

TOth, Mike  
February 26th,  
1992  
Mississauga  
News  
Peel Biography Bk.

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# The News says 'so long' to a respected colleague

After 30 years of racing to meet deadlines, Mike Toth is finally taking some time to smell the roses.

Toth, who retired from his position as Editor of *The Mississauga News* Friday, says he plans to spend a lot of time at Derrydale Golf Club during the next few months.

A father of four, Toth began his journalism career in Hungary when, at the age of 18, he and several university buddies assumed control of a local radio station during the first days of the Hungarian Revolution.

While communist troops laid siege to the country, Toth and fellow students broadcast news and messages of hope and encouragement until they were arrested by the Hungarian Secret Police and tossed in jail.

"In order for somebody to sit down, we had to squish together, sometimes standing on one foot," Toth recalls about conditions in the jail. "We took turns sitting."

After several days, during a break in the hostilities when communist forces fell back to regroup and reinforce their troops, the young revolutionaries were released from jail, many of them, including Toth, taking the opportunity to flee the country.

"They started rounding up the rebels," Toth says, remembering some young men who simply disappeared. "I lost a good friend."

With the help of some friends who passed them "hand to hand," Toth and a few fellow patriots made their way toward the border of Hungary and Austria, where a tank-patrolled roadway stood between them and freedom.

"The tanks were patrolling the road," Toth remembers. "You had to run across the road as soon as one passed so you wouldn't get in the headlights from the next one."

They laid in a ditch filled with frigid water, waiting for an opportunity to cross, when "we heard the guards approaching (and then) they stopped for a cigarette," says Toth.

When they finally crossed the border into freedom, they were picked up by Austrian police and taken to a schoolhouse to be reunited with other Hungarians who had fled the revolution.

From there, Toth was transported to Genoa, Italy, where he boarded a "boat they dug out of the mothballs to transport the refugees" and began a two-week trip to Canada, during which they lost communica-

tions and were lost at sea for several days. "I spent both Christmas and New Year's on the Atlantic," he remembers.

The only surviving child of eight, Toth left behind his mother and father in his bid for freedom. "I never saw my father again. I say my mother twice, once 18 years later and then at her funeral."

Toth's first stop in Canada was in snowy St. John's,

Nfld. From there, he began a five-and-a-half day train trip to Vancouver, B.C., which was in "second bloom. You can't help but fall in love with a country than has such difference," he says.

Armed with a dictionary — the only English words he knew were yes, no and okay — Toth spent the next couple of years mastering the language so he could ply his trade.

In 1962, he landed his first journalism job at the *Vancouver Province*. From there, he went on to work for the first offset daily publication in Canada, the *Vancouver Times*.

A former national level soccer player, Toth's next job was editing a soccer magazine that coincided with the birth of professional soccer in Canada, a magazine he, wife Edna and a compositor took over as owners and publishers a couple of years later.

Back in Ontario, after an interval working with Knob Hill Farms giant Steve Stavro, Toth accepted a job offer by *Mississauga Times* editor Phil Bingley, now sports editor for *The Toronto Star*.

Staff photo by Rob Beintema



The *Mississauga News* publisher Ron Lenyk presents retiring Editor Mike Toth a card signed by staff, at a luncheon in Toth's honor Friday.

In 1974, Toth came to *The Mississauga News* where he spent the next 18 years winning awards and becoming heavily involved in the community.

His volunteer credits include former deputy chairman and chairman of the regional Disabled Games, board and committee member of the Mississauga Symphony, The Mississauga News Christmas Bureau Fund, Mississauga Arts Council, Miss Teen and Miss Mississauga Pageants and Sports Celebrities Awards Banquet.

He initiated the province's first newspaper advisory board and has been involved in promoting and procuring a Sports Hall of Fame since 1975, a dream that may come to fruition this summer. He sees the Sports Hall of Fame as a forum where "we can hold up the best of our yesteryears as an example of what can be accomplished."

Toth's contributions to the newspaper industry and the community were honored at a luncheon Friday.