

OUR CULTURAL EXPLOSION

John Elliott: Theatre named after businessman

By CHRIS AAGAARD
Herald Staff Writer

Several streets and institutions in Georgetown bear the names of quick-witted, hard-nosed civic politicians who parented the community through some of the most dramatic moments in its history.

John Elliott, former councillor, deputy reeve and reeve of Georgetown is the latest town father whose civic duties have been honored posthumously, joining the late Joseph Gibbons and John Armstrong, among others.

Fittingly enough, his name now graces the theatre annex to the town's library-cultural centre, the construction of which is really a reaction to a need created as municipal reps, like Mr. Elliott, began to carefully envision a larger, urban community, as far back as the late 1880s and early '90s.

Old Herald headlines and articles serve as a historic barometer, telling of the turbulent transition Georgetown was making from a small town to a larger, more diversified industrial community.

A new sewage treatment plant opened in Hungry Hollow Delrex Developments Ltd. was changing the physical and demographic structure of Georgetown almost daily,

councils anxiously watched industry investigate possibilities of locating here, some choosing to stay, others continuing their searches elsewhere, and every



JOHN ELLIOTT

year there was an election, and every year there seemed to be some issue upon which candidates could build a platform.

EIGHT YEARS
Mr. Elliott spent eight years on Georgetown council during a particularly busy period; yet he still found time for his business, and about a dozen societies and service organizations gratefully can recall the work he did for them.

He was a World War II veteran, serving on the HMCS Algonquin, and he participated in the D-Day invasion of Normandy in 1944. The Grenfell, Saskatchewan, native died in February, 1978, at the age of 54.

Poll tallies from election years indicate he was a popular campaigner. His first bid for office in the December, 1956, election was narrowly thwarted by 49 votes. The following year, he and fellow newcomer John Gunn joined four council returnees in an election in which residents once again raved about the outstanding turnout at the polls—almost 42 per cent of the electorate.

Vying for his second term as reeve (reeves and deputy reeves served as municipal representatives on the Halton County Council) in the December 1962, election, Mr. Elliott scored a 2-1 victory over challenger Al Norton to retain his seat. He was declared an "across-the-board" winner in all three town wards.

Embittered by what he perceived as a lack of leadership, Mr. Elliott decided to challenge incumbent Mayor Joseph Gibbons in the 1965 election following two more successful terms as reeve.

An Aug. 5 issue of The Herald declared it one of the earliest campaign announce-



Announcing his intentions four months before the 1965 municipal election did then-Reeve John Elliott little good. He lost to incumbent Mayor Joseph Gibbons (seeking his third consecutive term and 18th all-time term in office) by a margin of 85 votes that December. Mr. Elliott then retired from political life. A week after announcing the Dec. 9, 1965, election results, The Herald reported that Mr. Elliott's ten-year old daughter, Lois, would be making her third appearance as a singer on CHCH-TV's Tiny Talent Time Christmas Show.

ments on record and the lead story featured highlights from Mr. Elliott's hat-tossing speech in which he blamed the mayor for council's unproductive in-fighting.

In response, Mayor Gibbons, then 78 years old, accused Mr. Elliott of being unable to hold down county taxes while serving as Georgetown's reeve. In the election which followed four months later, Mayor Gibbons edged out Mr. Elliott by 89 votes, returning to office for a third consecutive and sixteenth in total term.

COUNCIL TABLE
Mr. Elliott never returned to the council table as a sitting member. Instead, there was a business to run, Georgetown Terminal Warehouse Ltd., which he started in 1964. And he was still employed by Canadian National Railways as the Georgetown station manager.

Terminal Warehouses Ltd. is now operated by his widow, Norma, and daughters Brenda Sissett and Lois Elliott. At a press conference last week to announce the naming of the new theatre after Mr. Elliott, an appreciative Lois Elliott recalled how her father was always a great fan of plays, comedies and country music and credited him with encouraging her own pursuit of the dramatic and musical arts.

John Elliott would probably

have agreed with that kind-of community selflessness for the common good. His campaign literature, published for the mayoralty race in 1965, cited his intention to "stimulate a favorable atmosphere for rapid industrial growth" and a pledge to strengthen community spirit in Georgetown. They reflect the pressing issues which he perceived in his day.

His family is helping to carry on similar ideals. For the moment, however, "industrial growth" is substituted for "artistic" growth, and as three communities attempt to become a homogeneous entity, Georgetown bows out to Halton Hills.



Reeve John Elliott retained his seat in the December, 1962, election with a 2-1 margin over challenger Al Norton, a former councillor. Ern Hyde returned to the mayor's chair after a year's absence by defeating incumbent Doug Sargent and Joseph Gibbons in a three-way race. Deputy-Reeve Bill Hunter returned to office with a comfortable margin over Coun. Fred "Tut" Harrison.

It was a long time coming

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home, council realized, the old church could be used for no other purpose.

ATHHELM
By 1978, Halton Hills had an Arts Council, with Ralph Ursel at its helm. Well-known locally as an accompanist to church choirs and a musical director at the high school and with area musical societies, Mr. Ursel nevertheless describes himself as primarily an arts patron. Although the new Arts Council concentrated initially on "first things first", with Summerfest its prime object-



REX HESLOP JR.

ive, the need for a proper cultural centre remained its preoccupation.

Elsewhere in town, the Rotary Club of Georgetown, of which Mr. Ursel "just happened" to be a member, was in search of a worthwhile community project it could get behind. The proposed new theatre was an ideal goal, and the club soon obtained an option to buy land near the hospital.

Suddenly, the isolated facets of a town-wide problem all came together on the "gridiron" of the town council chamber, and the library's shortcomings, which Mr. Ursel and others saw as a "political football," ended up on the 55-yard line.

Mr. Wagland recalls the library site as almost an afterthought on Queen's Park's part when a list was being prepared of area locations to be scouted for the new theatre. The ministry of culture and recreation perhaps identified the possibility of combining both community needs in one, large project before anyone in town, and the idea suddenly made perfect sense.

"It's the inclusion of a library that makes this whole project viable," Mr. Wagland commented. "The mix makes this a solid concept."

With Mr. Wagland assisting, Bailey Consulting Associates (formerly of Toronto, now moved to California) conducted a feasibility study to determine whether so many diverse needs could be accommodated in a single facility and, if so, where.

SCHOOL PLAN
Mr. Wagland pointed out that the Georgetown Little Theatre at that time was keen on its own idea to have council share the cost of building a theatre into the new expansion at Wrigglesworth Public School. Fairly elaborate plans were drawn up and the Halton Board of Education indicated its readiness to assume half the cost.

"But the GLT would have

been the only ones happy there," he said.

Wrigglesworth, along with the Rotary's hospital site,



TOM SHEPARD

Cedarvale Park, the Alcott arena site and a number of others were examined in detail by the "Arts Plus" committee formed by the Arts Council and the Rotary Club.

Current Arts Council president Gretchen Day is proud of the fact that the umbrella organization, largely through Mr. Ursel, played such a key role in launching the project: it was Mr. Ursel who invited Rex Heslop Jr. to head the Arts Plus committee, and it has been Mr. Heslop - son of the man who built the Delrex subdivision - who has gained widespread corporate and trade support for the project.

While many of these involved preferred the Alcott site for

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Funding drive tops \$200,000

Herald Special

The Town of Halton Hills Library and Cultural Centre fund-raising drive topped \$200,000 this week - thanks to a \$5,000 donation from Ab Tennant (see separate story).

A jubilant Mayor Pete Pomroy reminded members of the fund-raising committee's "action team", which has been mounting a six-week blitz prior to the official opening Sunday, that this was the original goal of the 18-month long public subscription campaign. The target was raised to \$230,000 when anticipated Ontario Heritage funds for the restoration of the former Unitarian Church (the old library building) were not forthcoming.

As Library staff scrambled to get things ready and Georgetown Little Theatre backstage crew began assembling the set for the first production in The John Elliott Theatre, workmen were still putting the finishing touches to the \$1.7 million facility. Architect Keith Wagland spent most of the thanksgiving week-end personally putting up signs while Chief Librarian Betsy Cornwell cheerfully set to vanishing library shelves - "something they don't teach you in library school!"

Meanwhile the big push for the necessary public funds to complete financing continued this week with industrial, business and professional contributions amounting to \$23,300. New donors included: Die-Mold Tool Ltd. \$1,000, R. E. Cliphsham Ltd. \$500, Al Kogan \$400 and Goebelle, Wagner and MacAdam \$300. Also this week, Georgetown Area Ratepayers Association donated \$1,100, the proceeds from



\$230,000

\$203,125

ARTS COMPLEX FUND

its "I Love Georgetown" campaign.

Brenda Sissett, who is heading up the industrial-commercial blitz, said that fund-raisers are now hoping that with the official opening - Sunday other organizations will announce their donations-pledges.

Only 18 name-spaces remain to be filled on one of the rug hangings which will hang in perpetuity in The John Elliott Theatre at the new Library and Cultural Centre.

Response to the unique fund-Continued on page A10

CHURCH DIRECTORY

ST. GEORGE'S ANGLICAN CHURCH
60 Guelph St.
877-8044
RECTOR
Rev. Jim Boyle
Sunday, October 18, 1981
8:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist (Prayerbook)
9:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist (New Rite) Junior Church (Nursery Facilities)
11:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist

HOLY CROSS ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
224 Maple Ave. Georgetown
PASTOR
Father Dave Cota
ASST. PASTOR
Father Murray Kretsch
MASSSES
Sat. - 7 p.m.
Sun. - 8 a.m., 10, 12
For information call: 877-3983

GEORGETOWN ALLIANCE CHURCH
14 Main St. S. Georgetown
PASTOR
Rev. Peter Ralph, B.A., M.Div.
Evening Service Oct. 14
Baptism Service in Mountainview Baptist Church, Mountainview Rd. 6:30 p.m.
Evening Service Oct. 25
Gather's "Alesia" performed by Zion Covenant Church, Corale, 6:30 p.m. at the Alliance Church.
CALL: 877-8818 883-3923
A CHURCH OF THE CHRISTIAN & REFORMED ALLIANCE IN CANADA

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Biblical Preaching - Good Music
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Ladies Coffee Hour
Youth Time & Recreation
Boys & Girls Clubs
MONTHLY
Jolly Seniors
Missionary Meeting
Visitors Always Welcome!

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH
WINDSOR ROAD AT CAROLE STREET
PASTOR
REV. DR. J.M. DRICKAMER
Sunday School
9:45 a.m.
CHURCH SERVICE
11:00 a.m.
Church of the Lutheran Hour

WHAT ARE THESE CULTS?

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UNION GAS

Holy Cross Parish Community
224 Maple Avenue

CALENDAR OF GROUP EVENTS

1. Wednesday, October 21; 8:00 p.m. - Church Hall
"THE GOOD NEWS OF FERTILITY AWARENESS"
Speakers: Dr. Matt and Moira McQueen.
2. Wednesday, October 28; 8:00 p.m. - Church Hall
"THE GOOD NEWS OF THE POWER OF GOD'S HEALING"
Speakers: Dr. Joe and Cathy McKenna.
3. Sunday, November 1; 2:00 p.m. - in the Church
"CELEBRATION OF EUCHARIST AND COMMUNAL SACRAMENT OF THE SICK".
4. Wednesday, November 4; 8:00 p.m. - Church Hall
"THE GOOD NEWS FOR WIDOWED, SEPARATED AND DIVORCED CATHOLICS"
Speaker: Sister Joan DeLuca.
5. Wednesday, November 11; 8:00 p.m. - Church Hall
"THE GOOD NEWS OF FAITH OF INDIVIDUAL AND PARISH FAMILIES".
Speaker: Mr. Ed Krupica.
6. Wednesday, November 25; 8:00 p.m. - in the Church
"THE GOOD NEWS OF RECONCILIATION"
"Communal Celebration of the "SACRAMENT OF FORGIVENESS"

— Everyone Welcome! —