

# Crash claims seven

Continued from page one  
are upset about the alleged need for such high-speed chases in an era of modern short-wave radio communications.

Indeed, Lloyd Broostad of 44 Nelson Ct., Acton, whose 17-year-old son died in the collision, has openly questioned the need for the chase.

Said Mr. Broostad: "I don't see why it was necessary to chase that car — is it really important to catch it?" he asked. "After all, it's only a chunk of metal."

Constable Thomas Roduck of the Halton Regional Police has refused comment since the incident. The constable, according to the OPP report, started following the stolen Ford LTD as it was weaving slightly from side to side within town limits on Highway 25.

Car reported stolen  
The OPP report says the constable then heard on his police radio that the car he was following had been stolen minutes earlier and he gave chase.

Officer Roduck, an Acton resident who is married with two daughters, has been a Georgetown and Halton Police officer for three years, and formerly served as a military police officer for 10 years with the Canadian Forces.

Halton Police Chief Ken Skerrett Monday in a telephone interview with this newspaper defended his force's "high-speed chase policy as a necessary part of police work."

Said Chief Skerrett: "You have to keep the (stolen) car in sight so you'll know where to set up roadblocks over the radio."

"In our society, you can't just let the guy get away."

Commented Staff Sergeant Ward of the Acton precinct, "I found no fault with the actions of the officer. He did exactly what his training called for."

The Milton OPP report, however, notes the Halton Police radio dispatcher in Oakville — who had notified Constable Roduck of the car theft — failed to contact the provincial police to advise them that a stolen car was being pursued in the direction of Highway 401 and Milton.

Chief Skerrett, asked about this, said: "I can't tell you why, I haven't seen the report."

No time for OPP  
"But there was less than two minutes between the time the officer saw the stolen car and the accident."

"I think that answers that question."

Provincial police in Milton normally have five patrol cars out cruising at any given time, and although their territory is wide, the commander of Milton OPP was asked Monday what he thought of the "high-speed chase" aspect of the Saturday incident and the possibility of setting up roadblocks.

Staff Sergeant Alex Grainger of Milton OPP refused to discuss the accident in question on the record, but said "it is my feeling that the more police vehicles and officers who have involved, the more chance you have of a safer

interception (of a wanted vehicle).  
Mayor Tom Hill of Halton Hills, who is a member of the Halton Police Commission, said in a telephone interview Monday that he agreed with Chief Skerrett.

"Do his duty"

"I would say that if an officer is sworn to do his duty and has to catch someone, and has his flashers on, then that vehicle should stop."

"There is no need for high-speed chases if people obey the law," said the mayor.  
Mayor Hill said he believed Constable Roduck had done his duty, and might have been reprimanded by superiors if he had failed to do so.

A survey conducted Monday among Halton Regional Police constables in North Halton showed the vast majority felt Constable Roduck had acted correctly Saturday night under the circumstances.

And the officers, who asked not to be named, said they were proud that Chief Ken Skerrett had publicly supported the constable's action.

Said one constable, when quizzed about the lack of radio contact with the provincial police in Milton, "sure, if the chase had gone on, the constable would have been in touch with the OPP and there would have been an OPP cruiser blocking highway 25 by the time the stolen car got down near the 401."

"But here you're damned if you chase and damned if you don't."

The Halton Police officer said however, that he believes most of his fellow officers would not chase a car at speeds of over 30 miles per hour within a municipality like Georgetown, Acton or Milton.

Not surprised  
Asked about reports that the stolen 1972 Ford LTD was pulling away from the 1975 white and blue Halton Police cruiser, another North Halton constable said he "wasn't surprised in the least."

The officer said the new Halton Plymouth police cars have average-sized 360 cubic inch V-8 engines, and their performance deteriorates when they are driven around at 30 miles per hour in town or stand idling for 15 minutes.

He said the average Halton Police cruiser couldn't get over 90 m.p.h. in a pinch, V-8 engine or not.

But the OPP, said the Halton constables have 440 cubic inch V-8's in their cars which are driven mostly at highway speeds, so OPP cruisers can really move when necessary.

The near-midnight crash was a particular tragedy for Constable Arbour, in charge of the OPP investigation.

The officer spent three years with the former Acton detachment of the OPP, and



TREKKING DOWN Mill with microphone and movie camera are two of the many television reporters who flocked to Acton after the tragedy.

personally knew three of the six young persons who died in the northbound Chevrolet which driver John McHugh had only purchased within the past week.

Up all night  
Corporal Arbour, who was at the scene, was up all night and still fielding reporters' questions at supertime Sunday, said it was the "worst accident" he has seen in 15 years as a provincial police officer.

An OPP spokesman said Highway 25 was closed for three hours following the accident due to its severity.

He said investigating officers needed time to do their work, tow trucks were in operation, and an OPP identification expert and photographer, Constable Tom Fenwick of Milton had to be rushed to the scene from Burlington District Headquarters.

Firefighters' worst  
The horror of the accident returns to fire chief Mick Holmes each time he is questioned by reporters. It was the worst accident the brigade had ever been called to, he said.

A call from Milton OPP at 11:10 Saturday night asked for a pumper. It and the men were on the scene in five minutes, after dodging around a police roadblock.

It was the first time the brigade has used their new pagers, as planned, the siren sounded as well. Eventually the siren will be phased out.

The men threw water on the blazing car with high-pressure hoses and had it out in about five minutes.

Then the men followed the directions of the OPP and aided them and ambulance attendants in removing four bodies from the McHugh car. They covered the burned

# Arenas lose \$82,806...

(Continued from Page 1)

Memorial Gordon Alcott	\$30.00	\$35.00	\$40.00
NON-PRIME - Sports Groups			
Acton	\$7.00	\$10.00	\$10.00
Memorial Gordon Alcott	\$9.00	\$10.00	\$16.00
NON-PRIME - All other Groups in Town			
Acton	non-existent	\$25.00	\$25.00
Memorial Gordon Alcott	non-existent	\$25.00	\$32.00
NON-PRIME - Out of Town Groups			
Acton	\$30.00	\$35.00	\$40.00
Memorial Gordon Alcott	\$30.00	\$35.00	\$40.00

Special event such as carnivals and tournaments will be hit hard by the new rates, since the committee voted the regular rates above would apply to them.

At present special events are \$50 a day plus 45 per cent of all net profits. Council passed a motion in February that no special events other than the Bantam Tournament would be held this year.

According to the report, the Kinsmen Bantam Hockey Tournament would yield the town \$375 in revenue under the existing rates, but would yield \$1,916 under the new rates.

The 1975 Georgetown Figure Skating Club carnival netted the town \$173 in 1975, but under the new rates would net \$735, stated the report.

Continuing the director's report, the Midget Tournament would net \$175 at present rates but \$873 under the new arrangement. The Acton Figure Skating Club carnival would up the town's share from \$100 to \$350.

Councillor Ric Morrow pointed out Brampton made \$6,000 on their arenas last year, and claimed Halton Hills was charging lower than break-even rates.

Mayor Tom Hill said the town's rates are about the lowest anywhere.

Referring to the bantam tournament, chairman Les Dudy asked if other towns hosted tournaments.

Recreation Director Glen Gray said other towns have been told to operate at a break-even figure. "We have never been given that mandate."

Councillor George Maltby contended the operation of a tournament would not affect an \$82,000 loss very much.

Mayor Tom Hill said "One announcement the arena was open for public skating, Monday, jammed the place between 12:15 and 2:15."

Morrow claimed that would happen all the Easter holidays if there was no bantam tournament. He said apart from the loss of revenue, it bothered him that local children can't use it.

"It's full of out-of-town groups. Forty-two of the 44 teams are from out of town." He said this year's bantam tournament cannot be changed but contended it

new rates, would drop the deficit by approximately \$30,000, guessed the recreation director.

Other rate hikes would raise the casual rate for individuals from \$5 for the first person and \$2 for each additional person to \$7 at both Acton and Georgetown Memorial Arena, and from \$10 to \$12 at Gordon Alcott.

Lacrosse teams at Acton and Georgetown arenas would have their rates changed. Juniors would keep their \$10 an hour practice rate, but would now pay \$15 an hour for games, and \$15 an hour or 40 per cent of the total gate receipts for play-offs.

Minors would have their rate raised from \$5 to \$7.

Rates for community organizations serving liquor will go from \$125 per day to \$150, those not serving liquor would increase from \$75 a day to \$100.

Professional event sponsored by local groups will pay \$150 instead of \$125, and professional events sponsored by a private group will pay \$200 a day instead of \$175, or 20 per cent of gross receipts.

## Window at arena broken

A broken window at the arena was reported to police. Damage estimate is \$75.

The mayor said there is no reason to operate the arenas at a loss. "A lot of people never use arenas. The people who use them should pay the operating costs, but not the capital cost of building facilities."

Both argued that service clubs and volunteers have helped keep the town's budget down in the past.

Maltby claimed a service club was going to put in a swimming pool in Acton. "They did a lot of back-breaking work but the town paid for it."

Dudy said the service club only committed themselves to raise as much as possible.

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## Tweet, tweet

The first robin, to the Free Press' knowledge, was sighted at press time today (Wednesday) by Steve Trevail, 196 Churchill Rd. S. He saw the bird at the apartment buildings.



Jake Kuiken

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