

# Kaleidoscope



It was the family interest in politics that got Ruth Thompson involved in Peel County school board affairs and encouraged her to run as trustee in last December's elections. Meanwhile her brother David was running as mayor of Toronto. Now both are busy at meetings. Ruth averages at least three a week. Times photos by Ron Pozzer.

## Local political life and times — it's all in the family

BY SHERI CRAIG

If for a time Vera Crombie saw herself as Mississauga's answer to Rose Kennedy, well, you can understand why.

There was son David nominated for mayor of Toronto and daughter Ruth running as a Peel County school board trustee in Ward Three and the whole family out knocking on doors and setting up signs and furiously campaigning for the Dec. 4 elections. And then on election night when the results started coming in it was obvious that David was winning by a large majority and Ruth would be chosen as trustee, second in a field of four, just about 50 votes behind incumbent Bob Skipper.

So that evening was rather successful for the Crombie family and all those years of political talk had finally paid off.

### SPORTS OR POLITICS

"If you didn't discuss sports or politics there was no need staying around our house," Ruth recalls her years at home growing up. She was the third youngest, the only daughter in a family of four children, all close in age.

The Crombies lived in the west end of Toronto and then moved to North York where the youngsters attended Earl Haig Collegiate. The four were involved in school affairs, especially sports. "Except basketball," Ruth adds. She's only four feet 10 inches tall. But David and Ruth became really active with David editor of the school newspaper and Ruth taking on the job after him.

When Ruth graduated, she enrolled at Toronto Teachers College and taught grade 4 in public school for two years. Then her husband Bob, an Air Canada pilot, was laid off and the Thompsons left for England where Bob flew for British European Airlines.

They returned to Montreal for two years with Bob working at a ground job for Air Canada. Eventually the pilots were called back and the Thompsons lived in Rexdale and a year later they bought their house in Forest Glen.

Meanwhile three Thompson children had been born, Gordon, now 11, Garth, 9 and Gray, 7. David was busy with politics in Toronto and in 1970, he and their father Norman tried to get Ruth to run as a school board trustee in Mississauga.

### WAIT

"I didn't want to," she says. "I felt I should wait. But they asked me what I was waiting for and I couldn't answer their question." She shrugs. "So I ran."

That was a tough time to campaign because the Peel County school district wasn't divided into wards and candidates had to canvass the whole town. The public voted for

11 trustees out of 24 nominated and Ruth came in 12th. By the next election wards had been designated and the boundaries clearly marked for Ruth's area, Ward Three, Tomken Road to Etobicoke Creek to Dundas to Eglinton. But Ruth had decided not to run again.

### NUTS

"Davey and his wife Shirley had come back last July from a trip to Europe and Davey said he was going to run as mayor. I told him he was nuts.

"It wasn't that I didn't think he could do a good job. The main problem was that Davey wasn't well enough known and he didn't have the money to run an extensive campaign.

"But he had made up his mind and so I decided to bypass the elections this time and work for him."

Ruth took charge of campaigning in Ward One, the area east of Keele, from the Lakeshore to the York county border to Dundas. Bob was busy posting signs and Vera Crombie, 60, began knocking on doors in the old village of Swansea where the family had lived.

"Mother kept meeting old neighbours and teachers and friends and she had to go in and have a little chat with everyone. It would take her an hour to get through a block," Ruth laughs. "And Mother had six brothers and sisters so all the aunts and uncles were electioneering and people we went to school with popped out of everywhere to lend a hand."

### UNACCEPTABLE

And then a number of local events convinced Ruth that she had better run for the school board or else put up with a situation that she felt was unacceptable.

"Davey didn't know I was running until some time after my nomination. I had taken on the ward for him and I didn't want him to worry about my campaign.

"I really didn't do much campaigning around here," she says. "I'm pretty well known in this area so I concentrated on the other side of Dixie. I'm a great believer in the door knock. I just spent about \$400 and depended more on people.

"As it turned out, less than one per cent of those eligible voted and in six polls in this area there were no votes at all. "But election night was very exciting for the whole family." She nods at her sons lounging around the room.

### RESEMBLANCE

Politics aside, you can see the resemblance between Ruth and David. Both are short and stocky with a casual manner that suggests they'd prefer pop corn to caviar and a fast ball game rather than a fancy cocktail party.

Ruth frets now about being away from home to attend so many school board meetings but at the beginning of every month she lines up babysitters for all her appointments and

rationalizes that maybe it's good that her sons are learning to adjust.

Bob's schedule means that he is home several days a week. "And my neighbours are terrific, they'll give the kids lunch if I have daytime meetings.

"But I think it is important that parents get involved with school affairs," Ruth says. "Often there isn't enough communication between educators and the public.

### CONSERVATIVE

"I think I'm a conservative in education," she continues. "I'm not an advocate of the open-school policy. I'd like to stop and study this new direction we seem to be headed in.

"I think there is too much 'let's discover' and not enough teaching in schools. Children need to be guided back to the basic skills. There's no point in a youngster going to high school for five years and ending up with subjects that don't lead him anywhere."

So Ruth is busy now as a freshman trustee, learning as much about the education business as she can, averaging at least three meetings a week, fielding about 40 phone calls a day. As well as her job with the school board, she's also past president of the Forest Glen Community Association, in charge of Glenhaven community school, president of the Forest Glen Girls Softball League and director of the provincial Progressive Conservative party for Peel South.

### '74

"I think I'll run for the school board again in '74," she says thoughtfully. "I don't think I'd ever run for anything more than the school board because I don't class it as a political thing and I don't see myself getting personally involved with politics.

"If Davey runs again? Well he won't have the same need for manpower that he did last time, so when I campaign it will be for me.

"Why do I want to keep so busy? I think there are things that have to be done and I'm a fairly organized person and able to do them.

"I am organized aren't I?" she asks her husband. He just grins and nods his head.

She shrugs. I guess it's part of family tradition. We have to get involved.

"My mother never ran for anything but she follows politics closely and regularly attends Toronto city council meetings. (Alderman) John Sewell said one day that a council meeting couldn't start because David Crombie's mother wasn't there yet."



When Ruth isn't working as a trustee and her husband Bob isn't flying as a pilot for Air Canada, they spend their time at home with their three sons, left to right, Gordon, 11, Garth, 9, and Gray, 7.



Quite understandable, if after last December's municipal elections, Vera Crombie saw herself as Mississauga's answer to Rose Kennedy with two of her children winning their campaigns. Mrs. Crombie has never run for office herself but has always been interested in politics and regularly commutes from her Port Credit home to Toronto to attend city council meetings.

### 20-YEAR CAREER

## Housewife loved reading so she became librarian

A love of books got Grace Murton her first job with the Mississauga Library system.

About 20 years ago, people in Lorne Park area decided to start their own library. Neighbours searched their houses for books to donate and held rummage sales to raise money to buy more books.

Mrs. Murton was actively involved and when the library was established worked there as a volunteer. Eventually Toronto Township took over the library. After a short library course, she continued to work as a librarian at Lorne Park for 14 years.

She was then transferred to Lakeview for three years and in 1970 assisted in opening the Burnhamthorpe Library where she has been since.

This weekend (May 26) Mrs. Murton will retire from library work to spend more time with her husband, James, and son, Michael, 18.

"I've always been interested in books," she says. "I read at least four books a week and browse through 50 to 60 more. I'm going to miss library work terribly but I'd like to be free now to get away and travel with my husband."

This past year Mrs. Murton started a book club, the Book Group, at the Burnhamthorpe Library where she talked about books and introduced authors and

titles to the members. The group, about 15 to 20 housewives, met regularly Wednesday afternoons from 1:30 to 3 p.m.

"They were all very compatible and turned out quite faithfully," she says. "We would have discussions on books and sometimes I would use films to introduce authors as well.

"I hope the club will continue," Mrs. Murton mentions that libraries have changed considerably in 20 years. "They are now a centre for the community," she says "and there is more accent on people. "I think libraries are setting the pace for our style of life."

She plans to continue her reading and says she won't lose touch with the library system.

"I'm going to visit programs at other libraries and I would be interested in any other book clubs that are starting."

Librarian Isabel Hodge is also retiring from Burnhamthorpe. She opened the library there three years ago.

Replacing Mrs. Hodge is Barbara Kho who has a bachelor of library science degree and is now working on her master's degree at the University of Toronto. Also new on the staff at Burnhamthorpe is Joyce Capstick who has worked part-time in the library system for 10 years.



After 20 years of library work, Grace Murton is retiring from the Mississauga Library system. Barbara Kho, at the back, will take over in charge of the Burnhamthorpe branch. Times photo by Ron Pozzer.