. Serjeantson says she was quite vocal in her objections to the by-election being held and she received significant public support. She says she received many phone calls and letters expressing support for her appointment. However, council remained firm in calling for the by-election but, in the end, Mrs. Serjeantson was elected by acclamation when no candidates came forward to oppose her.

**PUBLIC RESPONSE**

She says she knew of some people who had considered running in the by-election but she thinks that the public response to the election kept some candidates from coming forward.

She says that while her husband was "very supportive" of her initial run for council, he thought she was a little crazy to try again in a by-election.

Mrs. Serjeantson's political career is running a little smoother these days and she was cleanly elected in the November municipal elections last year finishing second to Harry Levy, comfortably ahead of challenger Karen Morris.

Mrs. Serjeantson says she first considered running for council



Halton Hills town councillor says she finds being a council member a challenge. An avid recreation enthusiast, fulltime mother

and part-time nurse, Mrs. Serjeantson has her hands full with her many activities. (Herald photo)

because "at first it seemed like no one from our end of the ward was running. I was concerned about a number of issues including the Metcalfe ravine and the sewage plant and I wasn't getting answers from people to the questions I was asking."

**A CHALLENGE**

"So finally, the weekend before nominations closed, I decided to run. I looked on it as a challenge."

Mrs. Serjeantson says that probably her biggest surprise upon becoming a councillor was the slowness with which council operated.

"Things just can't be done overnight and if you go there wanting to change things overnight it can be frustrating."

"To be on council at a time when money is so retrained is also very frustrating."

She says her proudest achievement since becoming a councillor is her contribution to getting the Metcalfe ravine cleaned up.

**LEFT TORONTO**

Mrs. Serjeantson is not a native of Georgetown but, like many of her neighbours in the Delrex Blvd. area, she and her husband moved here to buy a house back in 1969.

Mr. Serjeantson is the head of the physical education department at the King City high school, and at the time the couple were looking for an area in which they could afford to buy their first house. Neither Serjeantson had ever visited the town until they came here house hunting but Mrs. Serjeantson says that now she wouldn't want to live anywhere else.

When the Serjeantsons moved to Georgetown, Mrs. Serjeantson was employed fulltime as an operating room nurse in Toronto. A year after moving here, Mrs. Serjeantson quit work to have her first child, Brett. She continues to work as a nurse at Peel Hospital in Brampton but only part-time. She says that her council work, along with work she does for a sports supply company her husband operates, along with the time demanded by her family, simply do not leave time for fulltime nursing.

**OLDEST SON**

Besides oldest son Brett, 9, the Serjeantsons also have two other children, Kirk 8, and Wayne, 6.

Mrs. Serjeantson explains that when council is operating in high gear she attends a mini-

num of two or three meetings a week in addition to the many hours she spends doing background work to prepare for the meetings. This background work can involve anything from simply reading articles included with council meeting agendas to visiting a site being considered for re-zoning or meeting with town officials.

Despite her busy schedule, Mrs. Serjeantson finds time for a number of hobbies including furniture re-finishing and an assortment of recreation activities.

People in the Delrex area may recognize Mrs. Serjeantson as the woman who jogs daily down Delrex Blvd. In fact, Mrs. Serjeantson says she used a jogging picture of herself in her election campaign literature because she thought residents might recognize her from her daily jogging jaunts through the area. She tries to run six miles a day, five days a week, but, says Mrs. Serjeantson, it's not a "religion" for her like it is with many joggers.

Mrs. Serjeantson is also an avid skier, of both the cross-country and downhill variety as well as a regular tennis player.

Reflecting on her first term as a town councillor, Mrs. Serjeantson says that undoubtedly her being a woman made things a little more difficult, at least initially.

**MORE LOUDLY**

"Obviously I'm not considered as one of the boys," she says. At times she has also had to speak a little more loudly to be heard or taken seriously but, she says once other councillors got used to her, her being a woman became less of a problem.

Although the municipal elections were almost three months ago, Mrs. Serjeantson says council has yet to really "get going".

"We are still in limbo right now but we should get going soon. I'm looking forward to that."

Mrs. Serjeantson says a top priority for the new council has to be encouraging the development of industrial land within the town. She says a roadblock to this development now is the high price many area landowners are charging for lands zoned industrial. The town will have to consider other sites for industrial land zoning, she says.

**FEW MINUTES**

Although there have only been a few council meetings since the new term began, Mrs. Serjeantson says "There are a certain amount of things being done outside council."

She says councillors are sometimes given the impression that they are only hearing half the discussion of an issue and that the real discussion may have taken place before the meeting.

"To make council work, things have to be a little more open, we have to feel like we are all working together."

She is hopeful that the annual budget making process will help unify the council.

And what of her future? Mrs. Serjeantson says she will likely run for council again. She would consider taking a stab at regional council seat but that would depend on who the other candidates were.

**And mayor?**

"No, I don't think I will ever run for mayor. At the moment I don't feel like I could do a good job as mayor. The day I feel I can do a good job as mayor is the day I would consider running."



**GEORGETOWN ROTARY'S ANNUAL SKATE-A-THON**

**\$6,700  
RAISED  
FOR  
CRIPPLED  
KIDS**

Children from public schools throughout Halton Hills, along with plenty of adults, combined to raise over \$6,700 at the Georgetown Rotary Club's skate-a-thon, held Sunday at the Memorial Arena. Above, two Limehouse youngsters prepare to hit the ice and do their bit for charity while (right) two Georgetown sisters discuss the rigors of the all day skating session.

Organizers of the event say over 150 skaters turned out for the skate-a-thon which ran from 10:30 am to 4:30 pm.

"We are happy with the response and thank the community for their efforts," said club president Fred Long.

Rotary Club members will be at the Memorial arena from 9 am until 2 pm January 20 to collect pledges. The skate-a-thon is the Rotary Club's biggest fundraising event.

— Photos by Michael Hollett and James Brennan



Georgetown District High School students, along with students from Pineview and Harrison Public School, were among those who participated in the Rotary Club Skate-a-thon Sunday at Georgetown Memorial Arena.

**Australian student here on exchange**

By MAGGIE HANNAH  
Herald staff writer

The Georgetown Rotary Club's second exchange student arrived in town Sunday. She is 16-year-old Jacinta Sedl of Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia.

Miss Sedl has already completed her high school education and will be heading for New England University in Armadale, New South Wales to take a four-year course in agricultural economics and finance administration when she returns home this summer. She will be attending Georgetown High School however, as part of her stay here.

Until the time of the Montreal Olympic Games Miss Sedl says she had heard very little of Canada. Since that time she became curious about the country and she says she was really pleased to find she could come here on the exchange.

"I had the choice of going to Canada, America or England," she says. "I put Canada down as my first choice but that didn't mean I'd get it. It all depends on how the exchange can be worked out. My family hoped I'd get Canada too, so we were really pleased when we found out I was coming here."

"You rarely meet a Canadian," she says. "There are tons of Americans but very few Canadians. All the people I met who had been to Canada told me what a really beautiful country it was and how much I'd like it so I'm really looking forward to my time here."

**FIRST EXPERIENCE**

Miss Sedl had her first experience of the difference between Canada and Australia when she landed at Toronto International

Airport and saw snow for the first time. While snow may be found on mountain peaks in Australia and in certain areas during other times it is never seen at Toowoomba. Some of our taken-for-granted winter sports like ice skating and snow skiing are among the things she wants to try out during her stay. She already roller skates and water skis but she has had no chance to try the version Canadians enjoy each winter.

Winter in Toowoomba runs from May to August and residents expect it to be cold with a lot of dry, westerly winds to contend with. In summer, which runs from December to February, they get a lot of rain and can look out for cyclones too. Temperatures range from 27 to 37c.

Miss Sedl lists basketball, tennis and attending the Speedway where her brother drives in races similar to Canadian stock car races as her hobbies. She also enjoys fishing and crabbing as well as swimming and boating at the family cottage at Paradise Point on the Goad Coast.

Miss Sedl belonged to the Interact Club in her school. She describes this as a mini-Rotary club and says the group did some work in a school for handicapped children and also held a concert for the aged.

Rotary is a family club for the Sedls. Mr. Sedl is international chairman for the Toowoomba club and Mrs. Sedl belongs to the Rotary-Annes.

Miss Sedl has a 13-year-old sister Shanelle still at home. Her brother, Michael, 20 is a motor mechanic. One of her 23-year-old twin sisters, Marian, will

begin teaching pre-schoolers this year and the other sister, Patrina, has a management position in a department store. Mr. Sedl owns a drainage and excavation company in Toowoomba and Mrs. Sedl does volunteer work in a home for the aged in addition to keeping house for her family.

**NEAR BRISBANE**

Toowoomba is about 138 kilometers from Brisbane and has a population of 72,000. It is the market centre for an area known as the Darling Downs. The city is surrounded by very rich soil, Miss Sedl says, and grain crops are the predominant farm product in the area although there is a certain amount of market gardening near the city itself.

Canadians may be fighting to get out of apartments but in Australia apartments are mainly rented by the elderly or those wanting to get out of the work involved in keeping up a house, or by newlyweds who can't yet afford a house of their own, she says.

Like Canada, Australia has had inflation problems. The Australian government, however, has managed to get the rate down to around 4 per cent, she says, and now they are tackling the problem of unemployment. They are having trouble finding places for all the refugees coming into the country, let alone finding them work.

Miss Sedl will be staying with Rotary councillor Jerry Peace and his wife Jean on Metcalfe Court for a few weeks. Mrs. Peace is an Australian, too, although her home was in Victoria.