

Free Press Editorial Page

Show window of town

It has often been said the main street of a community is its show place. Downtown Acton with its asphalt sidewalks and chipped curbs has long left visitors with a poor impression. There has also been so much construction in the downtown section it has hurt local businesses to a marked degree.

That's why it is good to see the last stages of the construction on Acton's main stem nearing completion.

New curbs are being installed, the new red brick interlocking sidewalks are being laid and it won't be long (We hope) before a new coat of asphalt is stretching from the CN tracks through the downtown business section.

They are much needed improvements and should add to the business centre as a place to shop pleasantly in this community. Some store owners such as Acton Delicatessen and Acton Family Billiards have already renovated the exterior of their premises. We understand other store owners plan renovations outside when street and sidewalk construction is finished.

There are those who will complain about the new red brick sidewalks but we believe they add an

attractive new dimension to the business section which can be enhanced further by pride in business places. This is not always easy with absentee landlords holding purse strings, but even a fresh coat of paint on store fronts and renovated interiors will attract shoppers and revive interest.

Those communities which have lost their downtown business sections to plaza developments on the outskirts or outside the boundaries often moan over the loss of the old downtown. They let them become seedy looking and lost clientele. Acton is in the fortunate position of being able to spruce up and shape up before any malls or plazas appear, keeping the focus on the existing business centre.

An attractive business centre will also attract new business and make available to the community goods and services which may not be available at the present time. Consequently the improvements planned by the Business Improvement Area Committee are designed to assist both businessmen and shoppers.

Acton may soon have a reputation proving what a small town with limited resources can do with its business section, tailoring the need to suit their purse.

Summer menaces

A typical drive down one of the busier residential streets in Acton means a driver, going the posted 30 miles an hour speed limit, often has to slow down to ten miles an hour or come to a complete stop at least four or five times.

In one block there are one or two youngsters who think the road was made for their skateboards. They continue, almost every day, to ride the slabs down the middle of the road. If and when they do ride at the side of the road, the board invariably gets away from them, and shoots out across the road, into the path of oncoming cars with its owner not too far behind.

People walking three abreast, on the road, ignoring existing sidewalks also cause problems. When they come to a parked car, instead of walking on the sidewalk side of the vehicle, they walk abreast, on the road side.

A driver would have to be an Evel Knievel to negotiate through the walkers at any speed. The law states that when walking, where there are no sidewalks, a person must face the traffic.

Bicyclists are among the most dangerous groups on the road. Even though the number of bicycle related deaths have increased 50 per cent between 1974 and 1975, there are still people who do not even know the simplest laws. Some riders on this particular street would have a tough time passing their beginners licence driving a car. They ride on the wrong side of the road. The law says a bicycle is a vehicle under the Highway Traffic Act, and must therefore ride on the right hand side of the road, with the traffic. Only one per-

son is to be on a bicycle at one time, unless it is a tandem bike. Local police stations have pamphlets listing the rules of the road for bicycles.

In Acton it seems most riders forget the rules of the road and do the opposite.

The most dangerous practice on this particular residential street is very small children, including mere toddlers, playing chicken on tricycles with cars. This of course is not an organized plan. It seems they start in driveways and see who can be the first to reach the ditch, on the other side of the road.

The children are so small, a motorist cannot see them in a driveway, unless he scrutinizes each driveway. In some areas of town this is necessary, with tricycles coming out of hidden driveways, out of control.

Drivers have enough to look after what with pedestrians, bicycles, skateboard riders, parked cars, and other vehicles with the same problems. They should not be expected to have to watch driveways also.

Whose responsibility is it to educate these youngsters, and adults. The local police and schools have already done as much as they can to drill safety factors into the heads of children. However, no matter how much they hear it at school, children follow the example set for them at home.

Parents have to teach their children. Even though parents cannot keep their eyes on a toddler at all times, they should at least impress upon them the fact that roads are not safe to play on.

Does Acton have to have death before parents will smarten up?

Region needs re-evaluation

Many people in Acton have been chafing ever since regional government was implemented in Halton. Their attitude was apparent in the brief presented to the committee of Halton Regional Council reviewing Bill 151, the documents which set up the new form of government here.

Acton's main complaint has been the loss of identity experienced since they were forced into a partnership with Georgetown and Esquesing. Residents feel out of the swim of things with only three members on a 13 man council, geographically isolated and unable to effectively control events in their own community.

Probably the most serious criticism is rapid and escalating costs which irritate the other concerns and the belief that services have not increased accordingly.

The brief says, "It is our con-

sidered opinion that our current system of local government in Halton Hills and regionally in Halton has become too costly to maintain at its current rate of growth in taxes."

The brief calls for better accountability so the average citizen can understand the financial operations of regional government. It also calls for an independent, over-seeing auditing body, reporting directly to Halton taxpayers to increase understanding and control of municipal spending.

Study for the brief has been going on for several months and some of the concerns voiced by the Actonians for Action committee could be applied to both Georgetown and Esquesing as well.

We believe, along with the Acton committee, that it is time for regional government to be re-evaluated, to iron out bugs which



LOOK ON MY works oh ye mighty and despair: this decrepit barn illustrates the transience of Shelley was talking about a king and his pride, but human works just as surely.



Sugar and Spice

by bill smiley

In l'affaire Trudeau, my sympathies are all with our Prime Minister, whatever I may think of him politically. It's tough for an old turkey to hang on to a beautiful chick. I know. I've been trying to do it for years.

My wife is beautiful. And I'm not saying that proudly, or because I'm trying to butter her up. I'm saying it as a fact. And I'm sure everyone who knows her will agree.

I am not tall, dark and handsome. I am short, white and rather ugly. Or, as we ugly people say, my face has a lot of character.

So, as you may imagine, I've had a lot of trouble hanging on to her. Not that she's a philanthropist, extending charity to any male who comes along. Nor is she a pilate, flirting freely in order to stamp on my ego. She isn't even a philanthropist (the world I was looking for in the first place.)

No, there's little chance of her running off with another man. She knows to the penny how much insurance and pension I represent. She's not going to throw that away for anybody less than Robert Redford, and we don't see too much of him in the crowd we hang around with.

And still I have trouble hanging on to her. It's not in the marital department. It's in the arms department.

I have trouble hanging on to her arms.

when she's going to hit me, or tear out some of my scanty locks, or clobber me with a telephone or something.

When we were first married, I didn't have so much trouble. I was stronger than she, and I could hang on to both her wrists, put my head down to avoid a butt on the nose, and raise one knee in front of me to ward off a kick in the groin.

But years of sedentary and licentious living have made me a shadow of my former self, and she, like most women, has got steadily stronger. Look around, and you'll agree that most women of a certain age could take their husbands, in one round, with one arm tied behind.

To add injury to insult, she has been doing yoga exercises of late, and has developed muscles neither of us ever knew existed.

She is a long-suffering woman, do doubt about it. How would you like to be married to me for 30 years? But you can be long suffering and have a short fuse, one of life's little dichotomies. She has a fuse about three-quarters of an inch in length.

Take last night, for example. She had dinner all ready but not cooked. Vegetables in the pot, ready to turn on. Chicken livers in the pan, salted, peppered, floured, and ready for a quick fry in butter. French fries all ready to dunk in the boiling oil.

We sat down in the living room for one of

those intimate pre-dinner chats that are just as much a part of marriage as post-coital depression, whatever that is. I read it in a book.

She recently lost her cleaning lady, and that, coupled with a visit from the grand-boys, had put the house cleaning 10 light years behind schedule, if you believed it all.

I listened with my usual interest and sympathy, occasionally interrupting to read her fascinating bits from the newspaper I was reading.

Finally, I got the drift. "Sweetie! You're exhausted. Let me get the dinner." Overriding her protests, I strode into the kitchen, calling over my shoulder: "Just relax. You know I can handle everything."

I kept up a cheery banter from the kitchen. "Is that all the vegetables we're going to have? Migawd, there's enough chicken liver here to feed a threshing gang."

Not a sound from inside. I thought she was lying back, maybe reading the women's page.

Turned on the cooking oil. On high. Got the veg. boiling happily. Put the chicken livers on high for that first golden searing. Took a small libation from the cupboard, to keep my head clear.

Dumped the french fries in the pot of hot cooking oil. Clouds of smoke, spatters of grease on walls and self. Seems you're supposed to put them a wire basket or something.

Screams of rage, anguish and bad temper. Pot of fries torn from my grasp and carried to backyard as billows of smoke polluted neighborhood.

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have developed and right the legislation which has never showed any tangible benefits. Whether this means Acton should leave the Halton Hills trinity or stay, is something for an independent body, completely separate from vested political or other vested interests to study.

Ontario Treasurer Darcy McKeough has long maintained that costs in municipalities not yet in regional government have increased almost at the same rate as those where it has been implemented. Mr. McKeough's figures have been disputed by the Acton committee which has done some

PICTURE LOANED to the Free Press by Grace Nelles shows students in S.S. No. 12 Esquesing school (Lorne School) in 1943. Teacher, in the back row, third from the right is Donald Switzer, who retired recently after 35 years of teaching. Recognize any faces? The picture belongs to Mrs. Nelles' sons.

investigating in other municipalities but they don't make their case as strong as it could be without their inclusion.

Acton councillors Pat McKenzie and Peter Marks have been quoted as saying that if Acton wants to go it alone their costs would rise dramatically with the present level of service. That may be so, a committee member points out, but Acton cut the cloth to suit when

they were autonomous. He could see no reason why there should be such a drastic change.

In any event it is time for a complete serious re-evaluation of regional government both by Queen's Park, the region, and the municipalities involved, to see whether much touted benefits have actually occurred, or the whole exercise has been merely a costly error. - The Independent, Georgetown.

The Free Press Back Issues

10 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Wednesday, July 5, 1967.
Acton Legion Chorallers were a big hit at Expo '67 this week. They arrived home last night after several days of singing, entertaining and sightseeing.

In a formal service in Trinity United Church last Thursday evening, the new minister, the Rev. Gordon Turner, was inducted.

Six Acton and Rockwood residents, aged eight to 19 received minor injuries early on Monday morning when the car in which they were riding went through a stop sign and into a ditch on the Guelph Line at Eden Mills.

The Williamson clan held a centennial picnic at the home farm of Mr. and Mrs. George Wallace on Sunday, June 25. Relatives were there from Burlington, Acton, Toronto, Georgetown and other locations. A wonderful time was spent, especially meeting relatives who had not seen each other for some years.

Mr. and Mrs. A. M. MacPherson, Mrs. Mabel Symon and Mrs. Marguerite Taylor visited with the former's son, Mr. Archie MacPherson and family at Clarkson recently.

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Perry were at Expo on the weekend and heard the Chorallers perform. Mr. and Mrs. Jim Spielvogel and family, of Montreal, and Brian Robertson of Ospringle, who works in Montreal also went to the exhibition to hear the Acton group.

20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press Thursday, July 11, 1957.

Mayor E. Tyler reported this morning confirmation on the sale of a large industrial acreage in Acton. It is understood the industrial site will be developed within a short time and the location of the industry in Acton is finalized. It was explained no further details could be released at this time "but the picture looks very good," according to the Mayor.

Charles Kelly Browne, 87, Honorary Past Grand Master, R.B.P., Ontario West of the Orange Lodge, Past District Master, Past County Master and Past Commander of the Scarlet will be marching in the July 12 parade at Oakville this Saturday with Guelph Lodge No. 1331, C.K. as he is known around town, has not missed a parade since he was eight years old and walks in every one.

Bruce Andrews of Acton, member of the Guelph Legion Track Club, won the Canadian juvenile one mile championship under 18 years at the Canadian Relay Championships held on Saturday at Varsity Stadium Toronto. His time was four minutes, 31 seconds. This is a remarkable time for Bruce who celebrated his 16th birthday on Friday.

Mr. and Mrs. Earl Lambert, Mrs. Nelson Lambert, Acton and Mrs. Hector Guthrie of Toronto left on Saturday for a two week visit with Mr. and Mrs. Len Lambert of Dartmouth, Nova Scotia.

100 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, June 28, 1877.

The members of the Baptist church here are neither very numerous nor very wealthy, and they consequently have not been in a position to support a regular pastor. With considerable liberality they recently undertook to expend a considerable money in putting their chapel in a much more comfortable condition of repair. The old benches have been taken out and replaced by comfortable seats, the pulpit remodelled and the inside neatly painted and decorated. On the Sunday re-opening services morning and evening were attended by large congregations.

On Monday evening a Soiree was held in the Drill Shed under the auspices of the Baptist denomination. It was largely attended and an abundant supply of excellent provisions was furnished. Elder Cook gave the history of the church building which some 19 years ago was moved here from Ballinacree.

The money expended in repairs was about \$250, but many members had given freely of their time. Subscriptions and collections have amounted to \$155, leaving about \$100 yet to be provided for.

With some further remarks a subscription paper was circulated and the required amount was soon subscribed.

The Rockwood people are likely to have a lively time on Dominion Day. There are various games and amusements for which \$100 has been offered in prizes, a Pic-Nic, under the auspices of the Knights of Good Templars; a dramatic performance of Ten Nights in a Bar Room, and a social Hop at night. The Acton Brass Band has been engaged.

THE ACTON FREE PRESS

PHONE 853-2010

Business and Editorial Office



1976 award winner

Founded in 1875 and published every Wednesday at 50 Wilcox St., Acton, Ontario. Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulation, the Canadian Community Newspapers Association and the Ontario Weekly Newspapers Association. Advertising rates on request. Subscriptions payable in advance, \$7.50 in Canada, \$25.00 in all countries other than Canada, single copies 15 cents; carrier delivery in Acton 15 cents per week. Second class mail Registration Number 0511. Advertising is accepted on the condition that, in the event of typographical error, that portion of the advertising space occupied by the erroneous item, together with reasonable allowance for signature, will not be charged for but the balance of the advertisement will be paid for at the applicable rate. In the event of a typographical error advertising goods or services at a wrong price, goods or services may not be sold. Advertising is money so offer to sell, and may be withdrawn at any time. D.B.S. Printing & Publishing Co. Ltd. David R. Dils, Publisher

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