

Third major blaze

Fire guts townhouse leaves four homeless

A family of four is homeless and two other homes damaged after fire gutted a Kingham Rd. townhouse early Saturday morning.

Mrs. Ena Brackenridge of 193 Kingham, awoke at approximately 6:45 a.m. and smelled smoke. She alerted her husband Colin and they escaped through the flames carrying their children, age six and two. Colin Brackenridge received cuts to his hands from breaking windows, according to fire prevention officer Larry Brassard.

Firefighters arrived on the scene within minutes and evacuated residents in the row of townhouses. The two adjoining units received damage, one with exterior fire damage and the other with interior smoke and water damage. Mr. Brassard credits fire walls between the units as preventing further damage. A neighbour turned in the alarm after hearing the Brackenridges' shouts.

The blaze is believed to have started in the living room, the officer says, but the cause is not yet determined. It is currently under investigation, he said.

Damage is set at \$50,000 bringing Acton's total fire damage in two weeks to over \$200,000 in three fires. Two major fires broke out within 37 hours of each other in early February, leaving two families homeless and two people in hospital.

Smoke detectors were in the townhouse, but according to Mr. Brassard, were not yet installed.

Mrs. Brackenridge and the children are staying with her sister in Toronto, while Mr. Brackenridge is living with his brother on Young St. in Acton. He will return to work today (Wednesday) in Rexdale.

Donations of toys, clothes, furniture and places to stay are coming in from friends and strangers alike, says Mrs. Brackenridge. The Lions club donated \$250. She is still shaken up over the loss of her home, but is overwhelmed by the generosity of everyone she told the Free Press.

The family expects to stay in an apartment in Acton while their townhouse is being rebuilt. Neighbors rallied swiftly to help provide necessities for the Brackenridges. The first donation came at 10 to eight in the morning, Saturday. Neighbor Jean Martin said donations were arriving all day long. She has clothing, food, drapes and dishes in her home ready for the family to use when they find a place to live. Over \$200 was also given Saturday morning by sympathizers. One person even donated the tea bags to replace those being used in such quantities Saturday.

Mr. Martin said young Colin, who is six, was particularly unhappy about losing his bike. The neighbors reported Tuesday Colin now has a bike, from an "anonymous donor." He and his young sister Samantha, two, lost all their toys. Four neighbors are spearheading the gathering of items. Anyone who wishes to help may call Jean Martin at 853-3425 or Val Caissie at 853-3026.



ACTON VOLUNTEER Firefighters sprayed gallons and gallons of water into the home of Mr. and Mrs. Colin Brackenridge, 193 Kingham, Saturday, as fire destroyed their townhouse. The

unit to the right of their home received exterior fire damage, and the unit to the left received interior smoke and water damage. John Tyler took the photograph.

Target!

\$400,000 chop from budget

The merits of a parks and recreation department \$27,000 master plan project, and other proposals were debated during a special Halton Hills council budget meeting this morning (Wednesday).

Councillors must slice \$400,000 from the town's proposed budget.

Consideration of the parks project and the 1978 operating budget were bumped to this morning's session from the regular Finance Administration Committee meeting Monday night.

The FAC decision to let the special meeting decide the fate of the parks and recre-

ation project came after Mayor Tom Hill fired some flak at recreation director Glen Gray and following Georgetown councillor Roy Booth tried unsuccessfully to have the project shot down.

Booth cited the financial restraints the town is facing in his move to drop the \$27,000 item from the recreation department budget.

The master plan idea before the committee is the second half of a two-year project. Maps from the first half of the project were tabled before council last week. One item which received stormy response suggested cemeteries be eventually

used for recreation.

The map work was supported with an \$8,000 grant from the federal government.

From talks with the town planner Mayor Hill said he had been given to understand the entire exercise was not to cost more than the \$8,000. Now it's \$27,000, he said.

"That information is totally incorrect", Gray contended.

Hill said he wanted Gray and the town planner in his office the next day to sort out the differences. "I'm gonna find out the whole damned gist of this", said Hill.

Acton councillor Peter Marks suggested the committee ask planner Mario

Venditti for his estimate of the project's cost.

Some of the features of the second phase of the project would include a set of planning guidelines, an assessment of current practices, alternate concepts and an inventory of open space, facilities and programs.

Taking into consideration the possible grants the town could earn by taking on the project, councillor Marks said the plan seems to make sense.

The project is not needed, according to Booth. "We've got, in my opinion, all we need for an official plan", he said.

Third donation from Lions

With a third family left homeless in another fire this past week, Lions club members extended their assistance even further Monday. A fund had been set up to aid the Van Merkestein and Cavic families, and this had grown to \$655.

The third fire was at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Colin Brackenridge and family on Saturday, and the Lions decided to give another donation of \$250 to them. This donation is apart from the original fund. Vic Bristow presented the cheque Tuesday, to aid the family in re-establishing themselves.

The Lions also decided their fund would close out April 30. The money in the special account was split, with \$325 given to the Van Merkesteins and \$325 to the Cavics. Any more donations

will also be split between the two families.

Mr. Van Merkestein is a member of the Lions Club and his friends got the ball rolling soon after the fire. Their first purchase was a replacement pair of glasses for Cory, so he could read while in the hospital.

He was released from hospital Tuesday morning, and was back in the family business, the Chicken and Pizza Spot, right away. They are living with friends and will be looking for new accommodations right away.

The Lions' original donation was \$500, later augmented by donations from any others who wished to help out.

The Lions' three donations to fire victims comes from money they have raised through community projects.



FLAMES LIGHT UP the morning sky Saturday as fire gutted the home of Mr. and Mrs. Colin Brackenridge, 193 Kingham Rd. When firefighters arrived on the scene, the house was completely engulfed in flames, threatening adjoining units. This picture was taken by John Tyler, Kingham Rd., just as the firefighters arrived.

License rush over, Kentner can relax

Bud Kentner has just gone through his first license sticker rush from the government's side of the counter and he admits he is a little glad it is over. Mr. Kentner has taken over the duties of the motor vehicle bureau from Watson's Music Store.

He was surprised that the office was busier Monday than it was Tuesday. At the busiest of times, waiting time for a sticker was only about five minutes, he said.

"I had a couple of really good ladies helping me," he said.

From all over People were coming to the

Acton office from all over to get stickers. Mr. Kentner suspects some of them were just travelling and stopped in for their stickers, but some told him they come here every year to avoid the lineups. "They say they can come here from Toronto, get their sticker, and drive back faster than they can get the sticker in Toronto," he said.

Lion or lamb?

March 1... another special day for weathercasting. Is March arriving like a lion or a lamb? By today's end we'll know how March will depart.

There isn't much Canadians can do about the weather except talk about it, and March 1 gives another opportunity. Today is also St. David's Day.



CAROL BROADHURST of Kortar Kennels gets an affectionate kiss from Champion Siberian Husky Cavalier. Mrs. Broadhurst has no favorites among her more than 30 dogs and treats each one as a house pet. For full story and more pictures, see page 11.

Cemeteries for recreation? not in Halton Hills—council

Regardless of what's done in Europe and other parts of the world, Halton Hills cemeteries will never be used for recreation land, Halton Hills planning board told a consultant last Tuesday who has prepared the first phase of the town's master recreation plan.

Councillors examined maps of Georgetown, Acton and Esquipping, showing lands currently used for recreation facilities and property owned by the town which has recreation potential.

Questioning by Mayor Tom Hill of the consultant, Rob Lockhart, revealed cemetery land was included in the potential recreation property.

Hill said it was "ridiculous" to include cemeteries in the master plan.

Lockhart countered in Europe, other countries and even Ontario cemeteries are viewed as valuable recreation land. He said the plan looks to the future, adding cemeteries are as valuable for recreation as shopping plazas and other facilities not traditionally thought of as recreation.

Planning board chairman Roy Booth said Lockhart could forget about cemeteries in the master plan because council would "never go for that".

Hill, who was visibly annoyed, said there was a big

difference between cemeteries and plazas since people are walking around in plazas.

Lockhart said everything that is done now on recreation affects recreation in Halton Hills for the next 20 years.

He explained the first phase was a study of existing recre-

ation facilities, including the first detailed maps ever for the town, and that was necessary before any planning could be done. Information gathered for the recreation master plan will have impact on both the town and region official plans.

(Continued on page 2)

Push again truck bypass

The town is going to go after the province to build a truck route around Acton again.

The long discussed by-pass was brought up again by Councillor Les Duby last Tuesday at Halton Hills planning board.

Mr. Duby noted Acton is in a "crucial situation" with two major highways meeting in a small town.

Planner Mario Venditti agreed a by-pass is needed for Acton. He noted the engineer has in the past been

working on this project with the province and suggested he continue with it.

Planning board agreed the town engineer should make a submission to the Ministry of Transportation and Communications to have the by-pass proposal examined again.

Mr. Duby supported this plan stating he wants to get the by-pass "off the ground".

Cancer banner

A cancer month banner will go up in April across Mill Street at John Street.

Monday Halton Hills works committee approved the banner for the Acton Branch of the Canadian Cancer Society. It will be put up by Acton Hydro and will advertise fund raising during Cancer Month.

The Cancer Society will have to contact Acton Legion for permission to have the cancer flag flown at the cenotaph.

Good news

The Churchill correspondent, Joanne Turner, reports groundhogs and crows in her district this week.



SUSAN CRAIG enjoys a relaxing moment during the M. Z. Bennett winter carnival Friday as she helps other students make a huge mural. See page 9 for more pictures and story.

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