Ex-entertainer tells hopefuls to start early

By MAGGIE HANNAH

Herald staff writer. . Scores of young people look at show business as one of those great professions they would just love to get into. Many others hope to parlay a modicum of talent into a glamorous career. Georgetown's Bill McKeewn knows the whole route and has many negative things to say about show business although he would never advise anyone against it if show business is their heart's desire.

Mr. McKeown was a middle of the road singer and bandleader for close to five years. He tells young people wanting to go into show business to do it early and get it over with. It's a young person's profession. They'll never stand the pace if they try to start at 30 or over. he warns.

"The basic difference between me and the other people in the music industry was that I wasn't weird enough," he says. "I was a nice guy and nice guys finish last. They get eaten alive. I didn't belong in the industry".

'While the really great stars he had the chance to meet like Bob Hope and Johnny Cash were terrific with a devotion to their family and interest in the world in general such as most people have, the middle of the road musicians "marry the lasmess first and others second," Mr. McKeown says. The music business was the whole world to the musicians he knew and nothing else ever mattered to them.

DOWN HILL He was Guelph's New Year's baby for 1949 "and I've been going down hill ever since," he quips.

He grew up on a farm in Erin township just north of Acton and started kindergarten at Acton's Robert Little Public School because his father was teaching there. He switched back to S.S.R Erin for grades one to four the skipped grade t). When his younger sister started Grade 1 and his mother

teturned to teachering Bill, Jo-Anne and Donna all attended Glen Williams Public School because their father was the school's principal. - He attended Georgetown high school and has fond memories of portraying J.L. Lambert in a play the students staged when Mr. Lambert retired as the school's principal. School wasn't quite as great os a teacher's child is supposed to think it is, however, and

there. "I don't know how my parents ever put up with me when I was in high school," he admits.

he chuckles as he remembers

how much trouble he got into

The fact that he began school h year early because of where his birthday fell and then skipped a grade on top of it leaves him saying he was too young to fit with his classmates in high school.

He failed Grade 12 and then hever completed his year when he went to repeat it. That didn't stop him from tackling e journalism course at Sherklan College in Oakville the

Bill McKeown poses with one of the flashler trucks on the Georgetown Chrsyler lot. After four years with the company he has nothing but good things to say about selling cars although he

year the college opened. "I lied my way into the school," he grins. "I told them I had my Grade 12 which I didn't, and I told them I was 18 which I wasn't. By the time they found out, though, I had written my Christmas exams and I had the third highest

me stay." It was one of his Sheridan instructors, Ron Martin, who got him deeply interested in show business and he never returned for the second year at Sheridan.

mark in the school so they let

He had grade six piano. grade two theory and harmony and sung. Most of his work was middle of the road rock but he had a short stint with country music while he was with the Tommy Hunter show.

His professional career began in September 1968 when he was "discovered" by an advertlsing agency, while he was working with a band at the Canadian National Exhibition.

He did a lot of commercials that fall. He also did a television special with Debbi Lori Kaye aired in late December. He was also among the 3,000 young people who auditioned for the Canadian Broadcasting Company's ill-fated Good Company. Eight men and eight women were finally chosen and he was one of them. From September to the early spring of the following year they studied acting, dancing and singing. When the show was finally aired "it stunk", Mr.

McKeown says. He was glad to accept an offer from Tommy Hunter to go on the road with his show for the summer as an opening act and also the master of ceremonies for the show. Again he worked with Debbi Lori Kaye. He loved the people on that show and considers that as part of the good memories of his entertainment career.

He went back to television commercials and small CRC

admits he never trusted a car salesman when he was in the music Industry between 1968 and 1973,

(Herald photo)

productions and in December 1969, he started putting a band together to go on the road with Debbi Lori Kaye. He and Debbi married in May and opened with the band at Charlottetown in June 1970.

During the ensuing two years he and his wife took a lounge act all across Canada and the United States as well as touring Canadian Armed Forces bases in Canada and overseas. They were at Osaka,

Summer school opens July 3

With the dust barely settled on their textbooks, some 1,000 to 1,600 Halton students are expected to be back in the classroom starting July 3.

That's the number the Halton board of education expects for its summer school program.

Half are expected to enrol in new credit programs taught for four hours a day; the remainder will be trying to make up credits for their last ...

The board expects 17 schools to be involved in the program depending on enrolment. Among them will be Centennial, Stewarttown and W.I. Dick public schools and McKenzie-Smith middle school.

Classes run from July 3 to

Studies will include "core"

subjects required by the ministry of education: Grade 9 and 10 English, mathematics, Canadian history. Canadian geography, science, and Grade II and 12 English. Other subjects . include French, biology, chem-

istry, physics and most Grade 13 subjects. A driver education course, typing, auditing, and a course teaching English as a second language are also being offer-

Each year, a number of adults register in summer school courses, either academic or general interest.

Secondary students are required to register at their home school. Adults are invited to call the continuing education office at 878-8451 for additional information and registration details.

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Japan for the Winter Olympics in 1970. They did a certain amount of television work as extras in some of the Many Others shows.

Financial disaster and marriage break up both struck in 1972 and Mr. McKeown says the decree giving him custody of his infant son. Richy, must have been one of the first ever to go through the Halton courts to give a father custody of a child His parents took his son and he went back to work doing a lounge act on his own. He also had a throat operation that year for polyps. It is one of the hazards of the job, he says, and comes from singing in smoky bars.

He got a big break the next year and was the headliner for Klondike Days in Edmonton which was the best job in Canada that year.

He earned "ten grand" for Klondike Days and never saw a penny of it. His manager got it all and he didn't even windup with a ticket home. NOTFIRST

That wasn't the first such incident, unfortunately. Between 1968 and 1973 he says his manager robbed him blind. They collected the money for the work and then just disappeared. Reporting them to the police wasn't much help. They were never found.

Saul Holiff from London was probably the only good manager he ever met, he says. He manages Johnny Cash and members of the Tommy Hunter Show among others and was the only one of his kind whom Mr. McKeown found to be totally honest, straight and trustworthy. Having no friends or relatives with show business experience he had no one to guide him or point out the sort of pitfalls to avoid.

Money was probably the worst problem because although he and his wife paid income tax on \$100,000 in 1970, inside two years he was broke.

He was unpaid again after landing the biggest job in Canada in August 1973. A month later when he finished working in a club in the east end of Toronto he decided he had had enough of it. The manager handed him a cheque for two weeks work as he was supposed to and Mr. McKeown handed him a cheque for half his wages since it was expected of him. That was Saturday night Monday he went to the bank, cancelled payment on the cheque and left the music industry permanently.

He came back to Georgetown and began shingling houses for CMC Roofing until November. Then he became a salesman for a computer company in Toronto. After four months he and the company's vice-president set up their own company, Key-Tech Data Service at Adelaide and Yonge in Toronto. He sold out his half of the business in January 1975 and manages not to look sour

when he tells how the company has grown to having divisions in Toronto and Montreal and grossed a six-figure income last year.

He invested his capital for the computer business in a restaurant at Sauble Beach in late January but the deal never closed. He found out later that the owner, a middleaged women, had already sold it four times. It didn't matter. He had lost his investment. CAR SALESMAN

In May he saw an advertisement for a car salesman at Georgetown Chrysler. He also needed a car. Although he was working in Toronto he decided to make one visit serve two purposes and grins about how he has never looked back. Now he is flet lease and assistant

sales manager for the company and gets to drive a car he can't afford, works near home and derives satisfaction from knowing he must be doing something right with his customers since they come back

again and again when they need cars. Not bad for a man who declares he never trusted a car salesman even though he bought 14 vehicles during his five years in the music busi-

Mr. McKeown married his present wife, Jan, in 1976, and

they now have a daughter, Lee Anne, to keep Richy company. He says he enjoy fishing, hunting, photography, tennis and snowmobling although fis-

hing has to be his real sideline. "You can't fish and worry and there's no telephones beside a stream," he grins.

Although he'll always look at his music days with foudness he has reservations about just how successful he

ENJOYS FISHING

"It always left you feeling empty," he says. "There's no measure for success in the business. You realize you can't please everyone and you have to be able to live with your-

"Get show business out of your system so you can get on with living after it's over. Music really ages you physically, emotionally and mentally. It's a tremendous strain. Absolutely the roughest industry you can get into and unless you're young you can't stand the pace," he says.

"If you don't have a vice going into it you will have before you leave. It will find you - either a physical or an emotional crutch.'

He grins as he realizes how philosophical he has become. "I think I'm very well adjusted for what I've come through."



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Fifth Georgetown Girl Guides receiving . their Challenge Badges at the Mother-Daughter Banquet last week were; back row from the left, Caroline Bjerkelund, Cherle McEl-

roy, Teresa Thompson and Janet Cummings. Centre row: Julie Hannah, Angle Kavanagh, and Helen Bilik, Front row: Lee Blendell.