

# Conducting business as usual

Many On Top of the World residents will recognize Don Jones as the founding Webmaster of the OTOW Canadian Club and the club photographer for many years.

Many others will remember him as a past president of the OTOW Computer Club and a Saturday morning lecturer in Microsoft and Adobe software applications.

However, relatively few residents are aware that Don is the present conductor of the 80 voice Dunedin Chorus, right here in our own back yard.

It is a voluntary post he has held for the past 11 years during the winter months. It is a job he loves and one he shares with co-conductor Janice O'Connor Sharkey, who runs the show while Don is north of the 49th Parallel.

Don has been conducting the business of conducting for a very long time, leading bands, orchestras, choruses and musical productions. It all started quite innocently when he was a 14-year-old high school student in his home town of Tillsonburg, Ontario, when he was asked to fill in for the regular band conductor.

That was about the same time Don and two of his other high school buddies formed the Rhythm Rockers, a loosely organized, dynamic group that played many school assemblies. On Friday nights they entertained at church-basement suppers and they spent New Year's Eve playing concerts at the Mil Mar Manor in Tillsonburg. The latter of these gigs would make them a tidy sum, but the others might net them a few bucks, a complimentary church-basement supper or simply some heart-felt applause. Whatever the pay off, it was enough. They were fueled by their passion for musical performance.

When Don finished high school, he attended the University of Western Ontario and graduated with a plethora of letters after his name – Donald Jones BA, Mus G. Paed, A.Mus., M.Ed.

He spent the next 35 years in the Ontario education system, 18 of those as a teacher, conductor and music department head.

During those years, he has conducted numerous high school musicals, including "The Fantastics," "Annie Get Your Gun," "Oliver," "Celebration," "The Apple Tree" and "Damn Yankees."

He finished up his career outside of the classroom as a vice principal, an administrator and finally as the prin-



The present day Don Jones, pictured above, is back-dropped by his younger self as a conductor in action. In the picture below is Don (far right) and the rest of The Rhythm Rockers.



icipal of Lucas Secondary School in London, Ontario. His administrative duties, however, did not dissuade him from following his passion.

Don conducted many more professional community musical productions in London, including "The Sound of Music," "The Music Man," "Oliver" and "Jacque Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris."

When asked which of the many productions he has conducted was his favorite, Don's answer was a good one. He said it was the University of Western Ontario Gilbert and Sullivan production of "Iolanthe" because it was there and then that he met the lovely Dorothy Shewan (Jones).

Don was conducting auditions, looking for an alto to play the part of the queen of the fairies. Who would have thought that a simple audition in community theater would lead to love and marriage?

Maybe it was the wine colored

band jacket and ascot Don was wearing at the time.

If it's any indication of the impression he made on Dorothy, she still remembers the stunning combo after all these years.

They say that show business relationships rarely last and, let's face it, there is plenty of evidence in print and on television to back that up. Well, I'm happy to report that the vows ex-

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changed between Don and Dorothy Jones are still binding and their marriage is still going strong 52 years, three children and five grandchildren later!

In 1995, Don retired from the Ontario education system and Dorothy retired in 2001 from her position as Dean and founder of the Children's Talent Education Centre, the world's first Suzuki-endorsed music school for pre-schoolers.

Now they migrate between London and OTOW and wherever else in the world that Suzuki music conventions take them.

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