

# At \$75 a year serving on council a breeze

If you have never been involved in municipal politics, you should have a go. Run for anything from dog-catcher to mayor. If you lose, it will be good for your ego. If you win, it will be good for your humility.

I speak, as always, from personal experience. For two years I served on a town council. It was illuminating. If not very enlightening.

I was elected, of course, by acclamation. As was everybody else on the council. So keen were the citizens to serve that some years, on nomination eve, we had to go down to the pub, drag a couple of characters out, and guide their hands while they signed up.

When I was elected, I was present as a reporter. There were only five other people in the council chambers, so it was decided that I would be elected as the necessary sixth. Since I had already served on the executives of various moribund organizations which had died forthwith, I agreed. It didn't die, as I'd hoped. The next year we were all re-elected. By acclamation.

It was pretty heady stuff, at first. As a partner in a printing plant, and a newspaperman, I was immediately appointed Chairman of the Printing, Advertising and Public Relations committee of council. This meant that our firm automatically received the contract for the town's printing and advertising, which we already had. The public relations part meant that I had to stop suggesting in the paper that the town council was made up of nitwits, nincompoops and nerds.

Another chap, with a pretty good heating and plumbing business, was named Chairman of the Interior Municipal Modification Committee, Heating and plumbing.

A third, who had a tractor, a back-hoe and a snowplow, was appointed Chairman of the Public Works Department. He immediately introduced a by-law raising the rates per hour of such equipment. It passed, four to two. The opposition was from another councillor a retired farmer,



by Bill Smiley

who also had a tractor and a threshing-machine, which he thought could be converted to plowing snow. His brother-in-law voted with him.

But these moments of power and glory soon faded. The conflict of interest became apparent, and there was no way out for a man of honor except to resign. It took me only two years to reach that conclusion. You may think that a fair time, but it's not easy to walk away from a \$75 a year stipend. The mayor made \$150.

As a reporter, I had been more interested in the conflicts than the interests. I had delightedly heard, and printed, one councillor call another councillor a "gibbering old baboon." And watched the victim of the pejorative, a stripling of 78, invite the name-caller outside, stripping off his jacket during the exchange. Cooler heads prevailed. It was 34 below outside.

Well, as you can see, as a member of that august body, the Town Council, I couldn't print that sort of thing. I had to report that the two councillors "had a difference of opinion." When I wrote that phrase and had to omit that one of the councillors was obviously in his cups, I knew I had to quit.

All of this is a preamble to a thickish document I got in the mail the other day. It is a new by-law printed and dispersed (at what enormous cost I shudder) by our local town council. There are 39 numbered pages of legal inanity, and about an equal number of pages of maps of the town, equally unintelligible.

As I said, the mailman delivered it, regardless of expense. A dozen kids could have covered the town in two hours, or

stuffed them in the sewer.

Despite my wide experience as a municipal councillor, or perhaps because of it, this by-law completely baffles me. The first 13 pages are definitions. They tell us what is a lot, a yard (front) and a yard (rear), a garage, a building. They also inform the ignorant citizenry what a school is, a person, a restaurant, a motel, a boarding-house. All alphabetically. There was no mention of "brothel" under the B's.

The by-law tells us how high our fences or hedges can be. It tells us how high our houses can be. How many square metres of floor space we must have if we decide to ask Auntie Mabel, crippled with arthritis, to share our dwelling. How many parking places we need for each establishment. Again no mention of either brothels or bootleggers.

For most of the document, the by-law dwells in metres, squared and decimated. I know very few people over thirty who would know a metre from a maskinonge. Somebody on council must have cornered the market on metre sticks.

Then this baffling by-law moves into "Hectares". What the heck is a hectare. To me, it's an ancient French (Canadian) piece of land about as accurate as an acre, which nobody understands either.

Here's an example: "RM2 uses are permitted as specified to a maximum of 550 persons per hectare." Is it a square mile. Is it a "H!acre" wit' an accent.

This is crazy. When I was a councillor, we could knock off three or four by-laws in a meeting, and everybody understood them. "Moved and seconded that there shall be no loitering in the cemetery, except by those who are among the dead, not the quick." That sort of thing.

This big fat by-law is for the birds. Or the lawyers. Not for us old municipal politicians. Remember what I suggested at the beginning of this column. Forget it. Otherwise you might end up with a "Detached dwelling unit", which allows "3.2 persons per unit standard." Not two. Not four. 3.2.

# Our readers write

September 1, 1979

Dear Editor:

In reference to the latest news of Lord Mountbatten's death, quoted as a shock to the whole world, I find it too foolish for words, in the face of all that has happened and the lives lost on both sides.

Ulster has been dominated by an alien population with a loaded rifle. Discrimination closed the doors of Parliament that was granted. Things went from bad to worse. Lord Mountbatten has lived there for some time and like all the rest has done nothing to improve the situation sensibly. We can only hope to reap what we sow.

Public opinion is building up against

all this nonsense and the excuse of the IRA is no longer good enough to carry it on much longer. According to a cross country check-up most were in favor of sensible changes so the underdog can lift his head and the tyrant see the light. There will be a lot to answer for over Ireland when that day comes.

Let's follow in the footsteps of Pope John to improve this world to a state of live and let live at least through our faith in the Good Lord as we don't live right without it. Ireland is a good example of that from countries under British rule.

Yours sincerely,  
George Graham,  
R.R. 1, Limehouse

CANADIAN OWNERS  
The Canadian Bankers' Association says that more than 95 per cent of shareholders of chartered banks' shares are Canadian residents.



John Currie with customers at Georgetown library. John is the new children's librarian at both Halton Hills libraries.

## Library hires John Currie

Children are people, too. That's the philosophy of new Georgetown and Acton children's librarian, John Currie. Resuming duties from past librarian, Sharon Naylor, John will be responsible for the general running of the library, ordering, planning programs and organizing activities for the children.

John obtained his BA at Lethbridge University, an MA at Carleton and his MLS at Western. This is his first job in a library.

John is hoping to get ideas from the children as to what they want their library to be. "We won't be telling them what to do, we want to encourage discovering for themselves," he said.

John and his wife recently moved to Georgetown and are looking forward to becoming actively involved in the community.

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## On the Leavell

With Helen



When former Acton Free Press columnist, and dark room technician Wendy Thomson moved west to Alberta four years ago, little did she know she was heading to the wild, wild west.

Got a letter from her a few weeks back to say she was enjoying her summer. 'cept for the fact hubby Gord was chased by grizzlies, while on a trail ride, and Wendy was home holding the fort against a mountain lion that had been killing the stock. She doesn't dare stray too far without her shotgun.

And Ontario folk think they have problems battling rush hour traffic.

Le Leche League, for mothers who are nursing their babies or are considering to do so, is starting up its next series of meetings next Monday at 8 p.m. at Sandy Kenzie's home on 15 side road west of Speyside.

The league offers mother-to-mother help in a series of four monthly meetings based on the manual 'The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding'. The discussions include the latest medical research, as well as personal experience. Other services include a lending library of books on childbirth, childcare and breastfeeding.

Other dates for meetings in this series are October 15, November 12 and December 10. For further information, call Marilyn Coxie at 878-4803 or Karen Gregory at 878-3884.

**WASH GREENS**  
For crisp salads, prepare salad greens such as lettuce and spinach ahead of time, say food specialists at the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food. After purchase, thoroughly wash greens in cold water, drain, wrap in a towel and refrigerate. Then greens will be cool, crisp and ready to use, anytime.

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## Two heads not better

By Christine Schulz  
Two heads are always better than one? Not always.

For one little piggy born on Lazy Pat Farm, two heads were a disadvantage. The piglet owned by Lance Pocock had two heads, unfortunately joined at the jaws, making it evident that its life would be a very short one.

On Tuesday, August 17, 1979 the last meeting of the Halton 4-H Club was held for this year.

To start the meeting off with a little fun, Lance Pocock, the host and club leader, asked each of the members to guess the combined weight of two pigs. The prize, a glass piggy bank, was won by Gerhard Trevisanus, who came within three pounds of the actual weight.

Next came the Halton 4-H Swine Club quiz. This quiz was used to test the members on how much they had learned in the Swine Club.

The members learned a lot about diseases at

this meeting through guest speaker Paul Simmons, Swine Specialist with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food in Markdale.

Some of the diseases mentioned were Rheinitis, Virus-pneumonia and Parasites.

After the technical part of the meeting came the fun part.

Mr. Pocock invited all to enjoy pop, cake, a dip in the pool and a game of shuffleboard.

All thanked Mr. Pocock for being host of the last swine club meeting for 1979.

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