

IN BRIEF**No parking zone expands along Jacob Street**

The no-parking zone along the east side of Jacob Street in New Hamburg is getting an extension beginning 190 metres south of Boullee Street, all the way to Bleams Road East after Wilmot council agreed with the move last month.

The request from Wilmot Township's bylaw officer and the director of public works stems from concerns from police and emergency services who cite increased traffic volume during events in Norm S. Hill Park, which can hinder access to the residential area. The current bylaw permits parking on the west side of Jacob Street, but prohibits parking on the east side of Jacob starting 30 metres south of Boullee to 70 metres south. Off street parking is permitted adjacent to the arena along a fenced section of the park.

School board cuts costs to approve 2007-'08 budget

The Waterloo Region District School Board approved a net budget of \$484,517,749 for the 2007-2008 school year after facing a \$5 million deficit.

Some of the cost cuts made following working committee recommendations include a reduction in plant maintenance service delivery through staff attrition, a delay in replacing school board vehicles and a reduction in travel expenses.

The board is retaining its outdoor education program at a cost of \$361,800 by assigning program enhancement grant funds to cover the costs. Restructuring the adult and continuing education program will result in a savings of \$229,343.

Custodial service delivery will be redefined through staff attrition to save \$334,100 in 2007-2008. The supply teacher budget will be reduced by \$400,000 in recognition of the implementation of attendance management and reduced use of supply teachers for school activities.



From Nigeria to Yellowknife to Qatar

Globe-trotting teacher Karen Morris decides to retire in New Hamburg

CINDY MATTHEWS
special to the Independent

Thirty-seven years in a single profession is an admirable accomplishment, especially in the current environment of multiple-careers-in-a-lifetime model. Recently retired teacher Karen Morris can boast this feat. Yet, there is a unique spin to her version of teaching. Every so many years she and husband, Peter, up and packed everything to move halfway across the world to follow their careers.

After Karen completed her psychology degree at the University of Toronto, she decided to enroll in what was then known as the Toronto Teachers' College.

"I decided to become a teacher because I could walk there. I could see the college from my apartment window," she recalls. Once there, she states, "I got into it, the whole teaching of kids."

Karen was quite lucky in that whenever she completed things in her life, she always seemed to have a job offered to her. For example, right after teachers' college, she had a choice to work in management or in teaching. She elected to follow her husband, Peter, who had secured an engineering job in Dundas and while there landed her first job as a teacher. It was at Chippewa Public School and she taught the other half of the grade six that she shared with the part-time principal.

Many teachers choose for a variety of reasons to stay put in one school, or at least in one city, or one school board district for their entire career. Not Karen. Because Peter's work took him all over the world, Karen embraced the opportunity to pull up roots many times. At one point, when Peter's job in Canada disappeared, he accepted a position to design a water system in Nigeria. Of course, Karen joined him. At that point, in their marriage they already had their two children, Michael and Tanya.

Karen originally thought she might be a stay-at-home mom in Nigeria and says "Then I could teach my own kids at home." But the parents of that school would have none of that. When their kids' teacher decided to leave the position, it was shameful that the school was empty and resources were left unused. Those parents soon convinced Karen to work with their children.

Karen could not resist the offer to teach in Nigeria.

"They transported me to school. Yes, I had a driver come and pick me up early every day," Karen explains. "Our children went to another private school and I taught in this privately funded school for the offspring of Shell employees."

Her job was to program for and teach twelve junior and senior kindergarten students. She even taught the Nigerian president's child.

When asked what life was like, Karen explains it this way, "We were treated very well, there. However, Peter and I decided to go back to Canada. The risk of violence was big. There was too much risk for our children."

What moves you from hot to cold? A career change from Nigeria to Yellowknife, of course. While Peter's job was to manage the community roads in the entire territory, Karen enjoyed the ambience of a



Karen Morris recently retired after 37 years as a teacher that included jobs in Nigeria, Yellowknife and Qatar.

TIM MURPHY, INDEPENDENT STAFF

'great place to raise children.' Karen explains, "You have to be an unusual person to live there — flexible, long winters, darkness, and mosquitoes. Doors did not have to be locked." The north holds a special place in Karen's heart.

Imagine arriving, like Karen and Peter, in the north after a very long drive. It's January. It is very, very dark. You are miles and miles from home. In addition, you have committed to make this dark, cold place your new home. Peter, Karen and their two children lasted five and a half years.

British Columbia model. Some things were the same like kids got to school by school-bus." She describes the resources, "You had everything you needed, like cross-country-skis and snowshoes and every kind of book. Mildred Hall had moveable walls. We had multi-grade teaching, with classes like the Grade 4, 5 and 6 combined class."

Some things they did just make sense, "At the end of the school day, after dropping off the kids, the school bus went around town as the transit bus, picking up the parents after work."

Karen describes how the teachers' schedules were arranged, "Every teacher got freed up to work one-on-one with a special need's student. Every three years, teachers either taught a new grade, or had to leave the school to learn a new assignment. This was to prevent people from getting stale." Karen wound up teaching at the same school that her children attended, J. H. Sissons P.S.

Karen remembers spending time on the ski-do and going to sleep earlier than in the south. That is just how people cope. They belonged to the Jack Rabbit Ski Club (cross-country skiing) and went south on vacations to places like Banff and Edmonton. The kids were involved with a swim club. Peter and Karen enjoyed curling, too.

The long winters were sometimes problematic. One year, Karen recalls, "It snowed on the first day of school and on the last day of school." Students return to school the last week of August. In the summer, the sun never really sets. In winter, the sun is just coming up at first recess (mid-morning) and sets a few hours later.

Karen and Peter intended to remain in the north. They even bought a 'retirement' house in Duncan, British Columbia, which they rented out. However, contractual work often brings uncertainty and eventually Peter was in search of a new place to share his engineering talents. Further, Karen's father was quite ill and the south beckoned

them. Peter accepted a job in Kitchener, so the return to the south made perfect sense. After all, the children were entering Grades 7 and 9 so the transition time seemed ideal.

Upon Karen's return to southern Ontario, she began supply teaching in a variety of Kitchener schools. Then the Catholic Board hired her as a core French teacher. When a new school, Silverheights, opened in Cambridge, Karen chose to join the team there.

"I taught a split grade and I loved it there. I also taught special education resource and Grade 3. I made many friends at that school, many of whom are still friends today."

For one year, Karen and Peter took an opportunity to work in Qatar and Karen describes it this way, "I taught at the English Modern School, a private school for Qatar children. I taught grade four. I was also the administrative assistant and was in charge of the various record keeping duties like keeping track of passports and things."

Qatar held many good memories for Karen and Peter. "Michael went to private school. It was the compound life again. People were super friendly. Our family had every privilege like maid service and the club life."

"There were people from all over the world, Brits, Canadians, and Americans. Every day, at six o'clock, I played tennis. We could walk to the ocean. I remember walking along the ocean. It was a six-kilometre stroll. It was the life."

Karen explains how she stayed in touch with family and friends back home. "We made audio tapes and recorded our ideas that way and sent them back and forth."

When the family returned to Kitchener-Waterloo, Karen eventually saw her career evolve again. She decided to take a job at the McQuarrie Enrichment Centre, a program for gifted students of Waterloo Region District School Board. This

Continued on page 18

"There were people from all over the world — Brits, Canadians and Americans. Every day at six o'clock I played tennis. We could walk to the ocean. I remember walking along the ocean. It was a six-kilometre stroll. It was the life..."

*— Karen Morris
on her job in Qatar*

Karen gushes about the quality of the schools in Yellowknife. There were two elementary schools: one that specialized in regular programming plus French Immersion and one that offered a regular school program plus programming for the gifted. Karen started working at Mildred Hall Public School. The school was gorgeous. Parents and teachers had designed it.

The whole concept in the school had students and student learning in mind. Karen explains, "In the north, there were many specialty teachers. Everything is based on the