

# Musical Ride brings back fond memories for man

BY FRANCES NIBLOCK  
The Acton Tanner

For Acton's Gary Ockenden, seeing the RCMP Musical Ride at the Georgetown Fall Fair brought back a lot of memories — of service to his country and saddle sores.

Ockenden, 74, wore the scarlet tunic from 1946 to 1954 when being a Mountie meant learning the "Bridle Arch," "Shanghai Cross" and "Maze" as part of basic training, unlike today when "taking the Ride" is a much sought after public relations posting.

Although the origin of the Musical Ride is lost in history, it's probably traced back to the development of the

early cavalry formations and their development during battle.

Legend has it the Musical Ride was performed as early as 1876 with the first recorded Ride performed in Regina in 1887 and first put on public display in 1904.

It was in Regina that Ockenden, then 18-years-old, signed up as a Mountie.

"I applied to the RCMP and the Air Force at the same time. The Mounties were the first to call and accept me, so that's who I joined," Ockenden recalled in an interview last Thursday.

"As part of our training, we had to take the Ride in

either Regina or Rockcliff (near Ottawa). You didn't have a choice — you had to learn how to ride because that's what the RCMP used in their early days," Ockenden explained, noting that he never travelled with the Ride, but performed it as part of his regular training.

"I assumed that I would be sent overseas when I joined up but they were short of men in Canada, so after my training in Regina, I was stationed all across the country and ended up in Toronto where I enforced Dominion Statutes, which covered drug squad work, immigration and customs work."

Although some recruits had a hard time learning to ride, Ockenden said he was lucky because he had been born and raised on a farm.

"Many of the boys had never seen a horse, let alone tried to make one do maneuvers, but I had my problems just the same because riding for the Mounties was a lot different than on horseback moving cattle. Being on the Ride was one of the best parts of the shebang."

The Musical Ride in Georgetown was very special for Ockenden — the announcer had overheard him talking about his time as a Mountie in the horse tent before the show and made special mention of him during the event.

Ockenden said he resigned as a Mountie when wage prospects looked better on the "outside." He spent the remainder of his working life in the aircraft industry, working on the ill-fated Avro Arrow and then with Orenda Aerospace.

Seeing the pageantry of the Ride left Ockenden with one desire: "I wish I could get up on a horse, but that day is gone."



Gary Ockenden, dressed in uniform in his earlier days as a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

## Library shelved, weeds cut

Although plans for the new Acton Arena and Community Centre do not include provisions for adding a new library as was first proposed, Halton Hills Chief Librarian Betsy Cornwell is not disappointed.

"Disappointed? No," she said recently. "I'm too realistic and cynical for that now. It just means we will have to continue working [to improve library services]."

Cornwell predicted pressure would mount for more library space once Acton grows and the over-crowding at the River

Street branch becomes more obvious.

★★★

No Town money will be spent this year fighting the weeds choking Fairy Lake, despite efforts by Councillor Rick Bonnette, who said the weeds were a potential safety problem for swimmers and boaters.

The \$6,000 weed harvesting program was cut from the budget by councillors aiming for no tax hike, but Bonnette argued one-third of the Town-owned lake was covered with potentially hazardous weeds.

## Not All Top Performers Were in Atlanta

*Some were performing worthwhile community service in towns right across Ontario*

Do you know a young person, aged 6 to 18 years, who is involved in worthwhile community service or a special person who is contributing, while living with a physical or psychological limitation? Do you know a youth who has performed an act of heroism?

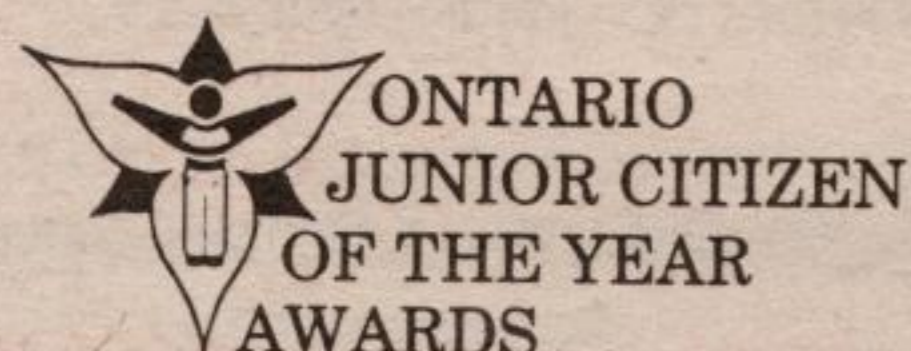
The Ontario Community Newspapers Association, with Bell Canada as the patron, is looking to recognize these "good kids"; the young people of our province who show a commitment to making life better for others.



To nominate an individual or a group of young people for the Ontario Junior Citizen of the Year Award, please contact this community newspaper or the OCNA at 905-844-0184. Nominations for this year's awards will be accepted until October 31, 1996.

Every nominee will receive a certificate and up to 12 individuals and one group will be the recipients of a plaque presented by the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, an Ontario Junior Citizen of the Year lapel pin, \$200 and a family portrait with the Lieutenant Governor.

NOMINATION FORMS - are available by contacting this community newspaper or OCNA at 905-844-0184




## Restructuring unclear

Word that the province may insist that Halton Council downsizing have the support of a so-called triple majority — that is the area municipalities, the electors and the upper-tier council — Acton Councillor Norm Elliott has joined with Town Council calling for clarification of exactly what that means.

Recently Halton Council voted to down-size to 20 from 24 members, resulting in Halton Hills losing two of its five seats at the table.

That news led Elliott to ask, "What did we go through all that rigmarole for? Can we find out what specifically is the formula that [Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister Al Leach] alludes to?" Elliott wondered.

Council voted to respectfully request Leach to clarify what the triple majority support formula means when it comes to changes in the size of local and regional councils.



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Love Lynda, Julie,  
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Gary & Grandkids**