

Exchange student leaves Milton to serve his native South Africa

Canada may be a great place to visit, but a matter of self respect is keeping Rotary Exchange Student Gert Botha from staying here.

Young south African men consider serving for two years in the army—a fact of life either after high school or university, but now that their country is at war, it has become a grim fact.

Gert is finished high school and came to Canada to delay his inevitable army enrolment, but now has decided to return home early to join his friends in the forces.

Following three months of basic training beginning in early January, the 19-year-old could end up at Tempie, an area of dense forest and extreme heat.

One of his school friends has already died there while another is still involved in the fighting and corresponds with Gert.

"Two of my friends got themselves stationed in Port Elizabeth (Gert's home town) and they go home every night," he says.

It's more than patriotic feeling

Gert will consider officer's courses or special training as the men have some options, although they don't have the final say.

He says his decision to return home is more than just patriotic.

"It goes deeper than that, it is something I believe in. To hide from it means losing my self respect," Gert contends.

He is relying on the South African government to end the fighting as they are responsible for starting it. Gert, who has been following the unrest in South Africa while in Canada and admits newspaper accounts are reasonably accurate and fair but he does detect a certain slant.

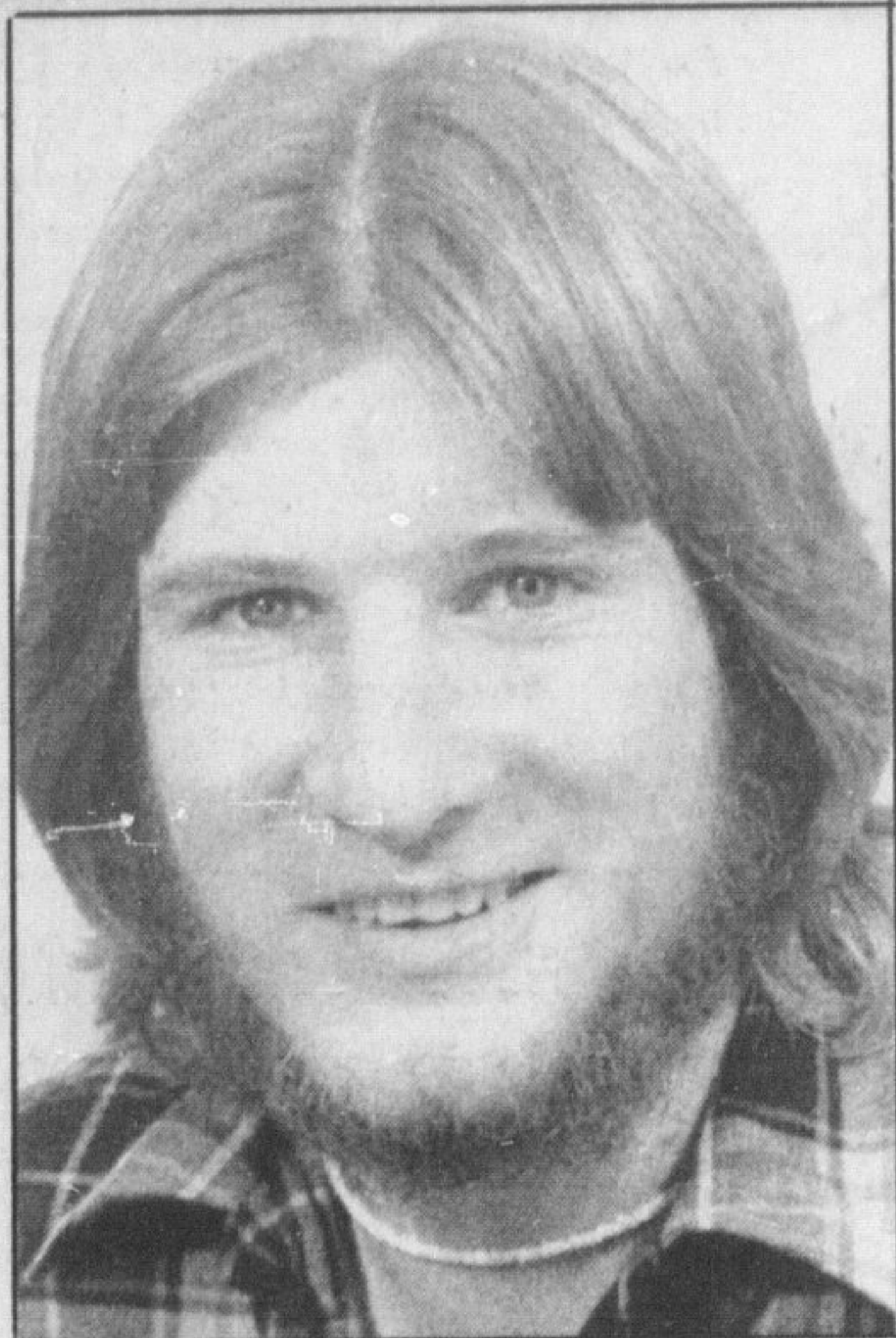
"It is very difficult to understand our complexities and it is easy to take the simplistic view," suggests the young man.

Since arriving in Milton Jan. 19, 1981 Gert attended Milton District High School more for the purpose of making friends than achieving grades.

"Back home I was an honor student," he says.

When he told his friends why he was returning to South Africa early, he was surprised by their shock.

"It is nice to see a society where people don't have to worry about going to war," he says.



Gert Botha

He adds he appreciates everyone's concern for him, but admits it's not that bad, "like El Salvador or something."

Unlike the majority of young Canadian men, those in South Africa have been regimented since the day they started high school. At that level, 70 minutes each week are dedicated to parade ground drills and rifle shooting practice. Strict discipline filters through the entire school system and bad behaviour is not tolerated.

Couldn't believe school freedom

This is one of the reasons Gert decided to attend school while in Canada, just to see what it was like. At first he couldn't believe the freedom and the lack of the toe-to-line attitude students in his country are accustomed to.

"Here you don't need our kind of discipline and it teaches kids self-discipline. The Cana-

dian system says if you want to excel you have everything to do that and our system says you will behave. It's hard to say which is better," admits Gert.

Gert didn't want this story to take on a depressing tone and dwell on the war he will return to. He's enjoyed his stay here, the four families who shared his time and their homes and the numerous friends he's made.

He has probably seen more of this country than many who live here, traveling this summer with a group of exchange students to Quebec and Alberta. During his travels, which took him as far south as Texas, he found Toronto to be his favourite city.

Found Canadians good people

He considers Canadians really good people, especially when compared with the Americans he met during his visit to the United States.

Although he took in numerous sights it's the people and the friends he found here which he will always remember.

Despite the discipline atmosphere South Africans are schooled in, kids will be kids, according to Gert.

"They are the same all over. Kids like to party," he says.

One Canadian celebration he was looking forward to sharing is Christmas. His early return means missing his opportunity to witness a white Christmas but it will be spent on the beach with his mother, and younger brother and sister instead.

"We have a candlelight service on the beach Christmas eve, dressed in shorts and sandals," he says.

For someone who is accustomed to winter lows of 12 degrees (C), Canada's climate is something he will be glad to put behind him.

"Back home, the nice weather is accepted and we take it for granted," he says.

Although he will be leaving Canada Saturday, Gert will not be reunited with his family until Dec. 7, 1981. In New York he will meet a fellow South African exchange student who spent his year in Texas.

The pair will continue their away-from-home adventures in England and Holland before heading back to their tropical homeland.

"I'm excited about the trip and am looking forward to a month in the sun at home," he says.

Betty Fisher gets angry

A misinterpretation of terminology has Betty Fisher angry and upset.

Fisher, who represents Georgetown on the Halton Board of Education, explained that she was embarrassed to have to face the Ministry of Education with the local board's executive committee's interpretation of a special report on continuing education.

Thursday night at the board's meeting in Burlington, trustees got a chance to pursue the executive's interpretation of The Association of Large School Boards in Ontario's (ALSBO) response to the Ministry's most recent paper "Continuing Education: The Third System."

Fisher is chairman of the curriculum committee of ALSBO and is on the executive of ALSBO.

Fisher contends her committee feels adults should be given more choice of continuing education subjects but not necessarily offered free of charge. The executive had interpreted it that ALSBO was putting more stress on the adult and not education's primary concern—the children. This of course is not true, Fisher says.

Fisher was extremely upset by the executive's interpretation of a portion of the education act.

The trustee said ALSBO believes that it is essential that the province continue to fund both credit and non-credit continuing education courses equally. The executive committee interprets the statement to say the board should provide free continued education in non-credit courses. Fisher took exception to that.

"How on earth did they interpret that when the section did not mention any funding at all by the board?"

Fisher asked the executive committee whether they still stayed with the fact that all credit courses should be paid for by the tax-

payers, when in fact the education act states that a person has seven years to complete secondary education and that the definition of secondary student in the act has no age limit. Therefore, she

said, if a person quits school after grade 10 and wishes to come back into the system at age 35 then that person has five more years to complete the secondary school free of charge.



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Office manager at schools

All secondary schools in Halton will have office managers, the Halton Board of Education decided Thursday night.

Trustees voted for a revision in the present administration structure to reflect an expansion of the office manager responsibilities in the business managers' job description.

"Through this revision, the business manager will now be responsible for the administration of the procedures and practices relating to the OPA Collective.

Because of the change in job description, a manager for each school is necessary. The present policy only allows for schools of 1,000 or more to have a manager.

Business managers are responsible for a wide variety of items, such as the administration of procedures and practices, liaison with head caretaker and municipal recreation department, supervision

of cafeteria operations, maintenance budgets, administration of supply book store, granting of and capital budgets, books, supply teachers, non-board funds, etc.

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