

# COMMUNITY CORNERSTONE

## PETE VIDLER: ACTON'S ICE MAN

by Deborah Quale

To be described as having ice in your veins is not usually a complementary statement, but with Pete Vidler, a.k.a. Slippery Pete, it must be construed as the highest form of flattery.

"Slippery Pete" is a highly skilled icemaker for Acton and Georgetown Curling clubs, renowned for his art. As with many secret veins of gold, it's something he stumbled upon and has had a passion for ever since.

"Del Hickling taught me how to curl - he was the icemaker at the time. In 1975 my family and I moved to Acton, and I joined the curling club and started to curl in October that year," he says. "I helped him make the ice and at the end of the year he told me he was quitting! So I started making ice, experimented and took courses. You learn from other ice-makers. There is a science and an art to it.

"Today we use different equipment and different water - it's purified and deionized to remove the minerals and ions to create a neutral pH. It's a jet ice system that creates a very hard pebble that the rocks ride on."

After a glance over the four sheets of ice, Pete continues.

"And I loved it - I love making ice. There's a great deal of satisfaction in preparing a field of play that the curlers can enjoy. Curlers want fast ice with a nice swing to it. Often we're battling weather conditions, such as humidity or warmth. Over the years you figure out what to do. The big secret is the rocks - we have really nice rocks, over 30 years old."

Pete began teaching in 1968 in Peel County and moved to Halton after that, working at various schools such as Martin Street and W.I. Dick in Milton, and McKenzie Smith in Acton. In 1982 he received a Vice Principalship at Gladys Speers school in Oakville, and had to stop icemaking for seven or eight years because the time involved in the commute did not allow enough for the club. At that point Joe Brown took over. Eventually, Pete became Principal

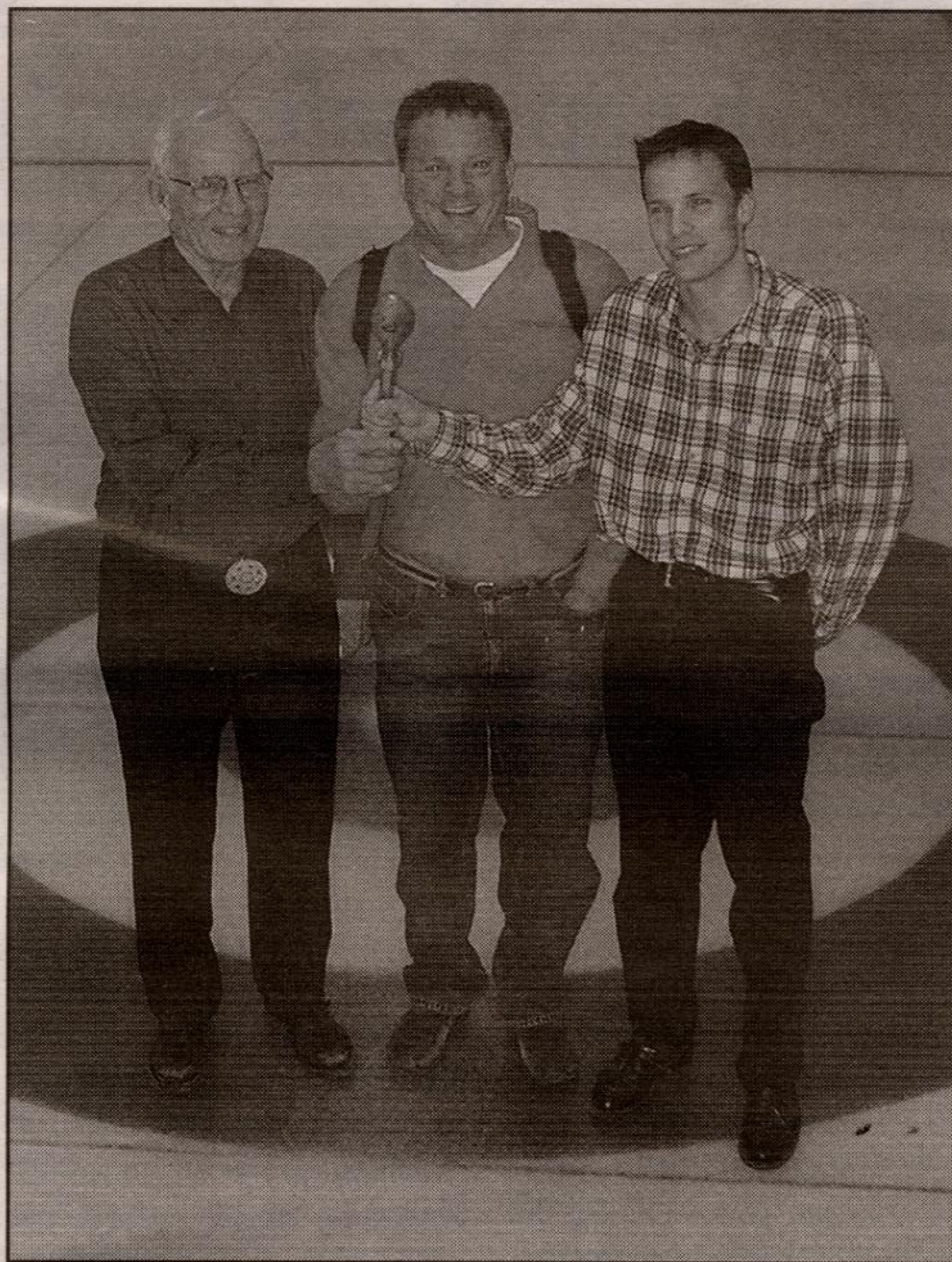


Photo by Reid Kennedy

The techniques for perfect ice are passed down from generation to generation. Pictured above are three generations of Acton Curling Club ice makers, L. to R. are Del Hickling, Pete Vidler and his son Jason Vidler.

at several other schools, ending up at Stewarttown.

"Stewarttown was by far the best school," he comments. "There's just something about a rural school - a closeness, with great kids, great staff, and a community who cared and helped out."

Pete has been President of the Acton Curling Club three times, including his present term. He's been a member for 27 years, and served on the Board of Directors for about 15 years. Along with that were a lot of early mornings and late nights crafting a superb surface for curlers to praise.

"When Nancy (his wife) and I moved to town, curling was a good way to get to know people," he adds. "And it's a great sport. You can start at age six and go into your 80s."

It's now time for the Vidlers to move on, however. Pete and his

wife Nancy have built a house in Port Franks, three houses down from their family cottage just off Lake Huron. They've been going to the area since 1969.

Nancy has a job she commutes to in London, cutting to half time next year. And Pete will "retire," taking a job in grounds maintenance at a local golf course. Naturally, he's joined the Forest Curling Club not far from his new home.

"It's sad to move and leave the town, but life changes," Pete concludes with a smile.

As for the Acton ice, son "Slippery Jason" will now take over, having worked with his father for eight years and learned the trade from the best.

No doubt both Acton and Forest curling clubs will be extremely happy with their catch.

# Ebenezer Church

## burns their mortgage

Ebenezer United Church will celebrate the "burning of the mortgage" at a special Stewardship Sunday on May 26, 11:15 a.m.

In 1991, the congregation broke ground for a 5,000 square foot addition to the church. The literally hundreds of people who helped bring about this day are invited to share this special day.

"Although it was a vision for literally decades, the project took off with warp speed in 1990, a huge commitment and leap of faith," explained Bill French, a member of the Finance Committee.

The project cost was estimated to be worth \$500,000. Funding came from donations, grants, loans and in-kind-services from individuals, business, and the United Church. The Provincial government provided a grant toward the access elevator.

For just over a decade, members of the congregation organized dozens of fundraising events, every thing from the Nassagaweya Art Show & Sale to car washes to garage sales, dinner auctions and everything in between.

Roy Metcalf, chairman of the Building Committee explained the project was seen as an outreach mission, a place to serve the communi-

ty with facilities and services. Many groups, including a pre-school program, now use the community room for special events.

One of the curious facts is the church went from a "one-hole facility" to four separate washrooms with this single project.

The congregation dates back to 1823. Major dates in the history of the church include the first log church in 1832, the frame church in 1847, the brick church in 1925, and the addition in 1991.

When most people hear the name Ebenezer, their thoughts turn to Ebenezer Scrooge, the bitter old miser in Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. Scrooge has come to embody the very soul of greed, of what Christians ought not to be about. And yet, long before Ebenezer ever became attached to Scrooge, the prophet Samuel used Ebenezer to name a memorial stone on behalf of the nation of Israel.

God had delivered Israel out from under the mighty hand of the Philistines, and Samuel named a stone Ebenezer as a marker meaning, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." (1 Samuel 7:12) Thus, this pioneer church, in a land rich in rock and challenge, was named Ebenezer, Stone of Help.

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