

Free Press Editorial Page

Downtown improvement

The new and exciting proposal for revitalizing Acton's downtown core was welcomed by merchants who attended the special meeting in the fire hall last week. Some of them said they just wished they had known earlier about this kind of plan.

The downtown area can be declared a Business Redevelopment District through which costs of repairs and improvements can be assessed to merchants and landowners on the town tax bills.

The Ontario government has published a booklet showing how it can be done, and copies of these were available at the meeting here

last week. Some farthinking merchants have been trying for years to convince their fellow shop owners that more attention and planning for the downtown was terrifically important to them.

This pre-planned method, which simplifies their eternal problem of financing, seems the answer.

However, it is unfortunate that decisions cannot all be made before Mill St. is rebuilt, starting next month.

The plan deserves the unstinting support of all those involved. Growth is coming, and they must be prepared.

Litter is "horrible"

Many people would agree with council's assessment that Acton's litter problem is "horrible".

Councillor Joe Hurst told his council colleagues that cleanliness standards in downtown Acton are deteriorating.

Garbage is usually obvious on all the busiest streets. Pop bottles are thrown in the planter boxes and on lawns. Candy wrappers and crumpled papers dot the sidewalks. Spilled pop and ice cream make horrid smears on sidewalks outside take out shops.

Young people congregate on corners and near restaurants and late-closing businesses. That's natural, and there's nothing wrong with it.

There are more people in town than ever before, too, with more take out restaurants. And children seem to have lots of money for pop and candy.

There are plenty of garbage containers handy, though, and they are easy to see.

The town men sweep the streets every Thursday. Sure, says the works superintendent, his men

could do a lot more. They could pick up garbage after everybody... but it would cost an awful lot of money. Laborers don't come cheap any more.

Some of the merchants take pride in the appearance of the front of their stores as well as the inside, and clean up regularly.

Some tend the town-owned plants that make the streets so attractive, some don't bother and let their portion of petunias wilt.

But the responsibility is not the merchants' nor the town's. It is solely the responsibility of the people who own the garbage originally. The girl or boy who bought the pop or candy still owns the container it came in, after the drink and food are gone.

Children are presumably taught tidiness and responsibility at home and in their schools. Well—aren't they?

For adults as well as young people, this feeling of pride in tidiness and responsibility should continue on the sidewalks and streets of their town.

Fanfare for the band

Another Thank You to Acton Citizen's Band, also-rans at the C.N.E. this year but Acton's favorite band anyway, any place, anytime. They're an ambitious bunch to take on extra practices during holiday time, and then to go to the country's hugest fair and compete there against bands from

towns and cities many times our size.

They took a first place award last year. And so it goes with competitions - you never know what the judge will be looking for in particular.

Anyway, as the players all say, it's good experience.

Acton gets underlined

Actonians are willingly signing the petitions against being required to pay their water bills in Georgetown, or else at the banks, for a charge. Some of the signers underlined ACTON forcefully as they signed their addresses.

The announcement of water bill changes was another blow to our pride, and Actonians have been aroused over it.

Councillor Pat McKenzie hopes for a successful outcome: bills all payable here in an Acton office.

Drinking-driving problem

The Hamilton Automobile Club believes that the breathalyzer law or possible blood tests will not in themselves solve the problem of driving while intoxicated.

They recommend the implementation of the Driving While Impaired Counterattack Program which now is widely adopted in approximately 1,000 jurisdictions in the United States including one province in Canada, Alberta.

Although it has been reported that test programs have been conducted in Ontario, there has been little progress to date in taking

action on a province-wide basis.

This program is an educational course for drinking and driving offenders to make them aware of their responsibilities. Offenders would be directed by the courts to attend the course. Sentencing for the offence can be deferred pending a report from the course instructor.

D.W.I. Mini-courses could be implemented in our high school Driver Education Programs to assist young people to understand the effects of alcohol and drugs on the driving task.

Of this and that

The Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada and also the mother of organizers of an MD carnival here both have pointed out this week that all donations made in Canada stay in Canada. Canadian headquarters uses the money raised here to continue the Canadian fight against this dread disease.

engines, thrashing machines and tractors. A display of vintage cars, model railways and a parade will also be featured this Saturday, Sunday and Monday. But there's not the usual big parade through downtown Milton this year.

School begins this year in the same old way - although later than usual. But by a year from now, the entire public school system will be changed, and the high school students will be in their new building. What changes the town is seeing, in the past decade!



YOUNG PEOPLE who completed the unique Reading Olympics at the library this summer were presented with medals on red, white and blue ribbons Friday by Esther Taylor. Posing proudly on the library bridge are front row Melanie Johnston, Mark Dubrosky, Patricia Henry, Beverly Dawson, Peggy Ancker,

Pamela Dubrosky, Carolyn Van den Akken, Nicky Dawson, Neil Sinclair, Eric Hansen, back row Anthony Larsen, Beth Olah, Kara Rosenquist, Sue Bennett, Mae Robinson, Karen Blain, Yvonne Blain, Warren Blain, Jackie Dawson, Sandra Schreiber.



Sugar and Spice by Bill Smiley

Boy, I can't think of anything more harrowing than trying to write a column sitting at the picnic table in the backyard at a mid-summer day.

I envy those writers who have a nice, quiet study, preferably without windows, in which to do their work. No distractions, no disruptions. Just the writer and his machine, the words pouring onto the clean white paper like sparkling wine onto a white linen tablecloth.

It's almost impossible for me to concentrate on turning out a piece of taut, fascinating, creative prose for more than a minute or two, sitting here today. Too many interruptions.

Not only do I not have no windows, if you'll pardon the triple negative, it's just one big window, and I can't stop looking through it. If it was possible to turn my head in a 360 degree circle, I would see an entire world, mostly green, in miniature.

There's my neighbor, Helen, at the clothesline. Uh-huh. Looks like her granddaughter was here for the weekend. Ten diapers on the line, among the towels and sheets. Doesn't believe in disposables I do.

There's a sawing sound across the fence. Wonder what my neighbor, Jim is working at this fine, sunny day. Better saunter over and check it out. We'll have a chat about the iniquities of the town council.

Here comes Patsy Woods, a third side neighbor, with her little brother Bud nose. One of my huge oak limbs, about two feet in diameter, the one that hangs right over their house, has a split right up the trunk. Have to go and look.

Yeah, that's bad, Patsy. I'll have to call George, the tree man, and have it taken

down. Pity, but it will provide some excitement for the neighborhood.

Right behind me is the big, square, brick house in which lurks my old lady, suffering from the mummy of all suburban Noses like an over-ripe cherry, chest like a peeling boiled beet. Furious because of the way she looks and feels.

I don't turn. After a dreadful experience as a kid, when I had to sit for two days and nights in a chair, plastered from head to toe with some concoction of my mother's for sunburn (was it baking powder or baking soda?), I keep my big limbs covered. Oh, I get what we call a farmer's tan, forehead, face and neck, but the rest of me is white as the driven snow.

I don't turn around to look behind me at that house. Aside from my sufferment white inside, there is the outside. That beautiful green vine, so much admired by visitors, is climbing the brick wall like a giant squid, pulling the bricks loose one by one, and occasionally hurling one down, just above the back door. At today's rates for repairs, that brickwork will likely cost me more than it cost to build the house, 70 odd years ago.

Let's change the subject. In fact, I think I'll break off for a moment, it's so painful. There's the garbage can to bring in. Maybe I'll get my seven iron out of the car trunk and cut some weeds. That's what I use instead of a hoe.

There, that's better. My swing was right on today. Kept my head down, my eye on the weed, took a slow back swing, and one whole flower head is weedless.

Also pushed the lawn mower under the spruce tree, to keep the rain off, and picked up the grandkids' inflatable swim pool, which, after a week sitting there full

of rain, grass and bugs, left a big round dead patch in the lawn. Good work Bill.

More distractions. A cheeky black squirrel, looking for a handout. Dumb cat rubbing against my leg, looking for the same. Three ugly crackles, striding splay-footed and insolent, across my lawn, pecking up the fresh grass seed.

Alah! What's that noise, down the lane. Better stroll down and see. Great. A Bell telephone truck and two young fellows digging a post hole. Entire neighborhood watches. Machinery digs hole, creeps pole with ease, old timers comment scornfully. Remember when you dug them by hand, with a spoon shovel. Brutal hard work.

There's the fire engine! Better jump in the car and follow. Holy old jimpin'! Why do they let all these crazies follow the fire truck through town at 50 miles an hour? Somebody might be killed.

Wasn't much. Just some housewife let the fat bull over on the stove while she was watching her soap opera. But it might have been a good one, like the old lumber mill last week. That was a dandy.

Should get back to the column. Oh, no. There's the old battleaxe at the back door, wailing. "What are you doing out there, just sitting around enjoying yourself, when you know I'm in agony? Least you could do is put a washing through and sweep the kitchen floor, it's filthy. And you haven't brought me any fresh tea for two hours."

Oh, lordy. Who's this pulling up? It can't be it. It's those people we met at a party two years ago and insisted with great fervor and sincerity that if they were ever in our neck of the woods, to look us up. Look at that. Three kids and a dog. Oh, dear.

Perhaps you can understand now why I hate being a schoolteacher and having the summer off and having to write my column out under the trees, instead of writing it at my desk in mid-winter.

OUR READERS WRITE:

Give people responsibility

I have been waiting to read some letters about the end of the Recreation Advisory Committee. Since no one else has written on the subject I will. Its death is not surprising. Why would anyone with any sense at all want to waste time sitting on a committee with no power and no responsibility. Only naive bureaucrats could imagine such a committee would work.

In the days before regional government and Halton Hills, people in Acton did things for themselves with the blessing of successive councils. No longer does that confidence and trust exist. Now we poor peasants are not smart enough to run our own affairs and must have "experts" elected or otherwise to guide our every footstep.

If council wants a recreational committee, or whatever, with contacts in the community to establish community oriented recreation, then it should give such a local committee a budget, power to spend it on plans it develops, and the responsibility of seeing that the plans work as successfully as possible. This is the way things were done formerly in Acton; they worked pretty well and there was never a shortage of people to participate.

Halton Hills Council however will not do anything as old fashioned or radical as giving people responsibility.

As Chairman of the tennis courts steering committee I saw exactly how much trust and responsibility was delegated to a group of volunteer citizens by our new form of government - absolutely none.

While I'm at it I'll tell you something peculiar. In the Soviet Union years back it was decided that the common people really didn't have the know how (intelligence) to run their own farms, factories, and affairs. Experts were brought in to tell everyone

how to do everything, all individual identity was put aside for the good of the whole. This process was called collectivization.

The Ontario Conservative government, which believes in individual initiative, in doing things for yourself, in being your own responsible master, has invented regional government. Small groups of people in little

towns are not thought capable now of looking after their own affairs. Experts are required and well paid ones at that. Does that sound familiar?

Our self sufficient pioneer forefathers, conservative to a man, would not stand a chance in today's conservative Ontario. Strange, isn't it? I wonder if that Conservative huffeguyman, Socialism, would by any different?

George Elliott

Put horse before cart

What happened to Mill St. reconstruction when business was slow? Halton Hills council has decided it will take place during peak retail selling (October through December).

Meanwhile a group of retailers and other citizens are looking into a scheme of general improvement of the downtown

core. This will probably include widening of the sidewalks, planting of trees etc.

We've waited this long, can't we put the horse before the cart and get the improvement plan implemented before tearing up the street?

—Bewildered

Donations stay in Canada

121 East 24th Street
Hamilton, Ontario
July 25, 1976.

Dear Sir:

I am sure you are aware of the Jerry Lewis Muscular Dystrophy Telethon which takes place each Labour Day weekend. It is the only charity where people across the nation join in the united effort, at a specified time to defeat Muscular Dystrophy.

Every year the people of your area have given generously to our cause. When the phones start ringing in our Southern Ontario Headquarters your town and

surrounding areas are familiar addresses to our operators.

Please inform the people of your area of the gratitude of the Muscular Dystrophy Association and even more so, the value their donations have - not only in the fight against MD, but in the knowledge given to the families affected that indeed they are not alone, many do care deeply.

Thank You!
Sincerely,
(Mrs.) Agnes Turbitt
Muscular Dystrophy Co-ordinator,
Southern Ontario

P.S. Canadian donations stay in Canada.

The Free Press Back Issues

20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of September 6, 1956

Constable Robert K. Moreau is replacing Constable Charles McLean on the Milton detachment of the O.P.P. for six weeks, while Constable McLean attends Provincial Police College in Toronto.

The Mitchell reunion was held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Alex Mitchell, R.R.3, Georgetown, on Saturday. There was an attendance of about 91 with members of the family from Ottawa, Niagara Falls, Welland, Woodstock, Waldemar, Windsor, Toronto, Georgetown, Milton, Eden Mills and Acton present.

Rev. Andrew McKenzie is being inducted as the new minister of Knox Presbyterian church this evening. Other ministers will assist in the service being followed by a reception. Mr. and Mrs. McKenzie, who come from Islington, moved into the manse this week. They have five children, Joanne 12, Alan, six, Marsha, five, Bonnie, two and Glen one. The three oldest started school here Tuesday.

After spending the summer visiting relatives and travelling throughout England, Mr. Wilson Altonby arrived back early this week.

Mr. and Mrs. Harold Fanson, Mrs. N.J. Reed and Mr. Clifford Reed, Guelph, Mr. and Mrs. Roy Ballentine and daughter Mary Jane, Huttonville and Mr. and Mrs. Leslie Ballentine and Tommy and Tara were visiting at the Ballentine's during the past week.

50 years ago

Taken from an issue of the Free Press of August 26, 1926

One Wednesday, August 18 Blue Springs Park was the picturesque scene of an interesting gathering. It was the occasion of the first Leslie reunion and over three hundred persons assembled to enrol on the clan roster.

Mr. H.W. Hinton and his daughter, Miss Edna, arrived home from their trip to England on Monday evening. About two months were spent in the home of his boyhood and they had many pleasant experiences and enjoyable meetings with relatives and old friends.

In four weeks Acton Fall Fair will be on. The prize list of specials is now in the printer's hands. The completed list will be issued as soon as possible.

Misses Delaine Gibbons and Mary Gibbons of St. Michaels Hospital were weekend visitors at their homes here.

Mr. George Hills announces the engagement of his youngest daughter Myrtle May to Mr. Frank J. Browning, Toronto, the marriage to take place this month.

Little Miss Connie Holland who has been spending a few holidays at the home of her grandparents in Preston, returned home on Sunday.

100 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press Thursday, August 24, 1876

Mr. L.R. Little, county school inspector, started on Tuesday morning for Parry Sound and Algoma, where he will remain a few weeks on business connected with the organization of school sections in these districts.

Five headlines in Succession, four of them all in capitals: HORRID MURDER in Esqueving, Robert Whiteside, a well-known old settler, found dead on his own farm. The skull horribly smashed with an axe. The Midnight Assassin Suspected but Not Yet Convicted. The Deed Enshrouded in Mystery. Sad End of a Wealthy Miser. (There follow five long columns of type and a map concerning the murder, including detailed evidence given at the inquest at Clark's Hotel, Silver Creek. The victim's son was arrested, as well as another man.)

(The editor arrived while the doctor, jury newly-sworn in and the editor of the Georgetown Herald were viewing the body. Full details are given of its appearance, and the run-down condition of the farm.)

Editorial: Of all the atrocious murders that have been committed in Canada during the past few months, perhaps the most diabolical of any was that committed in Esqueving, Sunday night. No word of ours can fitly describe the sickening sight that presented itself on the farm of Mr. Robt. Whiteside, or the feeling of indignation aroused by the thought of utter depravity that must have existed in the breast of the cowardly assassin who inhumanly evil hand in the blood of the poor decrepit old man. The only circumstance which may render the deed less horrible in the minds of the community is the well-known miserly and otherwise peculiar character of the victim. (And so on.)

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Business and Editorial Office



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