

HALTON'S PEOPLE

'Steamer' was town's reluctant mayor

By MAGGIE HANNAH Herald staff writer Wheldon Emmerson wound up as mayor of Georgetown for the 1969-70 term more in spite of himself because he wanted the job.

"If I'd really wanted it I'd have been the first man in the race instead of the third." John Elliott and Bob Francis had declared their intentions long before Mr. Emmerson decided to put his name on the ballot at the nominations night in late November.

"Intuitions were flying thick and fast the last couple of weeks before I decided to go and the pressure was getting unbearable," he recalls with a grin. "I don't know where the stories were coming from that I intended to run because I wasn't even thinking about it."

Finally Muriel Mrs. Emmerson said "Why don't you run? You might lose. There's not some peace." It sounded like the best advice I'd had so I decided I would.

TOLD COUNCIL "I announced at council that I was going to run and Mayor Joe Gibbons held a press conference later in the week saying he was retiring. He went to the nomination meeting Monday night and spoke. I was coming home from a meeting Tuesday night and I saw the ambulance leaving Joe's place. I followed them over the hospital since I live on this street (Princess Anne). Just 24 hours later after he said he was quitting he was dead."

His two-year term in office saw a great many projects finished. The Hungry Hollow bridge on Mountainview and the White bridge on Main Street were constructed at that time. The water tower on Todd Road was built. Two new wells were brought on stream to provide more water for the town. The new works yard (the present fire hall) was built on Maple Avenue and the iron removal plant was built. Work even began on reconstructing the main trunk sewer through Georgetown.

Mr. Emmerson says there were no development agreements signed during his years as mayor but the Moore Park subdivision and the Lane subdivision were completed. Council had released the land for them in 1965. Focal Properties, or Brumac as it was known to that council, was petitioning to get land to start the proposed Silver Creek project but council refused. Even at that the town's population was growing by 15 per cent per year.

When asked about his memories as mayor he pulls out a couple to prove his point about not taking the position too seriously or you'd go crazy.

OLDER FELLOW "I was walking down the street one day and this older fellow walked up and socked me right in the nose," he chuckles. "Then he started in giving me what for about the condition of his road. I'd known the fellow all my life but I didn't know about his road. When I finally found out where he lived I discovered he was out in the township and it was Tom Hill he should have punched in the nose, not me."

"I've been called Tug Boat."

Then there was one time when a couple of young kids asked to come and interview me for a school project. They came in with a tape recorder and went about setting it up very professionally. They were all prepared to do a really good job, you see. While the one boy was hooking up the microphone the other turns to me and "Here's a list of the questions we're going to ask you so you can look them over in case you want to duck any of them."

Mr. Emmerson served only one term as mayor for several reasons. One was his doctor's advice that he should quit. Another was the worry that his family was being neglected.

"One night as I was going out the door Muriel asked me if I knew how many consecutive nights out this was for me?" he says. "Of course I just looked blank but she knew. It was 21 nights in a row that I'd been off to some function or other."

"My son Blake was seven or eight then and it made me stop and realize what I was doing. I had to do some thinking and establish my priorities. I decided not to run again."

Although Steamer Emmerson is a familiar face to many are residents, the fact that he was not born in Canada is not so well known. He says he arrived from the United States as a baby along with the six older brothers and sisters in his family. He did his service during the war with the Lorne Scots and a couple of other Canadian regiments. He married a Canadian girl. He spent his growing up years in Georgetown and settled here as an adult but it wasn't until 1955 that he decided to get his citizenship papers.

NICK NAME His nick name, Steamer, goes back to his childhood and was a product of his own invention.

When the family lived on George Street, a couple of doors from the Alcotts he used to visit them regularly. One morning he went over before Gordon Alcott left for high school. As big boys will with little ones, Gord asked him how he was and what his name was. Mr. Emmerson told him "My name's Steamboat with two 'S's." Mr. Alcott thought that was a great answer for a kid of five and he called him that from that time on.

"I've been called Tug Boat."



Steamer Emmerson

Steamboat and even Howboat," he laughs. In fact, recently some fellow I was talking to on the phone obviously couldn't remember my name so he said "so long Smoker."

Mr. Emmerson was one of the original members of the Little NHL organized by Gordon Alcott and he has great admiration for Alcott's ability to handle youngsters. He was also a personal friend from later years. Gordon Alcott, his brother Ernie, and Mr. Emmerson were the men behind one of The Herald's earlier competitors, The Mirror.

The Mirror was established around the end of the war to be the best of Mr. Emmerson's recollection and ran less than six months.

"We ran it off a Gestetner in Mrs. Alcott's back kitchen until the machine broke down," he chuckles. Then one of us had the money to fix it, so we had to give up."

SEE YOURSELF

The paper's motto was "See yourself in the mirror" and they tried to use as many local names in each issue as possible. Gord Alcott was the editor, Ernie did the cartoons and Mr. Emmerson did anything else that needed doing.

"We'd say the darndest things," he chuckles "and we didn't think about law suits. Actually one fellow did threaten to sue us one time because we used him in a cartoon so we left him alone for a few weeks. The next thing we knew he wanted to know why we were ignoring him. It just shows how serious he was."

Mr. Emmerson has a love of music and was responsible for organizing the town's barbershop singers many years ago. He sang with them until he started into politics and no longer had the time. They soon began having trouble finding accommodation for their meetings and practise and the rent at Cedarvale became too expensive. Eventually the group moved to Brampton and changed its name to the Townsmen.

He was also involved with the town's minstrel shows during the post war years and jokes about how good he was at spotting talent.

"You know all the things Ralph Urset can do musically. Well, I had him in a minstrel show soon after he came to town - as an end man! You know, the fellow the emcee throws stories out to and they supply the straight parts in the joke. Now, can I spot talent?"

Mr. Urset teaches music at Georgetown and District High School and provides music for the Georgetown Little Theatre productions.

Mr. Emmerson also emceed affairs for numerous organizations and had a reputation that kept the calls coming in for his

services even when he decided to quit.

"I didn't used to mind it when I was young," he jokes. "I didn't know what a dangerous game I was playing. Then I started getting nervous and it got worse and worse so I gave it up."

Mr. Emmerson was also the first president of the Esqueving Historical Society, although again he says he won be default.

DANGEROUS GAMES

When the group was forming he attended the meeting and was asked to chair it.

"I didn't want to but when I looked around it was obvious that others had refused them. I figured if they had gone to all the work of getting it started they needed someone to say yes so they could go on. So I agreed. When it came to electing a president they went all the way around the table and everyone declined in turn. By the time it got to me there was no one else. If I'd said no then they'd have had to start all over again. It seemed a pretty little thing to do when the rest of them had done all the work."

Mr. Emmerson is also an honorary member of the Georgetown Rotary Club and one of its charter members.

Mr. Emmerson is known in the sports community because of his hockey career as a youth. He also played industrial hockey and baseball in later years and even wrote a "bit of a sports column" in The Herald at one time.

Now that politics is behind him how does a man find a job to equal that of being mayor?

"I got the job as deputy sheriff as a joke," he laughs. When I was quitting some fellows pointed out to me that the sheriff, Andy Frank, was quitting and there was going to be room for a new deputy. I ignored it at first when they suggested I should apply for it. Then eventually I did apply and I got it."

He has been at it now for eight years.



Barbara Scholz and Sandra Domski practice washing the floor in the practical life area of the Montessori School in Norval. The practical life area is designed to give the children a chance to practice activities they will encounter in life. (Herald photo by Lori Taylor)

Norval school gets new owners

By LORI TAYLOR Herald staff writer The Montessori School in Norval has changed ownership with new owners Clare and Alma Riepma preparing now for the upcoming semester in September.

Mr. and Mrs. Riepma purchased the school from Alan and Audrey Shine, who have operated the Montessori School in the Georgetown area since 1974. The school was located in the Mountainview Road Baptist Church, but for the past three years has been in its present location in the former Norval Public School.

Mr. Riepma said he and his wife have always been interested in education, and his wife is in fact a former teacher. They have been interested in the Montessori teaching method for some time, and their two daughters attend the Montessori school. Mrs. Riepma is currently studying at the Montessori Institute and will be graduating with an A.M.I., a certificate which qualifies her to teach at a Montessori school for students aged 2 1/2 to 6.

BRAMPTON SCHOOL The Montessori school in Norval is open to students aged 2 1/2 to 6, and if parents want their children to continue past that level in a Montessori school, Mr. and Mrs. Shine own a school in Brampton which is equivalent to grade six level in a conventional school. There are schools in existence which will take students to the equivalent of a high school level, but there are none located in this area.

The Shines decided to sell the school because they thought the school would bene-

fit from being operated by someone who lived in the community, Mr. Riepma said. He and his wife are preparing now for fall registration, and their tenure as owners of the school will begin with that class.

The Montessori concept of education was originated by Dr. Maria Montessori, Mr. Riepma said. She was a doctor of medicine and had nothing to do with education until she developed her theories of education from her observations of children.

Dr. Montessori observed certain needs and development patterns in children, certain things they like to manipulate, Mr. Riepma said. She developed her approach from her observations, and didn't try to make the children fit her theories as some educators have done, he said.

"The aim of the school is to help the children do it themselves," Mrs. Riepma said. "Children want to be independent, and they are curious, and motivated to find out."

CHILDREN MOTIVATED "Children are motivated, and the school wants to direct and stimulate that motivation," she added. "We help the children learn for themselves and through interaction with others."

The learning environment at the school is made up of a number of integral areas, Mr. Riepma said. It includes the practical life area, where the child works with items found in practical life situations, the sensorial area, where the child's senses are refined, the

language area where the child's language skills are enhanced, the math area, and the cultural area, which includes music, art, drama, history, geography, science and the natural environment.

The Montessori school is centred on the development of the child at his own pace, and not based on knowledge being given to the child from teachers, Mr. Riepma said. It is based on the child's own discoveries, and the job of the teacher, or directress, as she is known in Montessori schools, is to stimulate the child's desire to learn, and direct his efforts.

The materials in the school are used to help the children realize abstract concepts through manipulation of the materials. Concepts such as "large" and "small" are learned with pieces of wood in a range of sizes, and matching holes in another piece of wood. By matching up the pieces of wood with the proper-sized hole, the child learns the concepts of size and dimension, Mrs. Riepma said.

The school has 42 children registered now, Mr. Riepma said and they are taking registrations for next semester now. Levels from 2 1/2 to 5 will be offered to the children, and the level of instruction will be based on the child's ability, and what level he or she has reached.

WORK CLOSELY "We intend to work closely with the Shines," Mr. Riepma said. "If a child is ready for the day school, his parents may want to send him to the school in Brampton."

"We believe in quality education, quality materials and quality kids," Mrs. Riepma said. "The environment of the school has to be a quality environment, and the materials have to be quality materials for the child to use them well."

Parents who would like to register their child in the Montessori School, or who have questions, can call Mr. and Mrs. Riepma at 877-6751 in the evenings.

"One of the things we want to emphasize is that the children, when they're in the room feel a lot of joy," Mrs. Riepma said. "They enjoy what they're doing. They look forward to coming in, and they hate to leave."



MAPLE SYRUP TIME

Jim Alkenhead of Halton Region Conservation Area staff pours sap from the bucket on a maple tree into a collecting bucket so that youngsters from Hornby Co-Op Nursery School can see what sap looks like and how it tastes before it is boiled down in an

evaporator into maple syrup. The youngsters saw the various methods of collecting sap and making syrup from pioneer times to modern methods when they visited Nounsberg last week.

(Herald photo by Maggie Hannah)

Lot levy bylaw being revised

A bylaw has been forwarded to town council by the general committee implementing revisions in the town's schedule of lot levies payable by developers and builders in accordance with increases registered during 1978 by the Southam Construction Index.

According to town treasurer Ray King, the Index, as it pertains to Ontario, rose nearly 4.2 per cent between Jan. 15, 1978, and Jan. 15, 1979.

The municipal bylaw approved by council in 1976 to control lot levies requires an annual review of the lot levy schedule to reflect Index increases. As a result of the 1979 revisions, lot levies for single

family, semi-detached and duplex dwellings containing one or two units will be increased to \$1,512 per unit. Triplex, double-duplex and fourplex dwellings, as well as townhouses, will require lot levies of \$1,590 per unit.

A \$1,196 lot levy will be charged for apartment buildings of three stories or less, on a per unit basis, while senior citizens housing of the same height will require \$718 in lot levies per unit.

The town will charge \$1,076 per unit for apartment buildings of more than three stories and \$699 for senior citizens residences of more than three stories.



Clare and Alma Riepma are the new owners of the Montessori School in Norval, and Mrs. Riepma will become the director of the school in September. (Herald photo)