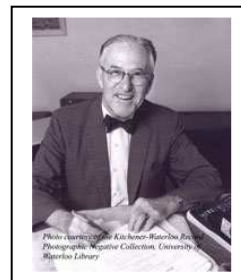


# Harold W. Wagner



When Harold W. Wagner made visits to the public school named in his honour, the young pupils were so amazed that they called the visiting dignitary Santa Claus or sometimes Saint Wagner.

“That’s pretty good, being a saint while I’m still alive,” he said once.

There are even some adults who would not quibble with Wagner’s informal benediction. He served the community for more than forty years as a city councillor and school board trustee, never accepting any remuneration for his years as an elected official.

Wagner was born in 1897 and began working as an errand boy for the Waterloo Mutual Life Assurance Company of Canada when he was just seventeen years old. He remained at the company, now known as Sun Life, until 1968. He worked in the mortgages and accounting areas, and retired as the supervisor of the premium department.

The company encouraged its employees to serve their community so Wagner started out with an acclamation to the Waterloo public school board in 1935. He remained on the board until 1961, being acclaimed every year except one, and serving as board chairman for three years. Wagner was also chair of the Ontario School Trustees’ Council in 1954-55.

In 1957 a new elementary school on Bridgeport Road was named in his honour.

Never one to rest on his laurels, Wagner was elected to the City council the year after retiring from the school board and served for fourteen years.

Harold Wagner advocated the kind of development and revitalization that is currently taking place in the Uptown. “What we need is a congestion of people uptown,” he said after retiring. He wanted to build high apartment buildings close to the city core so that people can be “close to where the action is – the church, the schools and the banks.”

He was also concerned about the environment, saying that growth in Waterloo must be good for our physical as well as economic health. “We don’t want to have a foundry coming to Waterloo. We must be careful that the industries that move to the city are not those that will pollute the air.”

While working at Mutual Life and serving as a public official, Wagner was also the official receiver in bankruptcy for Waterloo and Wellington counties for twenty-eight years, hearing more than 2,000 proceedings before he retired in 1973.

In 1967, Wagner received the Canada medal for his long service to community and country.

During his retirement, Wagner kept just as busy with his hobbies as he did during his career. In a newspaper article, Wagner said that at the age of eighty-six he was busy playing the piano for silent movies, teaching Hawaiian guitar, and playing the organ. He was also chairman of the Friday afternoon programme at the Waterloo Adult Recreation Centre.

Wagner, whose wife Nina had passed away three years previously, died in 1991 at the age of ninety-three. The couple had had two sons, Robert and Paul. Ever the optimist, Wagner was remembered as saying: "I think the future of Waterloo is better than anywhere else I know."

*Photo courtesy of the Kitchener-Waterloo Record Photographic Negative Collection,  
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