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Old school shared 'imperial' stairs of old city hall

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following article is reprinted from The Toronto Star, authored by Jim Emmerson, a former student at GDHS and a Star staff writer. The article originally appeared April 8.

Those of us from the 1930s who will attend the 100th anniversary reunion of Georgetown District High School July 3 to 5 will miss seeing one dear, old friend - the old school itself.

Local lore has it that the building - completed in 1889 and torn down in 1959 - was designed by Edward J. Lennox, creator of Toronto's old city hall.

Lennox experts in Toronto are unable to link the buildings as architectural cousins. But the two had in common what University of Toronto professor Douglas Richardson calls an "imperial staircase."

Upon these broad school stairs, we pupils sat for concerts, the performers striding the foyer. No fripperies for us. No auditorium, no cafeteria, no gymnasium, no swimming pool such as are enjoyed by today's 1,700 students and 100 teachers.

But the old school was a warm, family home for the half dozen teachers and 10- or so students of our day.

Death has claimed almost all the 1930's staff. Yet, half a century does not dim the memory of them.

There stands janitor Jack Evans, bicycle clips still on, clanging his Town Crier hand bell to start classes.

Principal J.L. Lambert - an extremely shy man - stares out a window at Jack Test's farm, hand clasped behind neck, lecturing on literature and Latin.

History teacher H.J. Heldmann drills cadets as they write in their agony in World War I khaki.

Physics teacher Elizabeth Pearson - a gentle lady - bravely beats out with bare hands the flaming brushed wool sweater of a girl who leans too close to Bunsen burner.

French teacher Florence Luke - a tiny woman - patiently endures gangling boys willfully writing blackboard lessons far above her corrective reach.

Marjorie Inman sternly brings mathematics classes to order with a harrumphing "see, here, good people!"

Younger teachers, Jane Beales and Gertrude Fatt, are staff sex symbols, the latter in her skimpy basketball skirt causing developing boys to renounce their vows to the Pythagoras theorem.

Senator Bill Kelly was a kid at Georgetown High along with his brother, Jim, who survived the blazing Lancaster in which Andrew Mynarski won his Victoria Cross.

NHL hockey star Bob Goldham was so good on the rink it was suggested he play the winning team for the school championship. But Principal Lambert ruled this unfair - to the team.

The Depression was on, the era of poverty strangely allied with an age of innocence. Hollywood agonized over letting Clark Gable say "damn" in Gone With The Wind. Then came war and innocence ended.

Principal Lambert shucked his thick glasses, memorized the eye chart, and faked his way into the army.

History teacher Heldmann chose the air force, as did part-time music teacher Carman Sutcliffe (later killed).

These men fight, not for conquest, to liberate, to let justice arise. Some will never return. Embrace these, Father, and receive them, Thy heroic servants, into Thy kingdom.

Johnny Bowman - like so many high school buddies - did not return. At his old farm home, summer's grass and weeds overgrow the site of our happy high school gathering. I never pass without a twinge of the heart.

GDHS souvenirs

The souvenirs with approximate prices include the following:

- 1) Plastic drink coolers (\$2 each)
- 2) Black and white sketches of the original school building (\$3 each)
- 3) Lapel pin or tie tack (\$5 each)
- 4) Coffee mug (\$3 each)
- 5) Solar powered calculator - credit card size (\$9 each)
- 6) Detachable plastic key chain (\$3 each)

Souvenirs will have some aspect of the 100th birthday of GDHS. These souvenirs will be collectors items and can be used as gifts for friends and relatives.

If you wish to buy the above named souvenirs write your order on a sheet of paper with your prepayment and return it in an envelope addressed to Mr. Mike Sherlock or Mr. Charles Genore at the High School. Be sure to include on this same sheet of paper your name, address, phone number and the number of items you wish with

your cheque. Make your cheque payable to GDHS Centennial Committee.

The past few weeks we have featured our oldest living graduate (Hallie Gibbons, 92), and the graduate that is coming from the farthest distance (Indis, Muriel Stephenson).

Names of other "Sweethearts" (married and still living together) are:

1. Dave and Gerry Kentner (nee Calder), who met Jan. 19, 1964.
2. Eric (Rick) Peavoy and Marilyn Goeth, met in Grade 10 in 1966 and were married in February, 1972. They are living in Peterborough, Ontario.
3. Eva Smarda and David Carney met in March, 1973 and were married February 4, 1978.
4. Peter and Elizabeth Norton (nee Davidson), met in 1963, married in 1969.