

The Acton Free Press

Founded in 1875

Don McDonald, Publisher

Published every Wednesday by Inland Publishing Co. Limited at 59 Willow Street, Acton, Ontario, L7J 2M2. Telephone (519) 853-2010. Subscriptions: Single copies 20¢ each, \$10.00 per year in Canada, \$30.00 in all countries other than Canada.

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Loiterers a problem

Chamber of Commerce officials and representatives of Halton Regional Police are meeting tonight to discuss mutual problems and hopefully arrive at some solutions.

The Chamber, in a letter to the police, recently noted they were opposed to initiating police patrols from Georgetown instead of the Acton office. They also brought out the considerable problem in downtown Acton where loitering has become a way of life. It creates a negative appearance for visitors, discourages new business and poses a problem for shoppers who find store entrances barred by loiterers and sidewalks sometimes impassable.

The Chamber notes, "Obviously this can only have a negative effect on the everyday business in the downtown area."

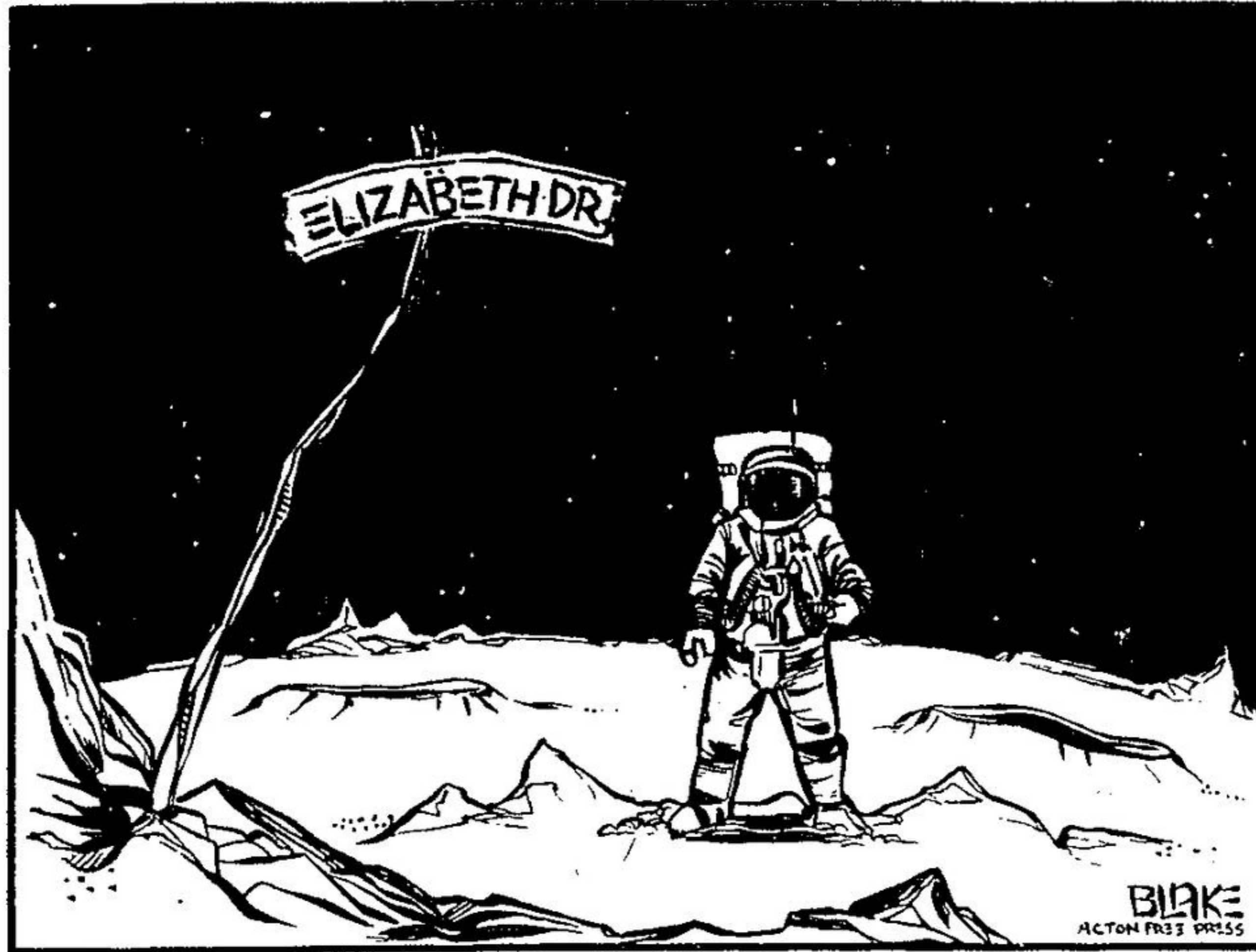
The Chamber also suggested possible measures such as foot patrols, increased visibility of local officers, letters to families stressing parental responsibilities for children, no loitering on main streets and other solutions to solve the problems.

Although the problem is different now it is interesting to note the 100 years ago column of The Free Press has an item which shows it is nothing new. "A number of unruly boys congregate nightly at the corner of Mill and Main," the Free Press of 1879 admonishes citizens.

Previous attempts to control loitering have not been enforceable because bylaws contain loopholes. It is often difficult to distinguish between who is loitering and who is simply spending a few minutes chatting downtown. Judges are inclined to be lenient with offenders.

If it were simply a case of loitering, merchants would not be upset but it has become a ritual for many young people to hang out on the streets and litter, block pedestrians and discourage business. There is also much vandalism.

Police and Chamber have to come up with a solution. It is incumbent on the police to provide protection for citizens as well as discourage loiterers. It is done in other communities. It can be done here. There are areas for loitering. They are not downtown.



Smiley's dept. — happy, relaxed

Every year, when July rolls around, I breathe a pretty heavy sigh of relief. Not because school is over and there's a long holiday ahead. That's nice. But I can teach English with one head tied behind my back. And I'm not that wild about holidays.

No, the reason for the relief is that I have managed to wiggle my way through another year of being a department head without having any deaths, suicides or nervous breakdowns among my staff.

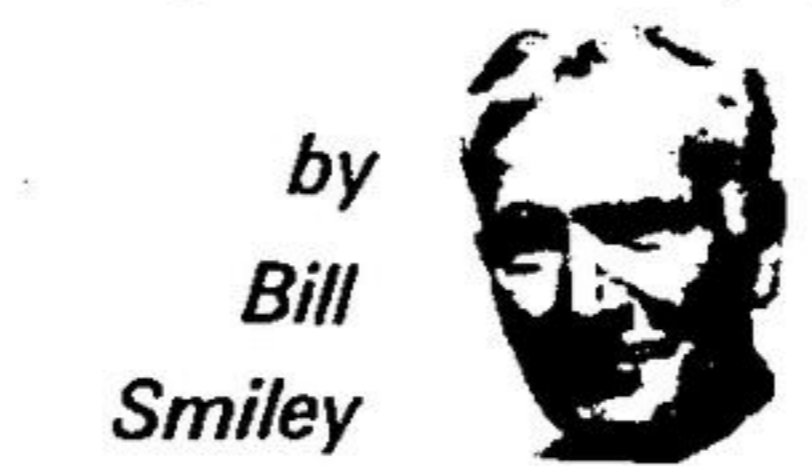
Being head of a large department in a large high school would seem to be a rather enviable position. You are paid extra for it, and usually teach one less class than the other teachers.

Those are the good aspects. But there are others, and they are not all a piece of cake. I won't bother moaning about the incessant paper work, the scrambling to stay within a meagre budget with cost of books soaring steadily, the taking of inventory of about 20,000 books. Those are the drudge jobs, and everyone has some of this in his work.

It's the personalities involved that make the job something less than a sinecure. A department head must be a combination of Momma, Polonius, Machiavelli, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, a priest, Napoleon and a touch of a psychiatrist.

For one thing, English teachers are a bit more creative, articulate, and rebellious than most of their contemporaries, perhaps because they continually deal with ideas, not facts. Ideas are shifty things, and the conveying of them to students is more slippery than the teaching of more pragmatic subjects: science, math, geography, shops.

As a result, the English department head must serve as a wailing wall for his teachers who loudly and sometimes tearfully vent their frustrations at their inability to impart their own skills to their students. He must oil the joints of his department frequently, when some of its



by Bill Smiley

members seem about to come to blows with each other. He must act as a buffer between them and the administration. And he must stand up for them vigorously, when someone is trying to shaft them.

Now, I hope you are not expecting me to say that I do all these things. A pat on the back here, a word of praise there, a shoulder to cry on, long one-to-one talks to restore their confidence, a stern reprimand when necessary, frequent department meetings where we "talk things out."

Not at all. If I tried to do all those things, I'd have been committed or had a heart attack long ago. I just leave them alone, let them crack up or break down, and try to show them, with invincible calm, my old theory that there is nothing, absolutely nothing in this world to get excited about.

It seems to work pretty well. I am rather shy and don't get involved in their personal lives, except to listen once in a while, if I can't avoid it. When they are seriously ill, I don't bug them, don't even go to see them.

We've had three department members with serious heart trouble in the last three years. They're all back on the job, better than ever. Probably because I left them alone, didn't show any particular sympathy, and let them solve it themselves.

When a couple of members are at each other's throat, I tell them to sort it out themselves, not come running to me for help.

We'd never think of having a meeting at which we "let it all hang out." We have the

shortest department meetings in the school. Most of them are taken up with ribaldry, a little business, and a quick acceptance of a motion for adjournment.

We have quite an assortment. Three working mothers. One artist. One student who has been taking extremely difficult courses for several years. One poet. One guy writing a novel. One syndicated columnist. Three of us are former newspaper people. One lady teacher is a dogged and determined member of the salary committee.

We have a devoted Catholic and a couple of agnostics. We have a mixture of racial backgrounds: Polish, Scottish, Irish, Greek, French-Canadian and German.

Occasionally, one or two members of the department need a good blast for recalcitrance, mopey or gawk. But I am psychologically unable to ream somebody out, and the trouble usually goes away, like bad weather.

Once in a while, when I become a little depressed at the way they are draining me, without knowing it, I take out a booklet entitled "Duties of a Department Head." This gives me a good laugh, when I realize that I am a lousy department head, and I feel better.

There is only one area in which I fulfill my function. And this is a holdover from wartime. A good officer always defends the men under him. Unless, of course, they are hopelessly incompetent. When somebody climbs on the back of a member of my department, the usually benevolent Bill Smiley unsheathes his claws, and the attacker backs off.

Some departments have lengthy meetings, terrific infighting, and resultant smolderings. We have the happiest, most relaxed department in the school.

Just want to say thanks, guys, for a good year. And next fall, don't tell me your troubles. Tell your husband or wife or mother or kids, and we'll have another great year.

Arena public facility

A bid by Acton businessmen to take over the operation of Acton arena has been rejected by Halton Hills council. Mayor Peter Pomeroy stated there is no way a public facility would be turned over to private enterprise.

The bid by local businessmen was prompted by a 30 per cent increase in ice rental rates projected for 1979 and since passed by council. The men were also dubious about a \$70,000 deficit in arena operations last year.

Although the suggestion has merit what the businessmen are really saying is that the operational deficit of the arena was a costly and unnecessary imposition on the taxpayers. They feel private enterprise could break even and perhaps make money at the old ice rates. They are critical of the time the arena is shut down with no activity and the use of labor. They believe they could run the operation more efficiently than the town. That may be so but if previous ventures into arena operation are any indication then council is right and the businessmen are wrong.

Private ownership of town arenas in both Milton and Georgetown failed miserably in the 1940's. The former Town of Georgetown allowed private owners to take over the sole Georgetown arena in 1942 and 1943

and Councillor Walter Biehn reminds us they "lost their shirts."

In Milton under a similar agreement with Fred Armstrong, an affluent businessman from that community, it was also a money loser. Efforts were made to bring in all kinds of attractions to draw crowds and patronage, including big name wrestling, but it wasn't long until the old Brown St. arena was back in the town's hands.

The businessmen can point out the Georgetown experience was in the war years when many public operations were strapped for funds and in Milton's case there wasn't the demand or the population to break even at that particular time. However, if they feel they can operate in these days of high demand for ice and arena space with larger populations then it is up to them to provide figures to prove it to the Town, not vice versa. If they can show a case with figures then perhaps council will turn a more sympathetic ear to their suggestion.

Meanwhile, the arena will continue to operate as a public facility. But council is reminded taxpayers are opposed to large increases which they feel unnecessary under a more efficient system than we have now. It's up to the Town to improve the system.

From the Editor's Note Book

by Hartley Coles

This may be my last report from Elizabeth Drive. I could well drown in the catch basin which the town has obligingly scooped out of property in front of our front lawn turning our vista into their version of the water hazard on a tinker's golf course.

It is hard to believe passing motorists are stopping, pedestrians looking into it and telling others in the subdivision who meander down to see a marvel of engineering obviously conceived by someone out to get me and the other half.

I've been thinking of charging admission, hanging a sign out with the words "Coles Canyon" embroidered on silk. Perhaps I could get someone to organize pony rides down the slopes for the kids and my wife could sell lemonade.

Workmen made improvements on the hole Monday, carefully sodding it so the green of their new sod made my lawn look like a World War I battlefield.

The neighbors are all glad it didn't happen to them. One man said "Sue 'em. They've devalued your property."

Another said "Migawd it is hard to believe we have such extraordinary engineering these days."

A colleague said: "Stick up a sign—Skylab reception area". Rot his socks.

Me? I'm still confused.

My tax bills are paid. I don't remember riling the mayor or members of council unduly. The mayor came up to have a look when my neighbors and I asked him to tell us why they didn't finish the road as promised in a letter last year. We got tar and chip and two catch basins were isolated up the road.

Ran out of money, council said. No grants available. Since I also work out of Georgetown I noted a similar project there on Main St. S. also was \$11,227 short of the amount budgeted. Did they stop work and save the \$11,227? No way. They went ahead.

Naturally, the question arises. Wotinell is going on here. Are we second class citizens or something? Why couldn't they finish our road when they had no problem approving it in Georgetown?

As Christopher Columbus must have said when he sighted the new world: "See, geography does matter."

Enough of my problems. They're minuscule compared to those of the "boat people" marooned on the high seas because of inhuman governments and doddering bureaucrats. Some people also oppose bringing more people into the country, although their ancestors certainly had to be immigrants.



Elizabeth Drive improvements gave the editor a new swimming hole.

I'm reminded of this by a recent family reunion which took place in Kitchener's Bingham Park for members of the Gibbons family, immigrants from England in the early 1900's. That was when some Canadians had signs up in factory

windows: "No Englishmen need apply." They came anyway and the family has grown and spread out all over North America like many others in similar straits.

It seems the Gibbons name was really

Gibney when they lived in Ireland and for some reason had to be changed so they could move to England ahead of someone in pursuit.

In any event my grandfather on my mother's side took wife, five kids and about 14 pounds to Canada, landing in a village called Fesserton, near Coldwater where lumbering was the big industry. They slept in a barn the first night here and must have got some impressions of their adopted country.

The Gibbons raised 10 children and as I said earlier they are spread all over this continent and some went back to Britain after marrying airmen here on commonwealth training. Another brother with the name spelled Gibbins also immigrated. His family was there, too.

Reunions are great. One gets to meet relations you never knew existed. Since this was a first effort, an executive was named to have another next year and since most of the original family seemed reluctant to serve those who married into the family got the jobs.

They're trying to grow a family tree and have copies of the log book my grandfather wrote of his years under the sailing masts available for all who want them.

We are already looking forward to next year's event. Digging for roots, I guess.

Back issues

10 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of Wednesday, July 9, 1969.
 Fred Kentner, who retires from Beardmore after 40 years service, was presented with a gift by vice-president Frank Racey of Montreal.

Playground '69 opened at the park Monday. Director is Don Price with leaders Dolores Jordan and Jeff Cooper.

A Limehouse mother of two, Mrs. Barbara Brotherton competed in the powder puff derby air race.

The latest hair styling trends from London were shown to 50 hair stylists at a course at Style Acres Ranch.

Dr. Anthony Kingscote has returned home to Rockwood after completing a second United Nations assignment to Southeast Asia and the Far East.

Churchill church welcomed Rev. Fosbury to their congregation, pledging the support of the whole congregation. Bob Hyde is leaving after a year.

"No end in sight," is how M.P. Rud Whiting described prospects for a summer recess on Parliament Hill.

Cons. Doug Noseworthy is the newest officer on the Acton O.P.P. detachment.

20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press Thursday, July 9, 1959

Thirteen grade 13 students held their graduation dinner at the Y. Frank Cooper, Mary Jane Force, Michael Homer, David Hunter, Michael Hursi, Ruth Landsborough, Shirley Mason, Margaret Morrison, Bruce MacPherson, Dianne Newton, Nancy Skippen, Valene Varey, Marilyn Young and William Johnson. A presentation was made to their teacher Mrs. D.A. Smith and two paintings were presented to the school.

Five Scouts received their Religion in Life awards, troop leader Peter Newton, assistant scout master Lawrence Doby, patrol leaders Bob Hinton and Ricky Currie, John Leatherland, George Ware and Brian Sproun. Rev. Stokroff made the presentations at St. Alban's church.

A newly-installed organ was dedicated at Eden Mills United church.

The angelus now peals from the tower of St. Joseph's church three times a day since the installation of a timing device which rings the bell automatically.

The Water Y's swimming program is back to life, being taught by J.H. Buckland at Doug Mason's dock.

Jack Coyle of Acton is Ontario Legion singles darts champion.

50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of Thursday, July 11, 1929

The results of the entrance examinations are announced this week and 16 out of 20 made honors. Every one of the pupils of Miss M.Z. Bennett was successful in passing. Pupils of neighbouring schools also wrote their examinations at Acton. Those with highest standing are Harvey Hassard, Clara Bauer, Catherine Mackie, George Molozie and Marjorie Near. Others with Honors are Gordon Cook, Amelia Evans, Thos. Gibbons, Laura Hall, Teddy Hansen, Joseph Kelly, Eileen Kowalski, Basil Mellon, Thomas Nichol, Marguerite Roszell, and Murray Smith.

Mr. and Mrs. Bert Mowat have moved to their new home on Frederick St.

The Starkman block at the corner of Mill and Main, comprising Talbot's Hardware and the Empire Cafe, has been improved by painting.

A large quota of Acton folk attended the garden party at Ospringe.

Mr. Richard Harris of Rockwood took a trip to Toronto on his wheel on Saturday, going down in less than four hours and returning in a little over five hours in the evening. He visited friends in the vicinity of the Humber River.

100 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of Thursday, July 10, 1879

School's out till the 18th August. We feel that our village should be protected from vagrants who are constantly loitering about the streets during the day and committing depredations by night.

Again we are called upon to report the destruction of trees, either by good-for-nothing scoundrels or cows allowed to run loose on Bower Ave. and other streets. Doubtless some will claim a vested right in the pasturage of the streets and commons of the Village, but is this trifling advantage to a few to be allowed to stand in the way of having our Village beautified and improved by the planting of trees?

The Board of Trustees met in the school house and approved accounts, Thos. Moore salary for June \$41.17; Miss McKellar \$25; Miss Moore \$22.92.

A number of unruly boys congregate nightly at the corner of Mill and Main. The end of the Zulu war looks more distant than ever.

A large number of Orangemen visited Milton on the 12th. All was quiet in Montreal. Over 3,000 were in the procession in Toronto.