

OPINION

Maturity of youth

While the problem is not new, few ever are, the tensions between skateboarders, police, and citizens reached a fever pitch in Georgetown this past summer.

With some justification on all sides, people were feeling put out by this sport, which is growing in popularity.

On the one hand, homeowners, drivers and business proprietors were up in arms at what seemed like swarms of youths gathering to skateboard in parking lots and on the street. Concerns included vandalism, littering, foul language, intimidation, and in at least one case, public urination.

As would be expected, it wasn't long before the police got involved, ordering the skaters to move on. From the start, members of the Halton Regional Police Service knew this to be a Band-Aid solution – once the skateboarders were ordered off one property, they would simply move to another.

Finally, we come to the skateboarders themselves. As they would be the first to point out, skateboarding is not illegal. It is a sport, no different than rollerblading or mountain biking.

After a summer of mutual discontent, Constable Keith Bennett decided to take on the project of trying to find an equitable solution to a growing problem.

Hosting a series of meetings, Bennett, with the help of Stacey Green of the Town of Halton Hills met with residents and skateboarders. The final two meetings had attendance nearing 200, an even split between the two camps.

Of particular note, the Sept. 29 meeting at 11 Division in Georgetown showed a number of things, specifically the levels of maturity displayed by both sides.

While there was no formal dress code announced, several of the skaters showed up wearing dress shirts, a few even wearing ties. Despite tensions running high, there was a minimum of shouted, derisive comments from these youths, who can, with some justification, claim that they are being blamed for many of the ills in Georgetown, guilty or not. Under the intense glare of the spotlight, they bore up wonderfully, obviously cognizant of the fact that their every move would be scrutinized and that now is the time for good public relations.

Sadly, the same cannot be said for many of Georgetown's residents in the opposing group. A number seemed to be committed to a private agenda. Almost like clockwork, after a youth would make an intelligent, thoughtful statement, a grumbling could be heard throughout the crowd. To be sure, that grumbling was not coming from any of the youths in the room.

The *Gemini's* reporter in attendance heard several adults making derisive comments, unwilling to listen whenever a point contrary to their own was brought up.

However, the real *coup d'état* was to come toward the end of the evening when one member representing the interests of homeowners addressed the crowd. While his comments could be described as "middle of the road," his lecture was peppered with profane language.

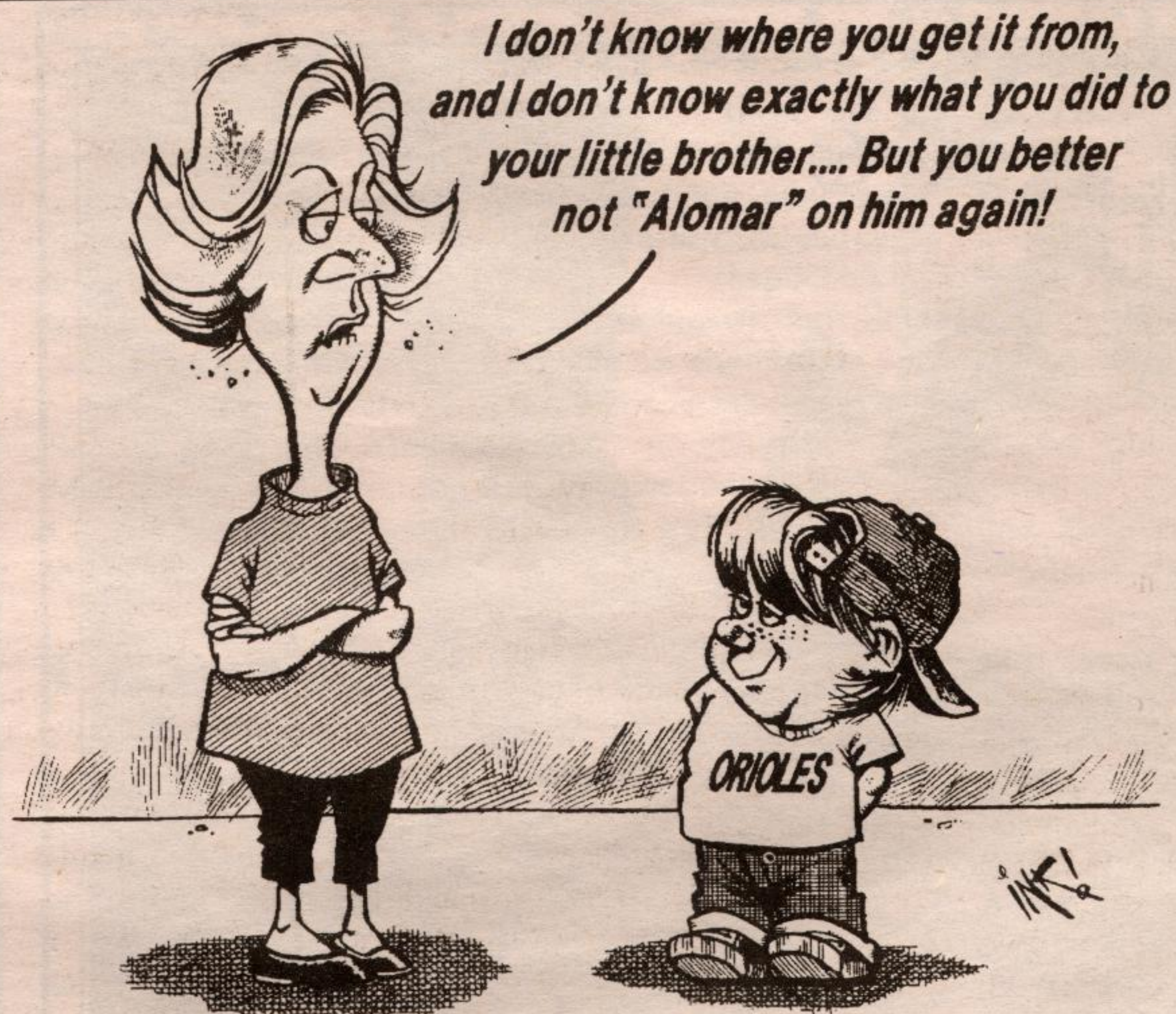
Without missing a beat, one of the skateboarders pointed out that if a group of youths could make it through the meeting without swearing, why couldn't the adults – the same group complaining about profanity coming from skaters?

Excellent point, young man. Excellent!

The real hypocrisy comes when these adults, many only a decade removed from their younger counterparts, seem to forget the exuberance of youth. While we could never formally endorse any actions contrary to the law or even community standards, it seems that some of Georgetown's most upstanding citizens have taken an attitude of "do as I say, not as I do."

Guess what? It didn't work when these adults were teens and it's not going to work now.

The sad fact is that it is those committed to obstructionist actions who usually have the final bearing on what happens. In other words, the squeaky wheel gets the grease, or, at least in this case, the squeaky wheel gets greased.



Your LETTERS

Hyde tries to clarify Towntrak issue

To the Editor,
Let me acknowledge Councillor Moya Johnson's elegant and considered response to the debate and relevance of the Towntrak Benchmarking Program. I am also delighted to learn the Municipal government has acknowledged and provided language for performance and benchmarking measures in the municipal sectors.

Towntrak's position is that municipal governments are operated as fiefdoms for the benefit of staff not the constituents. Let me illustrate the huge gap between perception and reality in appraising municipal expenditures using the Towntrak number, now acknowledged as being the average increases received by staff over the years 1988 to 1993.

The units of this increase are 7.8 per cent per annum, per residence. Recall that the per residence divisor is what Municipal Affairs Nancy Bardecki complained about. The divisor automatically corrects for

population growth and the increase is a clean, unadulterated increase. City Hall knows this very well and I wonder why it chose not to bring it to the Audit Committee Chair's attention.

The other missing information is to note that in the year prior to an election there are no raises, so in fact for four of the years in question the real increase hovered around 10 per cent, rather than the 7.8 per cent of this debate.

Even had the increase been taken at face value, without the per residence divisor, the increase should raise eyebrows. Halton Hills has not managed an annual increase in population, or in residences, for any of the last ten years over 1.5 per cent per annum. The good Councillor knows this. So a 7.8 per cent increase is needed to cover 1.3 per cent growth. It doesn't take too much imagination to see why our town ranks so poorly and why a Towntrak-like benchmark is so necessary and important to separate the perception from its reality.

Finally, don't expect any help from the Town staff. The Annual Financial Information Report costs \$15, a tariff to discourage inspection, one of the few Canadian corporations who charge for an annual report.

Bill Hyde, Towntrak
Harold Street

Slo-pitch season ends with thanks

To the Editor,
Recently the Limehouse Slo-pitch League completed its 16th season with Bill Van Ryn's Express winning a double knockout final over Charley FitzWhiskey's.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks to all the sponsors, players, team reps and umpires who made this an exciting and fun year.

There is also another group who deserve appreciation: Barb, Bryan and Joy at Recreation and Parks Department, who contributed to the success of the baseball league.

Over the last three years this league has contributed \$1,800 to local charities.

Finally, I would like to say that we are looking for an eighth team to fill our league. Please call me at 877-0427 for more details.

Dave Ward,
Limehouse

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THE GEORGETOWN GEMINI is published weekly on Wednesdays by Wicklow Hills Publishing Co. Inc. Mailing address: P.O. Box 145, Georgetown, Ont., L7G 4T1. Phone: (905) 877-1113. Fax: (519) 853-5040. Georgetown administrative office: Personal Secretarial Services, Unit 47, 360 Guelph St., L7G 4B5. Reproduction without permission is prohibited. Ideas expressed herein are those of the author only.

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