

Hamilton Spectator, Friday, 24<sup>th</sup> May 2013

## Scout, guide parade 'wonderful tradition'

By Jeff Mahoney

Brian Johnston's memories of his first parade come pouring out of boyishly lively eyes, and a voice that is expansive and resonant with the echoes of youth.

He's an energetic 72 years old now, so busy with volunteer work (including the promotion of Saturday's 75th anniversary scout/guide parade) you'd think he was running up hours for high school credit. Maybe that spirit is something he picked up from scouting.

His hair might be thinner, but when he tells of the day, he is nine years old again.

"The first parade was in 1939 and sponsored by the Eaton's Good Deed Club," says Brian.

"It was just scouts then, but 10 years later the girl guides joined." That was Brian's first.

"We started out of the Armouries, along King to the old city hall, then Main and John, and we'd disperse to the local theatres to see a movie and vaudeville acts. The Palace, Century, Capitol, Tivoli.

"It poured rain and at that time the cubs had wool jerseys, pants and socks. We were drenched. When we started taking them off to dry, such a fog went up in the room you couldn't see the stage."

Brian, with his broad bright smile, makes you see the fog.

Old city hall, Wool uniforms, Eaton's Good Deed Club? Vaudeville?

Yes, the years have raced away, but the parade goes on.

Thousands of area scouts and guides will march through downtown Saturday; not so much wool, we hope no rain, but just as much pride.

"It's a wonderful tradition," says Brian. And the parade is the only scout/guide parade on the continent. It's a uniquely Hamilton event.

"The heyday was the 1950s and '60s. The streets were lined with people and it behooved every local dignitary to be there."

The scouts and guides themselves practised for months back then.

"It was more military style, spit and polish, especially getting the turns, so you were doing baby steps if were on the inside and big long ones on the outside," says Brian.

Saturday's 75th edition will feature a carnival-like atmosphere with post-parade fun, like "dunk-a-leader." There will be vintage cars, including a 1936 De Soto taxi cab, courtesy of Blue Line.

The parade, which will feature the 24th annual "Hunger Is Not An Option" food drive for Hamilton Food Share (so bring non-perishable food), goes from 9 to 11 a.m. It begins at Victoria Park (Locke and King) and ends at city hall.

Let's get out and cheer them along.



## 1948 PARADE

*Huge crowds lined downtown streets for decades, and 'it behooved every local dignitary to be there.'*

1/2

### Scout/guide parade

**When:** Saturday, May 25, 9 to 11 a.m.

**Parade route:** Locke, from Victoria Park, to Main to MacNab to east parking lot at City Hall

**Road closures:** Locke Street (from Florence St. to Main St.) Main Street West (Locke to MacNab St.) MacNab St. South (Main St. to Hunter St.) Jackson St. (James St. to City Hall parking lot) City Hall, east parking lot

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