

# living IN THE HILLS

## SECTION B

Wednesday, February 5, 1992

### Georgetown Girls Pipe Band is alive and well

By LISA BOONSTOPPEL-POT  
The Herald

One of Georgetown's most unique bands is making a comeback in celebration of its 50th anniversary.

The Georgetown Girl's Pipe Band is one of only a few pipe bands across Canada comprised only of females. They're also one of the few who've survived severe drops in membership.

This year, as they celebrate the 50th anniversary of their incarnation, they're planning on once more becoming as strong and popular as they were in the 60's and 70's.

"We're becoming a strong band again," says leader, Pipe Drum Major, Jane Power. "There has been a decrease in membership lately because bagpipe music isn't as popular now as it was in the 70's." Back then, membership was as high as 30 girls.

"Traditionally, membership in pipe bands goes up and down as the popularity of Scottish music shifts," she added.

As part of their comeback, the band has begun competing at pipe band competitions and made a good showing at the Almonte Highland Games near Ottawa this summer.

"We kept getting comments from people who said they were glad we're back in the circuit," said Ms. Power. Before this competition, the band hadn't competed for two years, although they had kept up regular performances at local fairs and highland games.

Currently, the band has just enough members to produce a good sound with seven pipers and three drummers. They include: Jane Power of Georgetown, Valerie Cunningham of Georgetown, Margaret Hoggett of Streetsville, Eleanor Thomson of King City, Iris Irwin of Georgetown, Melissa Ellis of Toronto, Shayne Thomson of Brampton, Donna Edwards of Mississauga and Judith Irwin of Georgetown.

They meet every Monday (pipers) and Thursday (drummers) at Park Public School in Georgetown to practice the reels, marches and strathspeys that make up Scottish pipe music.

They plan to showcase their talents at their 50th Anniversary celebration 'Tattoo' Sept. 25. The next day, they'll host a dinner and highland ball and the Sunday after, a lunch and afternoon get-together.

The festivities are being arranged by co-chairs Val Cunningham and Elaine Robinson Bertrand, past members of the pipe band.

They're now working on a history of the band which will be incorporated into a booklet and distributed for sale.

Also included in the booklet will be old pictures of the band and remembrances from past band

members.

Ms. Robinson-Bertrand has special memories from her days as a drummer with the band in the 1960's, when it was basically a street-band performing in parades almost every weekend.

"The pipe band was an important thing in our lives," she remembers. "It was a real honor to be part of it."

She remembers the girls in the band had a family-type bond.

"Friendships were formed in that band that don't change," she said. "Even if I haven't seen my former bandmates in 20 years, we'll still have the same friendship."

It's these types of remembrances she and Ms. Cunningham want to record for prosperity in the history of the band. They're currently researching for the names and addresses of former members, instructors and supporters to incorporate their ideas in the book.

A portion of the book will be dedicated to Mary Cummins (Patterson) and Alice 'Lol' Costigan (Reid) who were the founding members of the band.

Ms. Robinson Bertrand said these two girls had a mutual interest in learning to play the pipes and got together to learn. Gradually, more and more girls took an interest and a band was formed under the tutelage of 'Mac' Magloughlen and Jimmy Valentine.

According to reports in the Nov. 25, 1942 issue of the Halton Hills Herald, nine pipers and six drummers met every Monday in the town hall.

"When trained," the Herald noted, "the band will prove to be one of the best advertisements Georgetown ever had."

Today, the concept remains the same. New members do learn on chanters. But the price of bagpipes has gone up considerably. Nowadays, bagpipes cost approximately \$600.

In another Halton Hills Herald article on July 7, 1943 it was written "the Georgetown Girls Pipe Band were a treat both to the eye and ear on July 1 when they made their first public appearance at a gala street dance they sponsored."

This also holds true today. Members are splendidly dressed in Scottish uniform complete with skirt, vest and cap and the music they perform is sweetly Scottish through and through.

Ms. Powers said the band is always looking for new members whether they have any musical background or not. Interested girls can call her at 873-4706.

Some of the 300 past members of the band may want to attend a general meeting Feb. 25 7:00 p.m. at Knox Presbyterian Church to help organize the 50th anniversary celebrations.



In the 1940's the Georgetown Girl's Pipe and Drum Band was at the peak of its numbers. This band photo was taken in 1949. Members were (back row, left to right) Shirley Muckart, Evelyn Guest, Eileen Kerr, Ann Luke, Doreen Jolley, Inez Scott, (middle row, left to right) Margaret McCallum,

Alma Stringer, Mary Cummins, Shirley Wright, Lol Costigan, Eleanor Smith, Mac Magloughlin, (front row, left to right) Jean Dickie, Helen McGill, Toots Murphy, Teresa Curtis, Edna Aitken, Pauline Norton, Marjorie Harlow and Helen Shelbourne. (Photo submitted)

### A dedicated champion

By STEVEN LeBLANC  
The Herald

Georgetown youth, Cara Kato, has been involved in judo since before she could read. Her years of training and dedication to the sport reaped its highest reward Jan. 26 when Cara captured a gold medal at the Nationals in Winnipeg.

"It was basically a big surprise," explained 17-year-old Cara, who took the gold in the 56 kg. weight class.

Cara entered the sport of judo at

age four. She said she started the sport because of her father, who has been a judo instructor for over 25 years and now runs a class in Brampton where Cara trains.

"My father was teaching classes very often when I was young and at one point I just wanted to see what he was doing," she said.

It has been said that to be the best you have to beat the best and in Winnipeg this is exactly what she did.

Facing two opponents from

Quebec, one from Ontario and another from New Brunswick. Cara did battle with last year's champ Sylvie Valais of Quebec in the finals and emerged victorious.

Also winning a gold from her father's class in Brampton was Jackie Hall of Mississauga who took the honor in the next weight class up from Cara.

"We came away with two golds, a silver and a bronze," said Mr. Kato. "This is great for one class."

Cara has competed at the Nationals since she was 14. She took the bronze in her first year but had not placed since.

Mr. Kato explained that competitive judo starts at age 13 so it was very beneficial to Cara that she started at such a young age.

"The younger a child starts learning, the better it will be for them when they start competitive judo. However, teachers have to be extremely attentive and careful in order to avoid injuries," said Mr. Kato.

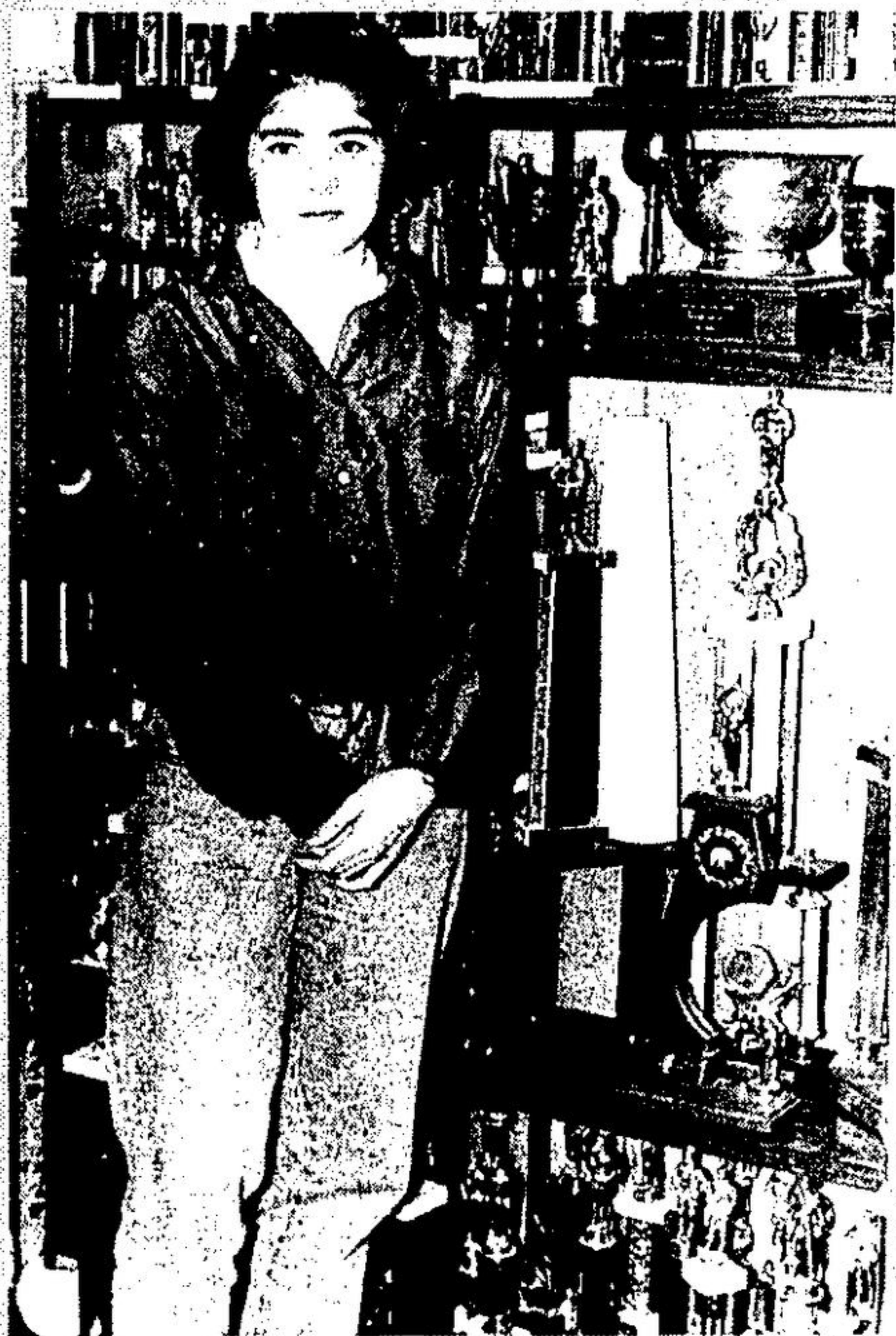
Judo has been a major part of life for the Kato family for many years. Cara's older brother Paul has been training for 12 years and father, son and daughter literally have a room full of trophies and medals.

Along with a heavy schedule of training and competing, she trains six hours a week and competes in over a dozen tournament in Canada and the United States each year. Cara also teaches judo to a small group of Halton Hills youngsters once a week at the Odd Fellow's Hall. She received her teaching certificate last May and has been teaching since October.

When asked about the class, she said, "It can be very rewarding if you have the right students. Those who want to learn."

Cara, a grade 12 student at Georgetown District High School, hopes to study fashion design at college next year. She said she isn't quite sure where her love of the sport of judo will take her, but she will continue to compete. Her next challenge will be at the Senior Nationals in Hamilton in early March.

It is clear the sport of Judo has given Cara Kato a great work ethic, a desire to reach for excellence, and tremendous self-esteem. Whatever she ventures into in her future, these values will certainly help her succeed.



### A champion's room

Georgetown youth Cara Kato, 17, displays some of the hardware won by her and her brother Paul during their 13 years in the sport of judo. Cara recently returned from Winnipeg where she took the gold at the National Judo Championships. (Herald Photo)



Professional bagpipe player Michael MacDonald of Toronto, eyes the fingerwork of Tracey Ellis of Cookstown, a member of the Georgetown Girl's Pipe Band. Ms. Ellis is seen here practicing on a chanter, an instrument new members train on before progressing to the bagpipes. The band is celebrating its 50th anniversary and is looking for new members. (Herald Photo)