

**HALTON'S PEOPLE**

# Acton band leader is a man of many facets

By **MAGGIE HANNAH**  
Herald staff writer

He may not come with 76 trombones but Acton does have its own music man. He is leader of Acton Citizens Band, and organist and choir master at Trinity United Church, George Elliott.

Mr. Elliott took over the band from Alf Perrot in 1965 and became organist and choir leader at the church in 1957.

His band work goes back to about 1943 when Charlie Mason began asking young Acton boys to start up a boys' band.

"Most of the men who had been in the Acton band left during the war, you see," Mr. Elliott explains. "So Mr. Mason decided he'd start up with the young fellows rather than see the town go without a band."

The majority of the youngsters who joined Mr. Mason's

band had never played before. Girls were introduced to the band a couple of years later.

and Mr. Elliott, are still with the present Acton Citizens' Band, Mr. Elliott says.

He starts classes for beginners hoping to join the band about every two years. The group practices in the Band Hall every Tuesday evening.

He was no novice at choir work either since he sang with the Hart House Glee Club for several years as well as being in the University chorus under Elmer Eisler for a couple of years. He also belonged to the Victoria College Glee Club and sang with the choir at the Church of Holy Trinity under Catherine Palmer's direction. He is a tenor.

"The classes I teach lend themselves to fall and winter so I do my research in the summer semester," he explains, "but I have worked in the summer and done my research in the winter. Some of the staff prefer to take winter vacations. It all depends on what you prefer and whether it can be worked out."

What the outcome of the committee's efforts to save the building will be he isn't about to predict. The money hasn't been as available as members had originally hoped but no one has totally given up the project yet. A meeting with Halton Hills council is scheduled for later this month for the committee to report to council on how their financial efforts actually stand.

Mr. Elliott says he likes to sail, play tennis and hike in the summer and ski and skate in winter.

While insulating and re-wiring his family home on Bower Street is not exactly a hobby it has kept him busy during the past year.

He has also rebuilt a 1919 organ which was originally in a church in Thornbury. He purchased the antique from the Keats Organ Company and spent three to four years on the project. It now rests on a movable stand with its pipes in a closet. He also has an old pump organ which he hopes to get around to repairing some time in the future.

**SINCE 1947**  
That band held together until about 1947 when it took first prize at the Canadian National Exhibition. Then higher education and out of town jobs began to take their toll as the young people grew up. Only two of those original young band members, Aldo Braida

The band went back to being a citizen's band rather than a youth band around 1948 and gradually the girls from the youth band dropped out or moved away. It wasn't until the early 1960s that girls again began asking to join the band and training classes were formed that included girls.

**REGULAR BAND**  
"You start off with about 30 people and by the end of the two years when they have the experience to go into the regular band you only have about 10 left," he says.

The members of the regular band range in age between 12 and "around 60", he says. They play a lot of Santa Claus Parades, as well as two or three concerts a year, and other parades like fall fairs and Remembrance Day. He expects 30 to 35 members to show up for the regular weekly practice in the band hall on Wednesday evenings although 35 to 40 members usually show up for parades. The full membership in the regular band stands at about 50 at present with about 25 prospective members in the beginners class.

Mr. Elliott has been a professor at the University of Guelph for 16 years. He teaches introductory biochemistry and analysis of food to students in the agriculture, general science and consumer studies course. Last semester he had 500 students. This time he is down to 270.

He has six hours of lectures each week but he must also have regular office hours so he is available to discuss problems with students who need a bit of help to sort out something that was said in a lecture but isn't clear. He also sets exams and marks at least a part of every student's papers so he knows how well they are doing in their courses.



In addition to playing with the Acton band, Mr. Elliott also played with the Lorne Scots band under Alf Perrot during his school years. He never belonged to the regiment but he joined them for parades during the summer.

"I wasn't part of the regular group but they'd always find me a uniform for a parade," he says. "I remember Coronation Day. We must have played half a dozen parades that day. We started out at 9 a.m. in Shelburne and went on all day. I always enjoyed parading."

**TWICE MISSED**  
Mr. Elliott says the band has only missed competing in the Canadian National Exhibition twice since he became the leader. Last year they decided against it since the higher prize money offered because of the C.N.E.'s centennial celebrations drew such stiff competition members felt it wasn't worth the effort. Over the years they have taken a couple of firsts and seconds and lots of thirds.

The competition is divided into three or four classes and bands enter as many as they feel they can handle.

"We entered three classes one year," he chuckles, "and it was disastrous. We just didn't have the time to concentrate on any of the pieces because we had so many. But it was good experience."

Mr. Elliott owns a coronet, clarinet, baritone horn, oboe, flute, piano, and organ and plays every instrument in the band.

"You have to be able to get around on every instrument if you are going to teach them," he says.

George Elliott spent three to four years rebuilding a church organ for use in his own home. The original works were built in 1919 but he purchased it from the Keats Organ Company and set it up on a platform which

enables him to move it around for cleaning. The organ's pipes are in a closet adjacent to the instrument itself.

(Herald photo)

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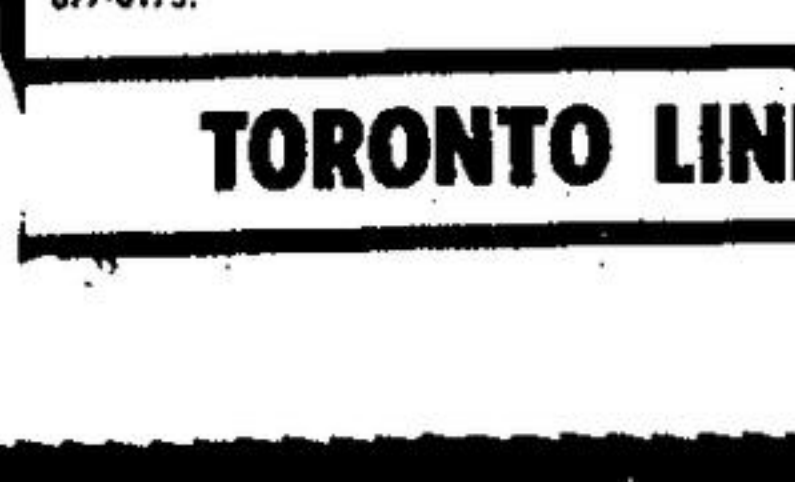
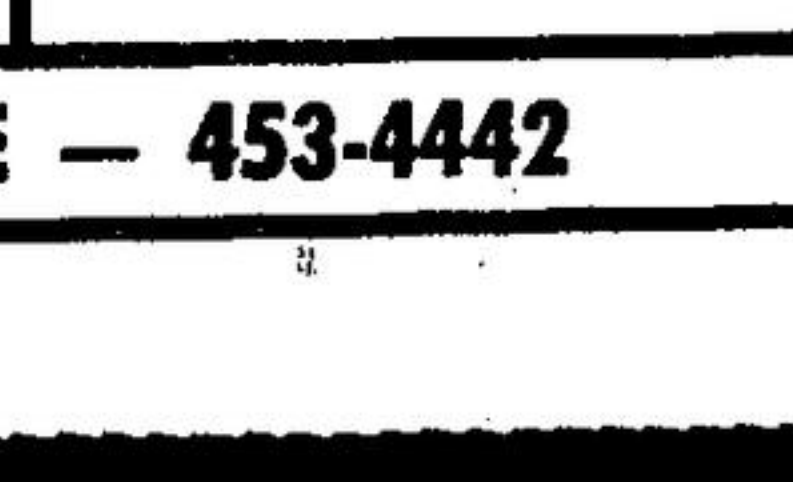
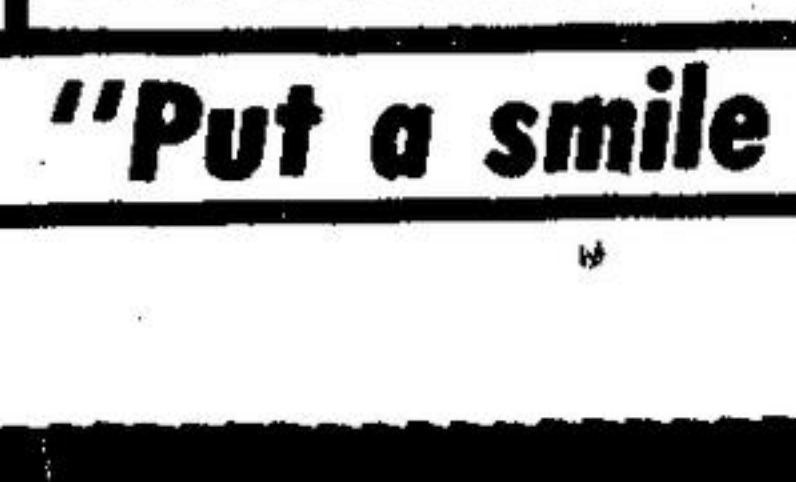
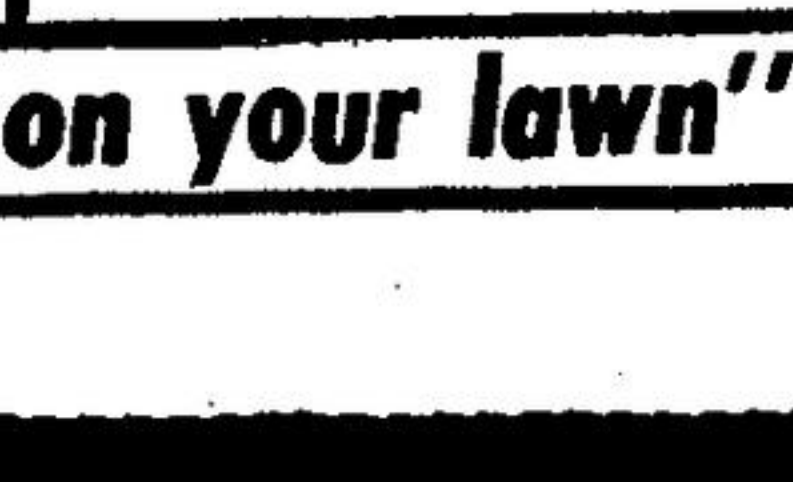
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