

Seniors for the Future

A look back at Guelph Street

By GARFIELD McGILVRAJ
Herald Special

When I wrote columns on sports and current events in my earlier days I never dreamed of being asked to write as a senior for a seniors column in the local newspaper.

But as my wife, Emmaline, and I sat on our front patio these past beautiful summer days (some of our friends say to watch the cars go by) we thought we could reminisce a bit about all the changes on Guelph St. in our immediate neighborhood.

We have been sitting on our patio at various times for the past 50 years, and when you start to look back in time, you know you are writing for the right column, that is, for seniors.

When we first came to Guelph Street, it was during the war years. We had a young family, and were looking for a lot to build a home.

We were fortunate, for one day Mrs. Tyers, who lived across the highway as it turned out, came into the newspaper office where I worked, to reply to the advertisement I had placed in the paper. She said "Why didn't you answer my advert?" I said, "I felt it would be too costly." And she said, "You didn't ask." So there was this fine lot, ready to build on, before my very eyes.

But I am supposed to be reminiscing about changes, and the first thing that comes to mind are the beautiful maple trees that lined both sides of Guelph Street. Their branches hung over a two-lane road which was uncluttered with motor vehicles because gas was rationed and tires were hard to come by. However, the trees were casualties of progress for road widening, nearly 50 years ago.

Old Georgetowners will remember the vacant lot with its old foundations and trees and where the ambulance hall now stands. The school children of the neighborhood used it as a playground - no recreational facilities in those days. It was also a short-cut to the old Chapel St. school which was recently demolished to make way for housing.

As we look across the street at the United Church property (built in 1880) we realize that is has seen a number of changes. The small cottage at the Chapel West corner is gone, and in the 40's a church hall was added and a second storey went up in the 70's. The church is again being renovated, adding offices, kitchen, washrooms and an elevator to serve the older members of the congregation. However, the ongoing weddings at the church seem-

ed to intrigue the lady of the house, and I believe we have witnessed more of these than anyone else in Georgetown.

Oh yes, West Chapel has been renamed Ryan Road, after a beloved school principal, to save the confusion of Chapel east and west.

As the eye travels down Guelph St., it stops at what was once Holy Cross Church. It served a small parish until Georgetown began to expand, and the new Church was erected on Maple Ave. The former church was built in the 1800's and now serves the French speaking population and is called Sacre Coeur.

We must not overlook the old town hall, (burned down early one morning) that stood on Cross Street just off Guelph.

Built before the turn of the century, it was an imposing red brick building, with a beautiful hall upstairs where minstrel shows and concerts were held along with high school commencements, and Black Beauty and Tom Mix shows.

In later years, it housed a pottery and a furniture restoration business. The girls pipe band used the hall for practices, and I can say their music was not appreciated by the lady of the house when trying to get the family bedded down for the night!

We don't have to go back too many years to remember the beautiful flower garden Mrs. Ida Harding cared for at the corner of Guelph and Cross Sts. It draw many visitors from far and wide, and Mrs. Harding was always very generous in giving plants away.

I seem to be getting carried away with this bit of reminiscing from our front patio, but must conclude by telling you that a few years ago a sub-divider approached the residents in the block bordered by Main, Cross and Guelph Streets, with a plan for buying all the existing homes, and erecting a plaza with supermarkets, etc. The plan never got off the ground. But think of the potential for downtown Georgetown had it come to fruition.

Now, just a little plug for the Seniors Association of Georgetown, who are working tirelessly for a seniors building, where all seniors can gather to socialize, play games or whatever. If you can help in any way with your gifts or talents, join a very lively executive to help push this endeavor along. Remember that everyone will be a senior citizen some day.

Sometime in the future, we may take a different approach as we reminisce about "old" Georgetown.



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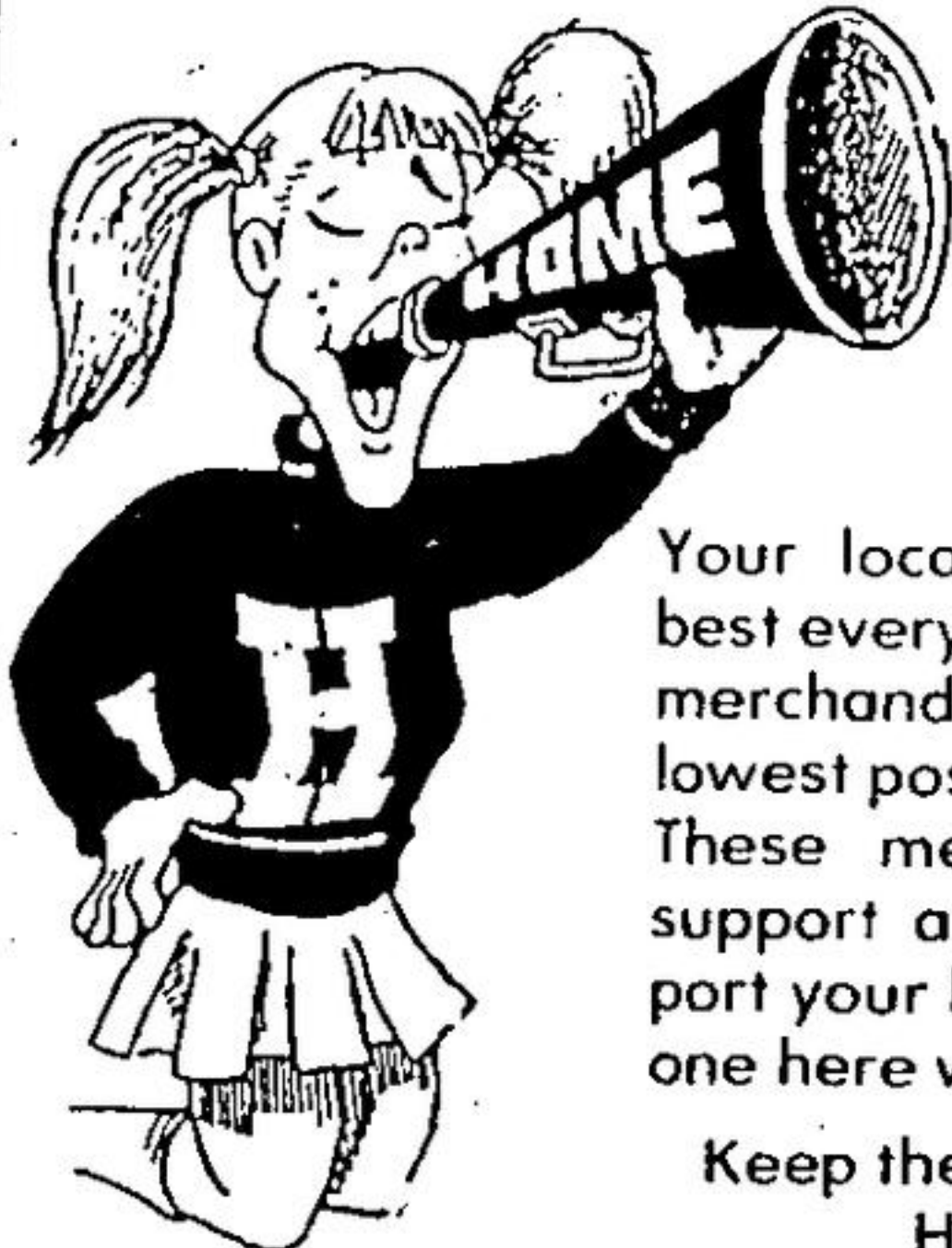
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