

HALTON'S PEOPLE

Community service is an obligation

By **MAGGIE HANNAH**
Herald staff writer

People have to set their own standards and principles and live by them. Residents of a community owe it something. Those raising families in a community have a moral responsibility to the community as well as their families, to give of their abilities in whatever way they can. So says Paul Armstrong, one of Georgetown's busier businessmen.

Just how Mr. Armstrong arrived at his philosophy wasn't discussed but it could well have come from family tradition as well as observation and inclination. Mr. Armstrong's twin brother, Michael, is regional councillor for Ward 4, and their father the late John T. Armstrong, was Georgetown's mayor from 1952 to 1959.

The boys were 12 when their father was first elected and Mr. Armstrong admits he was conscious of being the mayor's son.

"Occasionally there'd be a parental warning about doing something," he says, "but I think we might have been recognized as much for the fact that we were twins as for the fact our father was the mayor. Mike and I, and Ross and Bob Miller were the only twins in Chapel Street school in those days. There'd be about 250 kids in the school and it was the only school here then. We got ridings all the time but it was never anything personal. Someone would say 'why don't

you tell your old man to fix such and such a street but it was never vicious."

"I don't think politicians were considered all that great then. You had to be kind of a folksy person or you didn't stay around. The only professional from those days was Andy Dale (a lawyer). The rest were all working men."

DIFFERENT INTERESTS

Although Paul and Mike were twins they developed different interests as they grew up and as a result they had different friends.

"I suppose when we were younger our parents tended to expect us to do things together because we were the same age," he says. "I know we were on the same ball and hockey teams and in the same Sunday school class and choir together. And of course we were in the same class in school. Up to Grade 6, that is. I think that was when they began streaming the kids."

Mr. Armstrong missed Grade 7. Whether he had a slight perceptual problem, which of course teachers didn't recognize in those days, or whether he simply lost interest in school he isn't sure, repeating his year was good in the end, however, because he was an honour student by the time he completed Grade 8.

"I don't know if repeating Grade 7 let me catch up, or I matured, or I liked my teacher, or I was just damn scared of Harold Henry, the school's principal," he jokes, "but it was the best year I ever had."

Starting high school without his brother wasn't quite so easy. The school was small enough that the new students were spotted instantly he says, and the tales of what new students could expect were enough to make him nervous.

DENTISTRY

He finished three years and part of his fourth before he decided on a career. Mike had left school to work in a bank and Paul was aiming towards dentistry before the school guidance teacher poked holes in his ambitions.

"Ross Lambert, the school principal, also had the guidance in those days," he recalls, "and he told me the only kind of dentist I'd ever make was the mechanical kind, doing false teeth and that sort of thing, and after seeing me in the shop he had his doubts about that too," he grins.

Mr. Armstrong wound up attending the Guelph Business College. The college's owner was grooming him to be a court reporter but he got cold feet and decided against it.

Just as Mike was the better student, so he is the more aggressive character, Mr. Armstrong says.

"I have to push myself to do public speaking and I hate parties," he says. "I'm more comfortable in the one-on-one situation. Gangs of people overwhelm me. I'd just as soon not argue with people. That's probably why I'll never be a politician. I know people who disagree aren't against you personally but I just don't like to argue."

MALE SECRETARY

After his business college

training he went to Canadian Pacific Steamships in Toronto as a male stenographer and wound up spending more time of his boss's Rotary correspondence than on company business.

"I guess that was my first introduction to Rotary," he grins.

He has been with the club for 12 years now and has just stepped down as Youth Exchange chairman for the Georgetown Rotary club. He also was the group's president in 1972-73.

John T. Armstrong began in the insurance business in 1947 and set up his office in half of the present location on Main Street South in 1956. Paul joined his father in 1959.

"No one in the family wanted to go into the insurance business," he recalls. "One weekend when I was home from Toronto, Father mentioned it to me. It was a long haul to get anywhere in the CP then, so I went to the first course on training people in general insurance that the Ontario Independent Insurance Agent's Association sponsored. It was at McMaster University. I took my holidays to go to the course so I'd still have a job in case I didn't like it. Then I went back to Toronto until September. I couldn't get a license to sell insurance because I was only 20 so I went back and took it again the next year. Like Grade 7 it probably did me the world of good," he quips.

"My father was more a life insurance salesman than a general insurance man," Mr. Armstrong says. "He wasn't the office confining. He wasn't



Paul Armstrong

as much an administrator as a salesman and if he had his druthers he'd be outside the office talking to people."

DEPRESSION

When he began visiting customers in their homes in

1959 Georgetown was in a depressed state. At least, some areas were. It was the time of the Avro Arrow's demise and a lot of residents, particularly those in the new portions of town, were in bad financial

trouble.

"I had to push myself to go out after supper and talk to those people," he says. "I found a lot of the homes had very little furniture, people had no jobs, some of them had hardly enough to eat and a lot of them didn't know if they'd even be in the house next month."

"What an introduction to the business! It wasn't the depression but you'd swear to Hell it was. Gradually things got better. I sure developed a security sense all of a sudden. I probably wouldn't have stayed in the business if it hadn't been for my father. He could see a better tomorrow because he'd been through tough times before."

The business has changed over the years, Mr. Armstrong says. When his father first started selling insurance he used to visit people in their homes. When Mr. Armstrong began in the business a lot of people came to the office because it was faster to come there, do your business and then get on with other things. Now an increasing amount of their business comes in by mail.

"I used to be that your customers trusted you to know what was best for their needs," he says. "Now the dollar figure is more important. They think more in terms of getting what seems to be the best price. Customers are more aware but their faith in human nature has diminished."

MANY INTERESTS

Those who knew John T. Armstrong will remember he was involved with politics,

church, insurance and the Masons. Looking at his sons it appears that they have split his interests between them.

"It takes the two of us to keep up with all he could do," Mr. Armstrong says.

Mr. Armstrong has been part of the covenant program at St. George's Anglican Church for the past two years trying to determine what people want from their church and finding ways of making the church fit their needs.

Last year he was past Master of Credit Lodge as well as serving as secretary on the Credit Temple Corp. which looks after the building on Highway Seven west of town. He served as vice-chairman on the Georgetown hospital board and vice-president of district five of the Ontario Hospital Association.

He has also been a justice of the peace since 1973 although he doesn't sit in traffic court as do two other Halton J.P.s. It has his political affiliations he feels, which earned him that job.

"I don't hold any offices in the party but I do knock with the candidate at election time and I sit on the fund raising committee," he says.

He says he hasn't much in the way of hobbies although he plays a bit of golf and has been part of a group that gets together to play cards regularly. He also gardens.

"I'm a labourer," he says. "I like planting and its fruits but I don't know the names of things. I leave that to Janet."

Mrs. Armstrong worked for an insurance adjusting firm prior to her marriage in September 1975.

Back from Holland

Exchange student had a busy year abroad

By **LORI TAYLOR**
Herald staff writer

Hal Porter enjoyed the year he spent in Holland on the Rotary Club Student Exchange program, but he says it feels good to be home again.

"A year is a long time, but it was longer for my family, because I was travelling a lot, and having new experiences and time seemed to go fast," Hal said.

Hal, who turned 19 while he was in Holland, was selected by the Georgetown Rotary Club to spend a year among the Rotary Clubs of the Netherlands as part of an exchange program. He spent six months in a town called Ermelo with one family, and six months in a town called Puiten, with two families.

"I had an easy year, because the families I stayed with were so good," Hal said. "I was really fortunate. I was treated as a member of the family, and we did things together as a family."

Family relationships are strong in Holland, Hal said, and the extended family with grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins, is still strong. He said in most cases, all members of the family lived in the same town or village, partly because Holland is a relatively small country.

The exchange program works partly on a sink-or-swim basis, in that Hal spoke no Dutch when he arrived in Holland. After a year, though, he has become fluent in the language.

LANGUAGE A PROBLEM

"The language, of course, was a problem. I didn't speak a word of Dutch when I went there," Hal said. "Now I speak it fluently. When you're totally immersed in a language, it



Hal Porter

doesn't take long to learn how to communicate."

Hal went to school in Holland, although he didn't take a

full program. He followed four or five classes because taking into consideration the language problems and the differences between the educational

systems, a full course-load would have been too difficult, he said.

"Their education system is a lot different from ours," Hal said. "It's much more intense. School starts at 8 in the morning and ends at 3:30 and it's oriented completely to academics. They don't have the social and recreational components that we do here."

Students in Dutch schools are expected to learn a lot more, including other languages, Hal said. Because Holland is surrounded by different countries, with different languages, learning other languages is essential for communication.

"Through going to school in a European country, I really have more appreciation for our system—we're more rounded," Hal said. "Because of the way I've been taught, I found it easier to meet new people and adapt to the different situations in Europe."

Students on the Rotary Club exchange program don't normally do much travelling while they're on the exchange, but Hal's trip was an exception. While he was in Holland, he also visited England, Switzerland, France, Austria and Germany.

"It's not the idea of the program to travel, but with my families, I did a lot of travelling that I never thought I would do when I left," Hal said. He spent Christmas in Switzerland skiing, which helped him deal with the inevitable feeling of homesickness from spending the holiday away from home, he said.

EARLY CHRISTMAS

"The Dutch celebrate Christmas on December 5, not December 25," Hal said. "They invited me to go with them to Switzerland, and I was glad I went. It didn't seem like Christmas in Switzerland."

Hal went to East and West Berlin on a school excursion, a trip which he described as one of the most interesting trips of his stay.

"We got into East Berlin, and even though we had to stay on the bus most of the time, and we only saw the places they wanted us to see, it was really interesting," he said.

Hal went to England twice, once with his host Rotary Club and once with other Rotary Exchange students. He spent about twelve days in England altogether, two of them in London.

He also made it to Paris, a trip which he said he had always wanted to make.

"I've always had a dream to go to Paris, and when I got there, I found it was everything I thought it would be," Hal said. "I wasn't let down at all."

The last three weeks of his stay in Europe, Hal spent in southern Germany with one of

his host families. They visited Munich and also did some travelling in Austria, he said.

"I never dreamed I'd be going to these places," he said.

Hal also visited with Marie Boffe in Belgium. Marie was a Rotary exchange student, who stayed in Georgetown during her trip. She showed him around Brussels and Belgium during the four days he spent there, Hal said.

Hal said it would be difficult to generalize about the people he met during his stay.

PRETTY SMALL

"Holland is pretty small, compared to Canada, but people from the east, west, north and south are completely different," he said. "But people are people. I found the big difference was in the young people. As they got older, I found they were more like us." He said the difference might be to the different emphasis placed on education in Holland.

The Dutch were very interested in hearing about Canada, Hal said, although they had some misconceptions about the country.

"People thought Canada was really cold, they thought it was Indians and Eskimos," he said. "One thing people were really impressed with was all the room. They were impressed that our streets were so wide, and things like that."

Life in Holland is marked by a number of rituals which are so much a part of tradition that people do them without thinking, Hal said. At 10 in the morning, everything stops for a coffee break, and that includes the schools. Lunch comes around noon, and at 2 in the afternoon, everything stops for tea. At 5 p.m. comes another coffee break. Hal said these are not small meals, such as the English afternoon tea, but strictly tea and coffee breaks.

The Dutch drink a lot of coffee, Hal said. At any Dutch party, the guest are served a cup of coffee, followed by a Dutch pastry, and then another cup of coffee. Only then is alcohol served. There is no drinking age in Holland, and it is quite acceptable to offer young boys a cold drink of beer, Hal said. The teenagers in Holland don't seem at all preoccupied with liquor because they're used to it, Hal said.

Hal celebrated his nineteenth birthday in Holland. His birthday actually fell during a trip to England, but when he returned, his host families held a birthday party for him. In Holland, when a birthday is celebrated, the whole family is congratulated, and not just the birthday person, as is done in Canada.

Because he is a Canadian, Hal said the gifts he received from his host families were mainly Dutch items which he could keep as souvenirs, such as Dutch records, and a pair of wooden shoes.

QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY

One of the big holidays in

Holland is Queen Juliana's birthday. A lot of people go to her palace to celebrate, and take part in a parade which passes under the balcony of the palace, Hal said.

Christmas is celebrated in a slightly different fashion from the Canadian traditions in Holland, Hal said. The holiday is less commercial than it is in Canada, and is celebrated as St. Nicholas Day on December 5, he said. That is when gifts are exchanged.

The exchange of gifts is not what it is in Canada, Hal said. They are small, because the Dutch consider the important things to be the thought behind the gift. Gifts are usually accompanied by a poem composed by the person giving the gift.

"The poems are very special," Hal said. "On Christmas day, or what we call Christmas, the people go to church, but there isn't the kind of celebration we have here."

It can be difficult to adapt to a different culture, but Hal said that it helped that the Rotary exchange students got to gather one weekend a month. The students were from Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand

and South Africa. There were 28 of them, and Hal said it helped that they could discuss their impressions and any problems they were having.

People who remember Hal as a singer and musician from his appearances as Rolf in "Do Re Me" might take note that while Hal was in Holland, he took part in a school variety show, which was part of a cheese party, where guests sampled different kinds of cheese. He also played classical guitar, and one of his host families lent him a guitar for the duration of his stay, so he could keep in practice.

Hal also joined a folk-dancing group, where he learned mainly Israeli folk dances.

MILKING COWS
Among other new skills Hal acquired was learning how to milk cows. One of the families he stayed with lives on a farm, which was built in 1860. The farm didn't have central heating or hot water, but it did have 2,500 chickens and 80 head of cattle which had to be milked each day.

Hal said he made many friends in Holland, and he expects to be corresponding with a number of people he met during his stay. He said he

will be having visitors from Holland, when people he met come over for holidays.

Hal kept in touch with his family during the time he spent in Holland, writing letters once a week and telephoning once a month.

Hal said he would recommend that those who have an opportunity to get involved in this type of exchange program should do so.

"I lost a year in high school, but if you look at it in terms of experience gained, it wasn't lost at all," Hal said. "I saw a lot of Europe and I learned a lot." Hal will be returning to Georgetown District High School in Grade 13.

"I want to express my appreciation to the Rotary Club for the opportunity to go on this exchange," Hal said. "I gained so much through the experience of going to another land, that I could never express enough gratitude to the Georgetown Rotary Club."

"Anyone could go to Holland as a tourist, but you don't get many chances to go there, to live there, go to school there, eat Dutch food and experience Dutch culture," Hal said. "It was an invaluable experience, and I'll never forget it."

OBITUARY

Acton school principal dies

The principal of Acton's McKenzie-Smith Middle School, Gary Dawkins, died in his home on Monday. He was 40.

Born and raised in Acton, Mr. Dawkins graduated from Toronto's Lakeshore Teachers' College in 1960 and began teaching at Speyside Public School. He became the school's principal in 1963 and was transferred to M.Z. Bennett Public School 10 years later. When the old Acton High School was converted into a middle school in 1977 Mr. Dawkins was named as its principal.



Gary Dawkins

Principal's Association. He was recently appointed to the Georgetown and District Memorial Hospital board of directors and was this year's grand

master of Walker Masonic Lodge No. 321. He was past-president of the Acton Progressive Conservative Association and ran as P.C. candidate for the Halton riding in the 1975 provincial election. He was also a former member of Knox Presbyterian Church Board of Managers.

Mr. Dawkins is survived by his wife, Rosealee, and sons Mark and Michael, at home. He also leaves his parents, Mr. and Mrs. W.E. Dawkins and brothers Fred and Don, all of Acton.

Funeral services for Mr. Dawkins will be held in Knox Presbyterian Church at 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Thursday). A Masonic memorial service will be held tonight at 9 p.m. in Shoemaker's Funeral Home. Interment will follow in Fairview cemetery.

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