

# He's Streetsville town tinker

BY JOHN KERNAGHAN

STREETSVILLE — Vic Johnston's voice rasps through an old exploit like a cross cut saw through a piece of knotty pine.

He bites along and, getting snagged on a particularly juicy part, falls an octave into a breathy cackle.

Vic Johnston, almost anyone in this town will relate, has a lot of stories to tell.

He's dedicated 54 of his 79 years in town to community activities and can toss you a tidbit from any of those years.

Like the time town urchins kept the volunteer fire force busy at all hours of the night putting out grass fires.

"We'd put one out and by the time we got home there would be another call. They were the only fields of long grass they could set on fire so about the third time back while the other boys were controlling one field I set the other field on fire myself. Never had any calls after that — there was nothing left to burn."

Firefighting was only one of Johnston's callings. After 35 years he still serves on the Public Utilities Commission and the town's recreation board and, although he has no official title, runs the arena and community centre as if it's his own.

Well, it almost is.

Two weeks ago town officials and members of the

arena and community centre board officially named it the Vic Johnston Community Centre Incorporated.

He has babied the complex from before its birth. When the same location was a simple outdoor ice surface, he cleared it and flooded it nightly.

And when the arena was built, Johnston practically lived in it for the first winter.

"He was in here almost every night all night" recalls one fellow worker. "We had a leak in one of the pipes and we had a hell of a time locating it. He was out there every night trying to find it."

A January stroke felled Johnston for three-and-a-half months. He threw away

the cane he was told to use — "I was getting too damn dependant on it" — and continued in a maintenance role at the arena.

"I came in one night after he was up from his stroke" related an arena employee" and there he was in his shirtsleeves on the ice trying to replace a light. He was halfway up the ladder and it was really cold. He's a tough old boy, that's for sure."

Johnston, the tinker, self-confessed gossip monger and Father Christmas image to the town kids (he has played Santa Claus for 35 years) is also somewhat of political sage.

While other Streetsville residents are trying to outdo each other in invective at what they consider the

treason of Premier Bill Davis, Johnstone merely says the town was "left in the lurch" and that it was inevitable".

"It's going to cost us more and there is going to be more red tape. It's just too big an area."

As unofficial supervisor of the community owned complex he intends to continue keeping his building in shape long after an amalgamation with Mississauga.

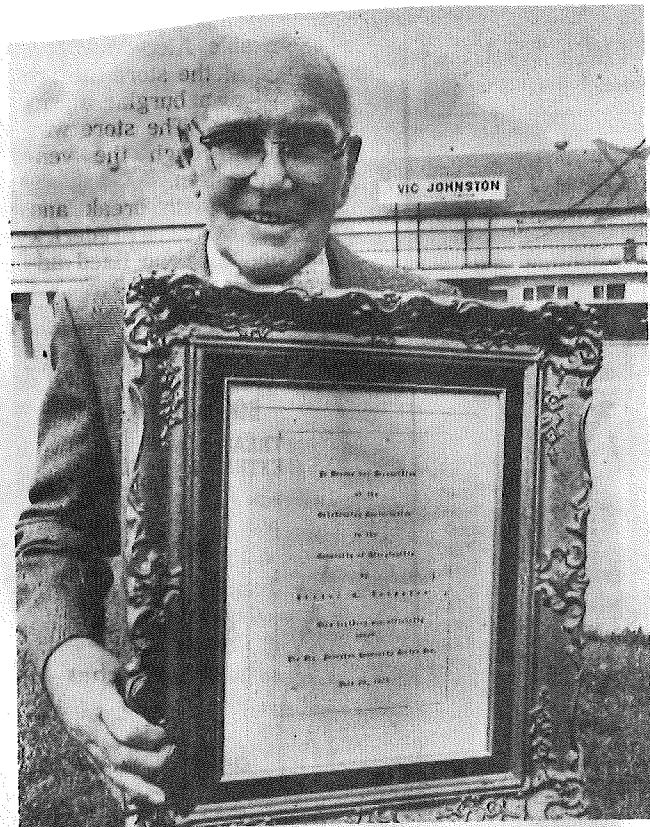
It probably couldn't be run without him.

"He knows every beam and pipe in the place," says one arena worker. "If anything goes wrong you have to call on Vic. He can find the trouble in a minute."

*Photo courtesy of...*

*Vic Johnston*

*Real to the Vic Johnston*



VIC JOHNSTON