



Halton Hills Arts Council

Keeping his dream alive

Dear Sir,
The first time I met Ralph Ursei was about 10 years ago. Having just moved to Georgetown, my husband and I were browsing through the arts and crafts displays at the Fall Fair to find out what Arts activities were available. Suddenly this tall man with a slight stoop and big bushy eyebrows thrust a flyer into my hand that encouraged the need for a cultural centre in Town.

As we talked, I noticed that, despite his quiet manner, his eyes gleamed with excitement at the prospect of a gallery-theatre complex. Ralph, Keith Barber and a handful of others were establishing an Arts Council to spearhead the project.

Ralph's enthusiasm was contagious. It wasn't long before I became embroiled in meeting after meeting with him to promote the Arts Council or the cultural complex or just the Arts in general. Every once in awhile I'd think I could relax for a bit when Ralph would once again come up with a new idea, and somehow I could never say no to his requests.

Developing the Arts and increasing an awareness of them has large-



Ralph Ursei

ly been limited to the efforts of volunteers and some Arts-related non-profit groups. The job is never ending, with a need for individuals who are committed and will work hard. Ralph was such an individual and more. He was tireless, a planner, a doer, consistent, talented, informative. He was a walking directory of all the various aspects of the Arts. Ralph was Mr. Arts himself in Halton Hills.

From the beginning, Ralph and I recognized in each other a mutual love of the Arts. With him being a music teacher and me an art teacher

at the high school level, we shared the belief that the training we did in the classroom should go beyond the walls and be encouraged long after the students had left school. In this hectic world, there was a real need for all the Art forms to be made freely available and appreciated.

Oh, there were times when Ralph and I didn't 'always' agree, and he'd give me a hard look from under those brows and I'd stare right back - both of us being very stubborn. But in the end, we'd find some compromise that would please us both.

The phrases that I kept hearing again and again last week at his funeral were, "Who will carry on with Ralph's work? Who can replace him? Who will keep the Arts Council and his dreams alive?" Even after surgery last year, it wasn't long before he was once again dropping Arts information at my door, despite his physical frailty. Personally, I think that it will take a number of people to equal Ralph's abilities and tenaciousness.

The last time I saw Ralph was on Canada Day in the Glen. With the same old gleam of excitement in his eye, he once again was thrusting flyers into the hands of passersby. This time it was a questionnaire, the results of which will determine a necessity for the establishment of an Arts Policy for Halton Hills.

It was his dream that such a Policy would ensure future development of his beloved Arts for years to come with the support of the Town. I only hope that all who admired and appreciated Ralph's efforts over the years will not allow his dream to be shelved.

To Enid, his wife, on behalf of the Halton Hills Arts Council and all who have benefited from and gained enjoyment from his work, may I express our deepest sympathy.

I, like so many others, shall miss Ralph Ursei very much.

Sincerely,
Gretchen Day
Past President,
Halton Hills Arts Council.

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