

Corktown Culture

Corktown's Mike Dowson is the centre of attention in crowded rooms both day and night. By day, the roomful of people is his class of grade seven students. After dark, audiences gather to enjoy Mike's musical talents as a singer/guitar player in local nightspots.

For the past five years, Mike has played and sung in Hamilton and the surrounding area. He entertains with Top 40 songs from the 90s, favouring the music of Tom Waits, Sublime and Bob Dylan, to name a few. He is the House Musician at The Snooty Fox and Bean Bar in Westdale. He prefers to work/play as a solo performer because, among other things, there is no debate as to song selection or rehearsal schedule. His song list is drawn from a repertoire of over three hundred tunes, which date back to his days leading sing-alongs around campfires as a camp counselor. For guitar geeks, Mike's workhorse is a Taylor 414 CE and he has a Takamine G Series, 12 string.

Mike and wife Katie have long-term plans to settle down in a house in the country. Mike moved out of Corktown briefly and then moved back to his present location, which he likes working on improving. He also enjoys the social aspects presented by Corktown's many restaurants and the easy access



to the downtown, especially the Farmers' Market. Nature trails and parks are also attractive to this canine oriented little family. One thing Mike did not expect was the community aspect, neighbours looking out for each another and taking the time for a friendly greeting.

The sounds of the neighbourhood are a little sweeter thanks to the expressive musical talent of people like Mike Dowson of Corktown. ♣

Message from the past President

Being involved in the Corktown Neighbourhood Association over the past couple of years has been quite a rewarding experience. I would like to thank my fellow associates who have all worked very hard to get the Association going and keep it thriving. So, many thanks to Heather Hosten, Julie Spicer, Doug Pawson, Barry Bogusat, Cathy Emick and Joel McCormick. I welcome the new members who are joining us this year, Mary and Margaret. Thanks, as well, to all the Corktown Neighbours who come to our meetings, park clean-ups, yard sales and events....your support has been very appreciated and you have made all our efforts worthwhile.

Please welcome your new President, Joel McCormick. Joel has already been hard at work with us and will do a fantastic job leading the Association. As well, we welcome new members Mary Dawson and Margaret Berlowska.

Peggy Freeman

New Board of Directors

Hello fellow Corktown neighbours! I would like to take this opportunity to introduce the new Board of Directors for the Corktown Neighbourhood Association. My name is Joel McCormick and I am delighted to accept the position of President. I have been a Corktown resident for the past 8 years and have been active with the association in many ways, from delivering flyers and newsletters to an active Director role. I would also like to introduce the fantastic new Board of Directors for the Corktown Neighbourhood Association. Barry Bogusat will be the new Vice President, Margaret Berlowska will take the position of Secretary, Douglas Pawson will stay on with the Board as Treasurer and Mary Dawson will take an active Director position. I can speak for the new Board when I say that we are very excited to be apart of this association and we know with the help of the entire neighbourhood, we can make the best neighbourhood in Hamilton even better! ♣

**Lest we forget.
Please check www.myhamilton.ca
for Remembrance Day events.**

Fred's Stories

Neighbourhood Memories

(The *Crier* is running a series of articles based on conversations over tea with 89-year-old Fred Engelbrecht – Corktown native, survivor of Dieppe and 2007 Canadian Veteran of the Year.)

In 1940, a year after the outbreak of World War 2, Fred answered the recruitment call of the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry and enlisted. He was just 19 years old. "I have no regrets. I thought it was my duty. If it happened again and I was 19, I would volunteer again.

During the Battle of Britain I was on coastal defence on the south coast of England. Our training was very demanding and very physical, and because of this, I am positive and a little biased, that we were the very best troops in England at the time.

In 1942 Russia asked Britain to invade the French coast. This was not possible due to the lack

of manpower and equipment, so a large-scale raid on the port of Dieppe was authorized. It was code-named "Operation Jubilee" and was carried out on August 19. It was a day I'll never forget. Over 6000 troops took part. 582 men of the RHLI landed on the main beach. 211 returned to England with 109 wounded. 174 men, 85 wounded could not be evacuated and were taken prisoner.

I was one of them.

The raid was a disaster, a massacre, a living hell. Nothing was as it should have been. They told us the coast would be bombed the night before. Not a single bomb was dropped. The navy would shell the shore line. This did not happen. We



should have landed under the cover of darkness. We landed in broad daylight. But we learned something. How not to do it. The disaster of Dieppe paved the way for a successful D-Day.

Shortly after being taken prisoner, we were strafed by our own planes. Needless to say we were not happy to see them. A few days later, the Germans put us in a railway boxcar with a sign saying, '40 men or 11 horses'. Most of us were sick, dirty or wounded. On the outside of the train was a large banner saying, 'This is Churchill's second front.' For several days we travelled across France and Germany on exhibit. A few men wanted to jump from the train, but the others got mad because they were afraid they would all have to pay the price for their escape. Eventually we were taken to war camp Stalag VIII B in Lamsdorf, Germany.

I was a prisoner of war for 2 years, 9 months or 767 days. During that time I was interrogated, humiliated, tortured and traumatized."

In 1943 Fred and another POW, Ed Liberte, tried to make a daring escape. We'll save this story for the next edition of the *Crier*. ♣

Publication Information

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Editorial Policy

The Corktown Neighborhood Association of Hamilton reserves the right to edit newsletter submissions due to space limitation. In order to ensure the newsletter promotes an inclusive and respectful tone, letters deemed slanderous or profane will not be printed. All letters must be signed by the author; anonymous letters will not be printed. In the event that a letter's content is questionable in the eyes of the editor, the neighborhood association executive committee will be consulted to determine whether or not to print some or all of the submission. Submit letters to: corktown_news@yahoo.ca.

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Ghosts of Corktown

Recently, I spent the evening with two sober and serious fellow Corktowners, conducting business of a sober and serious nature. Jeff and Sandra (not their real names) and I were winding down our discussions when we started talking about ghosts and hauntings and things-that-go-bump-in-the-night. It seems there is a neighbourhood restaurant which proclaims that 'you may even encounter one of our four ghosts' as an incentive to visit, which Sandra thought may actually deter potential customers rather than attract them. But then, with the trace of a smile in her voice, she shunted the discussion off the advertising track and into the spirit world. What did we think, she wanted to know, about the whole 'haunting business' anyway? Jeff's quiet but clear response soon made the room feel a little drafty.

A resident of Corktown for ten years, Jeff related that one evening he went out to buy a bag of milk. He set the alarm, locked the front door and left. Returning home a short time later he saw a figure standing in the second floor window. Thinking his partner had come home while he was out, Jeff was surprised to find the alarm still set when he opened the door. Why had his partner reset the alarm? However, it was to Jeff's chilled amazement that upon scouring the building, he learned that he was home alone. Then who was the figure in the second storey window?

An even stranger occurrence involved pet rabbits. Jeff and family thought soft and cuddly little pet rabbits would be good as 'stress reducers'. Once in awhile the pets were allowed to venture outside of their cages to explore and gnaw and hop around. It was the hopping around that caught Jeff's attention. He observed one of the



rabbits 'hoppily' approach the bathroom on the second floor. But as the rabbit began to hop past the door, its trajectory was thrown into reverse, back to its takeoff point. It seemed to Jeff that the rabbit was not 'allowed' to go past the bathroom door. In fact, the rest of the rabbits also avoided the area after that. They appeared to know they were not supposed to venture past the bathroom door.

Jeff calls himself a skeptic on such matters and that if he hadn't experienced these things himself, he would find them hard to believe. He still lives comfortably in the same house.

Sandra's story is equally 'tingly'. Sandra has lived in Corktown for about five years in a home built in the early 20th century. One day her adult son noticed four well-dressed people standing in front of their home. The two men and two women were holding what appeared to be photo albums. When the son approached them, they stated that this had been their family home and they displayed many photographs to

prove it. Sandra felt safe inviting them in and was curious to learn more about the history of her home. The visitors related several stories including one about their uncle's funeral. In fact his coffin had been 'right here where your dining room table is', they said.

Sandra's daughter-in-law, Jennifer, was not too pleased about any of this. She and Sandra's son had been staying on the third floor until they could move to their own place. Jennifer had complained to anyone who would listen that her sleep had been regularly disturbed by what sounded like an old-fashioned sewing machine. The conversation came to an abrupt end when one of the visitors revealed that the deceased uncle had worked for a tailor and used to have a sewing machine on the third floor.

But it does not end there. Sandra's son admitted that he had recently been playing the family piano in (you guessed it) the dining room when he thought he heard his father walk in the room and, turning to greet

him, saw not his dad but a male figure receding from view.

Another time during a family visit, Sandra's three year old niece asked who the man is upstairs and, of course, was assured there is 'no man upstairs'. One day as she was being zipped into her snowsuit, she pointed at the landing and said, 'See, there he is!' As quickly as the adults could turn their heads, the apparition was gone. What did she see?

Sandra still lives in and loves her home and Corktown.

Our conversation left us all a little giddy as we ventured out into the autumn evening and home.

Do you have a ghost story to share? Contact us at corktown_news@yahoo.ca ♣

Beautification News

The Beautification Committee recently delivered this year's Shamrock Awards to many deserving homes and businesses in Corktown. We were certainly impressed by all of the hard work, pride and dedication put forth by so many residents.

The Shamrock Awards have two categories. The Green Shamrock is awarded to those who have shown a great deal of care in the appearance and maintenance of their properties. The Golden Shamrock is awarded to those who have displayed an outstanding effort and are the places that are setting the standard through their meticulous care and dedication. Congratulations to all of our Award winners!

We had a general cleanup in Shamrock Park in August and are planning another cleanup and spring bulb planting day in October. If you'd like to volunteer and come out and have some fun and meet some of your neighbours, please drop us a line at the Crier. ♣

Important Community Contacts

Keep this contact list and refer to it when you have concerns, see something suspicious, want to report something, or have a question.

Hamilton Police Service

Emergency 911
 Non-emergency 905.546.4925
 South Town Crime Manager
 A/ Sgt. Chris Zafirides 905.540.6074

City of Hamilton

General Inquiries 905.546.CITY (2489)
 Ward 2 Councillor
 Bob Bratina 905.546.2711
 bbratina@hamilton.ca
 By-Law Parking 905.546.4925

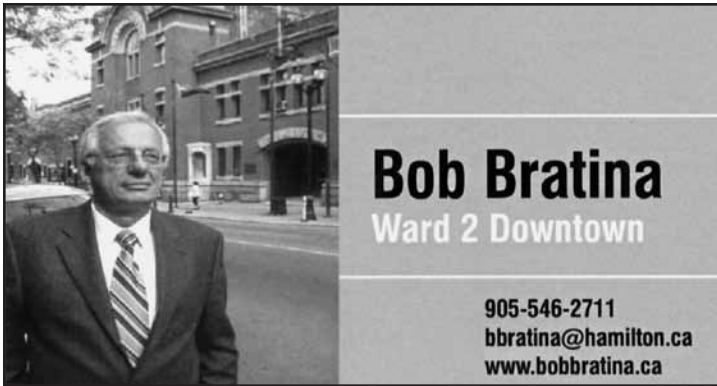
Corktown Neighbourhood Association of Hamilton

Any executive member by email corktown_news@yahoo.ca

Message from our Ward 2 Councillor

Thanks to the Corktown Neighbourhood Association for an excellent meeting in the new Queen Victoria School. I encourage everyone interested in helping make a better neighbourhood to attend those meetings and join in on neighbourhood initiatives. Recently City clean-up crews washed away the mess under the railway bridges. I have been pressing our staff to have pigeon spikes installed along the girders to end the problem once and for all. This has been slow in coming, but hopefully will soon be resolved. On another matter, most agree the GO layover facility east of the GO station has brought many benefits, but it does have a downside. A group of neighbours are particularly affected by noise and vibration from the locomotives and have taken up a petition. I have discussed this with GO staff who agree to fully investigate and hopefully remediate the problems. I've also asked City staff to monitor the area for locomotive emissions to determine whether they are within acceptable levels. Our office is also working on late night nuisances likely caused by some bar patrons, absentee landlords whose tenants' unruly behaviour and unkempt properties are causing problems, and recurring incidences of drug-related activities. The Police SWAT team closed down an operation in a Corktown apartment building in dramatic style, which may have been the source of a recent rash of attempted break-ins. Unfortunately it's not a problem that will be solved until changes are made to the Criminal Code to give the Police the tools they need. We have made great strides toward a better Corktown neighbourhood and residents should take great pride in all they've done to improve their properties and maintain vigilance on anti-social behaviours and lapses in property standards. And soon we'll enjoy one of Corktown's annual highlights...HALLOWE'EN! ♣

Bob Bratina, Councillor, Ward 2



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Letters from our Neighbours



A petition has been circulating around Corktown about concerns raised over the Go Trains that have been parking between James and Baillie Streets since March 2009. Over 50 people have signed on, expressing an interest in meeting with City officials and GO Train representatives about the noise and pollution generated by the engines idling so close to homes.

To date, Councillor Bob Bratina has corresponded with Go officials on our behalf and states that they are presently testing the noise levels in this area and that GO spokesperson Michael Cyer will be meeting personally with Mr. Bratina in the next few weeks. GO has reassured him that only four trains will ever be parked in this section of the tracks no matter how much train traffic increases over the years.

Residents are hoping to get the idling time reduced and have a sound barrier built between Catharine and Baillie Streets, but are generally pleased with the decrease in vandalism and loitering around the tracks and support the idea of trains as a "green venture" for the region.

Mary H.

The Corkboard

October – December Events

Grand Opening

Thursday October 22, 2009
 from 5:00 pm to 7:00pm

Queen Victoria Elementary School

Remembrance Day

November 11, 2009
 Please check www.myhamilton.ca
 for event updates.

Advertisers receive complimentary event listings.
 All dates and info subject to change.