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'Doc Ruffin' musical at AHS

BY DOUG HARRISON
The Acton Tanner

During a visit with her sister Christine to the Metro Toronto Reference Library in January 1990, Cathy Slaney figured she would look at some family history.

That was when the former Acton resident discovered that her great-grandfather, Anderson Ruffin Abbott, had been the first

Canadian-born black doctor and a Civil War hero.

"The library brought us trolleys full of Abbott papers — albums and notebooks," recalls Slaney. "He was a prominent, interesting person."

Four years later, Slaney, has been in contact with about 100 of her relatives in Detroit and Chicago. She initially sought infor-

mation about her great-grandfather, but has since maintained a "pen-pal" relationship with her extended family.

Abbott was the first black doctor to graduate from Trinity College at the University of Toronto and served as one of eight black surgeons in the Union Army during the American Civil War.

At 23, Abbott was appointed assistant surgeon-in-charge of Freedom's Hospital in Washington and later surgeon-in-charge at the huge Camp Baker Military Hospital.

Captain Abbott resigned in 1866 and returned to Chatham, where he married and started his medical practice. During a 10-year period he held such positions as president of the Wilberforce Educational Institute, Coroner for Kent County and president of the Chatham Medical Society.

In 1881, he moved to Dundas

where he was appointed doctor for the Dundas Mechanics Institute.

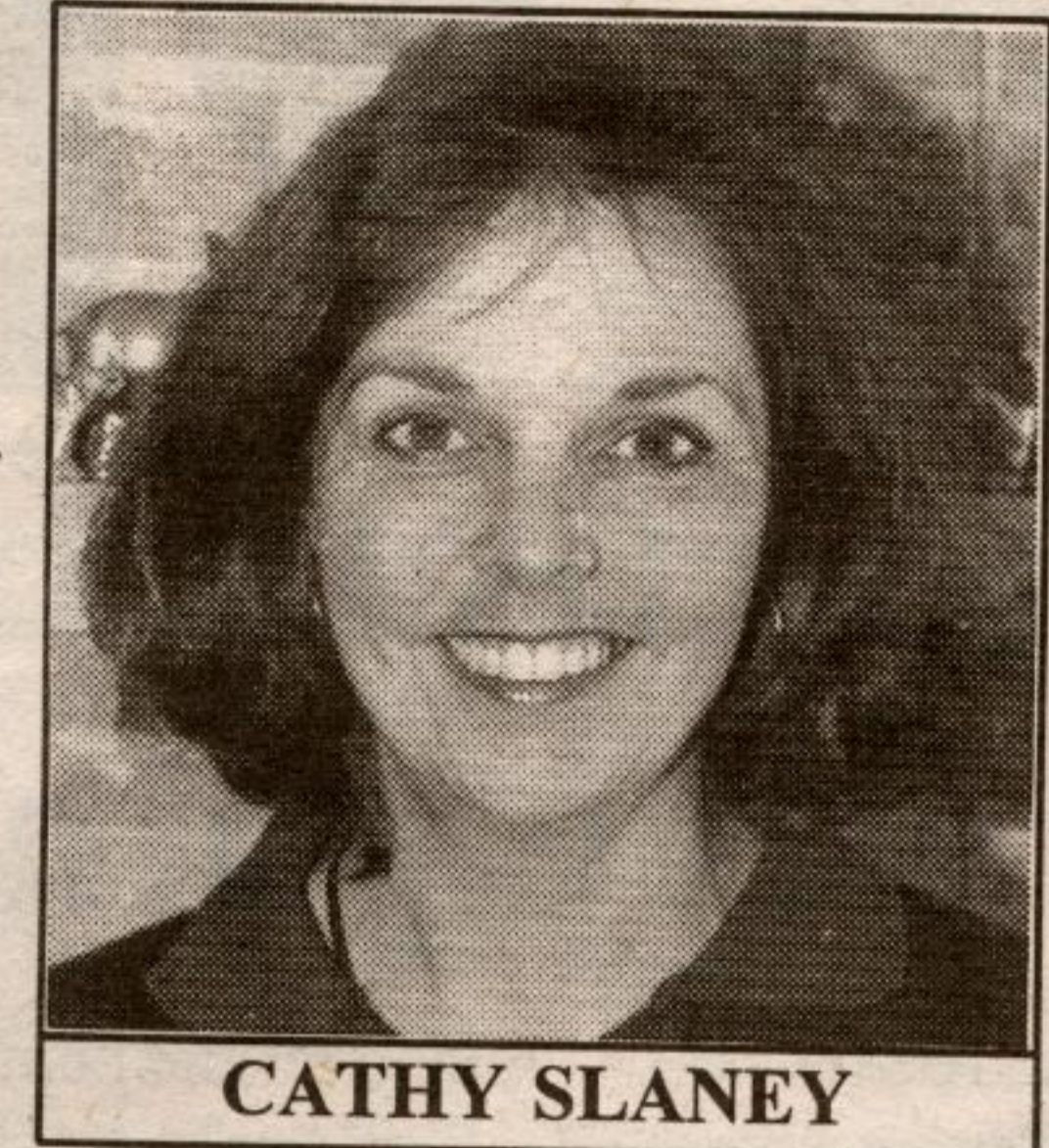
Abbott was heavily involved in the community, lending support to the church, the arts and ensuring that the school system would make quality education available to children of all races.

"He was conscientious and proud of what he did, and he did it well. He repre-

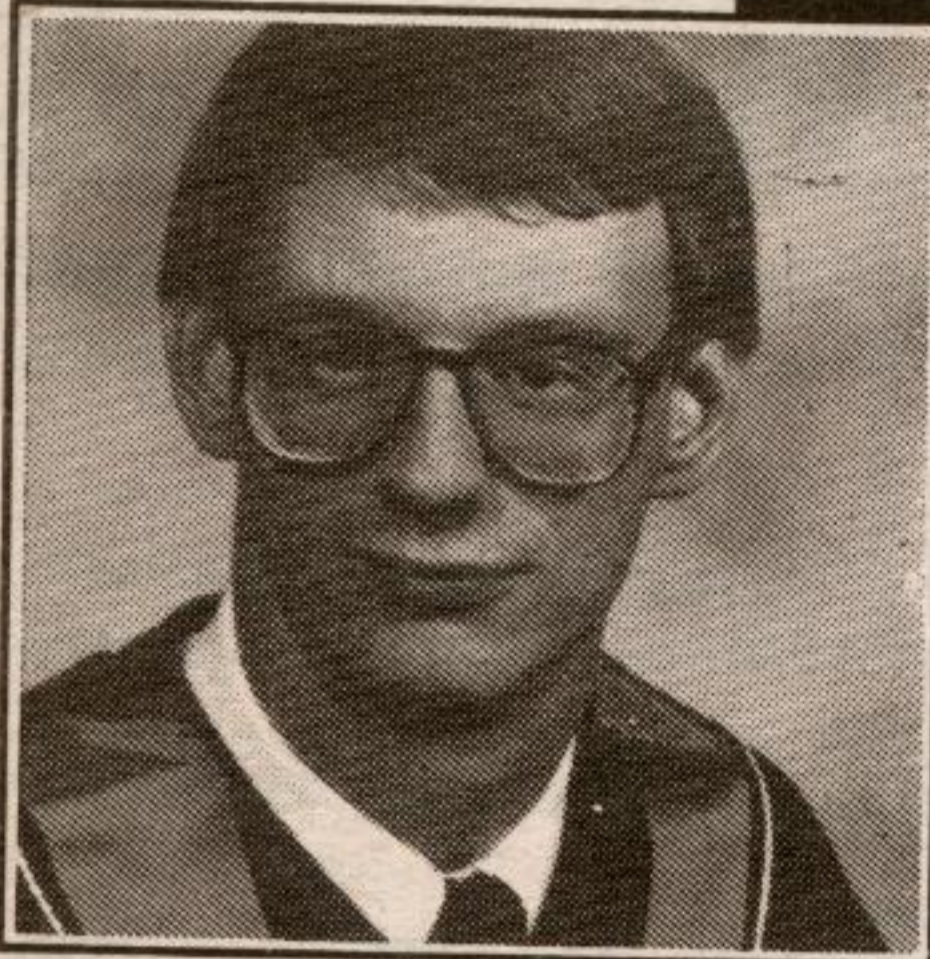
sented his race and believed if you wanted respect you had to earn it and not assume you were born with that right."

A musical about Abbott's life entitled *Doc Ruffin* will be presented by the Smile Theatre group on Feb. 2 at Acton High. Tickets are \$6 and are available at the Acton Social Services and Information Centre or at the door.

"I think the musical is a valuable way to teach history," says Slaney. "Kids don't learn history in school today; they think it doesn't apply to them. I think the schools should jump on the idea of using musicals as education tools."



CATHY SLANEY



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Travelling alone

On Jan. 19 I was at a SALT meeting; this is a group of senior citizens and police officers who work together in the community.

At this meeting Constable Dave Thomas of the O.P.P. presented a video called *Travelling Alone*. The video is to be used when police officers are talking to groups in regard to personal safety. This video clearly demonstrates the ways that you can prevent yourself from being a victim.

Although the video is directed at women, the ideas and safety tips can be used by everyone. I will have a copy of this video in the near future and will loan it to any group that wishes to view it. I will also make myself available to talk to groups about personal safety.

Here are some travelling tips you should follow to prevent yourself from becoming a victim:

- Know your route and expected arrival time. Tell your friends.
- Consider getting a cellular phone.
- When walking to your vehicle position the key in your hand ready for the lock. The key can also be used for defence if necessary.

I'll have more safe travelling tips for you next week.



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M.Z. Bennett looks 'Under the Sea'

M.Z. BENNETT NEWS

BY JESSICA CRAIG & DREW TIMBERS

Mr. Shrubsole's Kindergarten classes went to the high school to see the Grade 11 drama class perform. They said it was really good and they enjoyed it.

Mrs. Mattell's and Ms. Dunnet's classes are baking bird nests made out of Shredded Wheat. They are working hard on their puppet plays. They are busy learning about birds and their paper maché birds are hanging up in their rooms.

Miss Lawson's class is studying "Under the Sea." They are doing activities and research about sea creatures. In Math they are doing measurement and geometry and learning about Scuba diving equipment.

Mrs. Bannerman's and Mrs. Spencer's classes are studying "Under the Sea" as well. Mr. Joyner, a scuba diver, came in to tell the classes all about the sea. He taught them some interesting things, like how blood vessels sometimes blow up under your skin.

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