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An easy-going, law-and-order kind of guy

BY FRANCES NIBLOCK

Bruce McCarthur may have given up his gun and his badge, but he hasn't given up his desire to help people and to be useful to the community.

Bruce, 57, is best known for his 30-year-career as an OPP officer, most of it spent in Acton. He is remembered as a cop who would always give someone a second chance; a warning instead of a ticket, a ride home instead of a ride to jail if they'd had too much to drink. "I felt good about helping people. If I gave somebody a break and they appreciated it — those were the things that made me high," he says.

When told that people in town think of him as a "fair" officer Bruce says that's how he would like to be remembered. "That's what I wanted to be. I remember when I joined the force somebody said 'be fair' and I thought that was really important and that's the kind of police officer you should be."

Bruce, born in King Kirkland, joined the OPP in 1961 when he was 27 years old. "I'd worked at mining in the Bancroft area before joining the force but mining wasn't fulfilling the need I had to serve people. The small town I came from there were seven fellows that joined the force from a town that only had three or four hundred people.

"I really think it had something to do with a school teacher we all had. His name was John McNeil and he had quite an influence on a lot of the people. He taught us right and wrong," Bruce remembers.

As a boy, Bruce moved to Bancroft with his mother and father and lived there for six years. It was there he met his wife Marilyn who he married after coming to Halton.

Bruce started his career in Dundas and then transferred to Acton and moved his family here. When regional government was



A 1972 photo shows Bruce at the Acton OPP detachment. He is grateful he never had to use the weapon he is holding.

introduced the OPP moved to Milton where Bruce finished his career.

Bruce says Acton has become a "kinder and gentler" community with a lot less of the drunken brawls that were commonplace in the late 1960s and early '70s. He credits the Halton Police Service's community policing programs for part of the change.

"We were village constables.

We were required to live here so we knew the people and the approach needed to keep the peace. I liked that part of the job — walking the beat on a one-man shift, responsible for the town, checking doors and stopping the fights. Acton was a scrappy town with a lot of alcohol-related fights and rowdiness. There was a lot of rivalry with Georgetown. I don't see it as being quite that tough now. I think the town has improved and mellowed and it's probably because there are officers back walking the streets that people get to know."

Bruce says there is no particular case that stands out in his mind. "I can't say I was a super-sleuth or anything like that around town. We just did our job from day to day. As far as big events, we did have three or four murders in a very short period of time in the late 1960s and early '70s. They were comparing us to Detroit in per capita murders. Most were domestic disputes that ended with a death. One of them was one of our own officers who was shot and killed by his wife. It was November 10, 1972. It was my birthday. That was probably the most devastating investigation I ever was involved in," Bruce recalled:

"I felt good about helping people any time I had the opportunity. I did enjoy and was proud to be picked as part of the OPP crowd-control team. I worked the Pope's visit in the early '80s, but unfortunately the highlight of that was 500 of us getting food-poisoning."

These days Bruce can be found at Blue Springs Golf Course where he acts as a marshal making sure golfers follow the rules. He doesn't have a gun and the Blue Springs logo on his T-shirt is as close as he gets to a badge, but he brings the same even-handed approach to that job as he did to his three decades as a cop in Acton.

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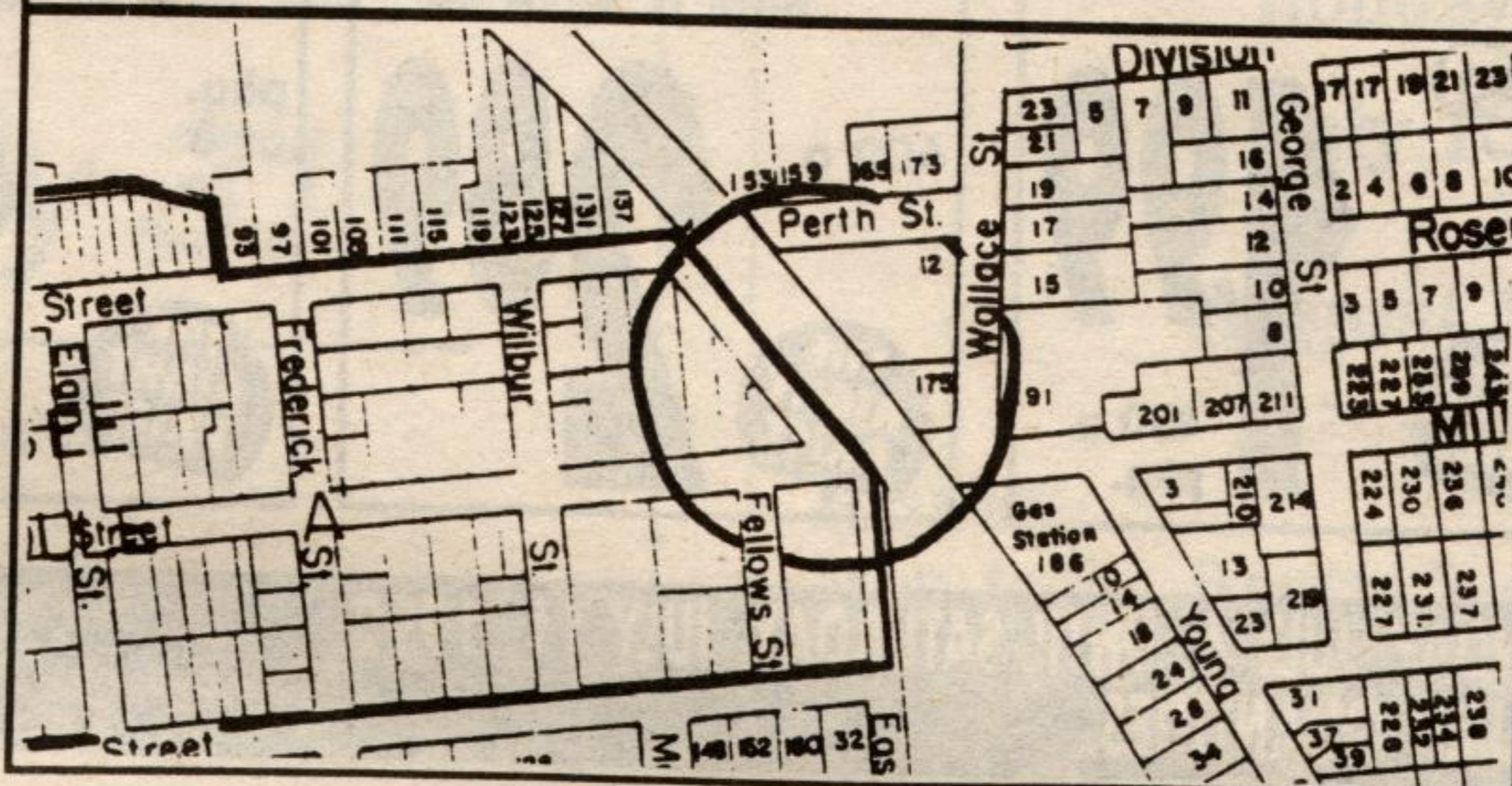


NOTICE Temporary Road Closure

The Town of Halton Hills is advising of the temporary road closure to vehicular traffic on Wednesday, July 15, 1992, from 7 am to 6 pm, at the Mill Street (Highway 7, Acton) level railway crossing. If inclement weather causes a delay, the road closure will be in effect the following day (July 16).

The single day closure is required so that improvements to the level crossing and approaches to the level crossing may be carried out.

The Town of Halton Hill's Engineering Department will be co-ordinating the road closure and detour signage. If you have questions pertaining to this project, contact Kevin Chalmers, C.E.T., Senior Operations Technician at 873-2600 ext. 303.



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