

The 'Old Guard' gathers to honor Margaret Davey

By JOHN BURNHAM

They met under the "old guard" that collection of individuals who have done so much to determine the shape and destiny of the Town of Bradford.

Most of them have lived here all their lives. They have gone to school here, raised their families here, worked here, and served in one official public capacity or other. In many ways, they probably what Bradford was, and is at present, and is.

All the old guard was there Friday evening at the community centre to honor one of the older members, Miss Margaret Davey, the clerk treasurer of the town for almost 20 years.

Miss Davey, "Peg" to anyone who knew her, retired last March, filled with her memories of a small town that had become too large to be run by the old guard anymore.

BIG WHEELS

"The Big Wheels," as former Mayor Joe Wagon called them, turned a corner. "They're all here tonight," he said, smiling at the audience.

Everyone knew everyone on a first-name basis, something that's become almost impossible with the town's growth in recent years.

The ceremony officially got underway with Mayor Ray Gordon presiding. Miss Davey with a bouquet of roses. Other gifts included a washer and dryer from the town, a bouquet of roses with a \$100 bill from the fire department, letters from the POC.

The memories began with Charlie Evans, former mayor of the town who worked with Peg in his many years of service.

He recalled the Davey family, including Miss Davey's father, William, and the other "old boys" whom he remembered as a small boy.

"I've been associated with everyone of them," Charlie said, naming the eight Davey children of which Peg is the youngest.

There was Louie (Mrs. Jack Lukasi), Catherine, Mrs. Frances, Oswald, Miss (Helen), Gordon (Doris), Mac, and Arthur.

"I used to be fond with Anny," Charlie said, adding that his son is Senator Keith Davey.

SMART MOVE

"The Davey family was the backbone of the community," he said. "The smartest move we could make, or any other council every since, was to buy Peg in 1946. She ran that shop perfectly. She was conscientious, careful, and out ahead of work. Peg always did a wonderful job for Bradford."

Fred "Oddy" Collins, former clerk with some reminiscences of his own. "I was appointed assessor shortly after Peg. It was all new to me and I got wonderful help from Peg. I was the first assessor in the County of Simcoe to measure by the foot. It had always been an eye-ball assessment," he said.

"The Davey family produced the first professional hockey player ever to come up in Bradford. Arthur. Now when you talk about Piper Williams," he said, smiling.

Chairman for the evening, Harry Ken Wood,

commented when Collins finished. "Only one could remember the incident... he's 80 years old."

For Oddy David "Dude" Boyd wanted her "lots of luck and happy days" he added. "Dude is around before lunch time, some days he'll be around, other days he'll be up a tree."

MARKER

The ever-charming Joe Maguire followed back with a few memories of his own, including, "I became councillor in 1947 and I was never so scared of anything in my life as I was of Peg Davey. I heard how tough she was. In her we were just one-year members, we were only elected to one-year terms then."

He continued. "Even when I was mayor for 12 years, I still had to turn to Peg Davey and ask her what time of day it was."

He gave this hint of his future ambition: "I wish her and I respect her, and if I ever live

long enough to be mayor again, I'll have her back. She could go on till she's 100 and still work as assessor."

Former mayor, member and member of provincial Parliament Art Farrow recalled his own initiative to public life with the Public Utilities Commission in 1961 when Miss Davey was the secretary. "She stood on my feet when I was mayor and that's why standing is a such good financial shape today. She held Bradford's purse strings."

"She is Bradford's greatest citizen," he concluded.

Friday evening may have been the last opportunity for the old guard of Bradford to get together.

BRANDS

In many ways it was the end of an era. Miss Margaret Davey long readily in retirement to her comfortable little cottage in LeRoy overlooking Lake Simcoe.

She keeps busy with a little part-time accounting and "marketing" and plenty of housekeeping, but she works carefully. "It's a terrible headache."

None of the things she recollects are mentioned at Friday's tea, for example, the rather bold career as a teacher in a town of eight grade schools in LeRoy.

"I didn't like it very much," she said, following that was the position held in a lifelong position as Bradford's printer, newspaper, secretary, and bookkeeper in the town booker stock factory.

But the Depression which left Bradford a hard as any rural Ontario small town with that emergency.

"You know," she said smiling, "memory is a terrible thing."

But for someone like Peg Davey, memories are an indulgence in which she doesn't like to indulge.

Besides, there's too much work to do.