

Deal is final, Heller's move to Disston this fall

by Gord Murray

Seven long months of negotiations have resulted in the sale of the closed Disston plant to Frank Heller and Co. Ltd.

Heller's general manager Fred Dawkins confirmed Monday an agreement of purchase and sale for the large factory on Wallace Street has been reached between Heller's and Sandvik Canada Inc.

Dawkins noted the deal won't close until this September.

Government aid is still pending, but the deal will proceed, he said.

Because of the uncertainty of government assistance and the sluggish economy, Dawkins noted, the firm won't

expand as rapidly as first hoped once it has consolidated its three plant operation in the Disston facility, but the move is a "commitment to growth."

The move will take three months: September, October and November. That way Heller's can continue production while moving.

All of the equipment now used in the firm's three plants, two in Acton and one in Georgetown, will be moved to Disston. It will be a very big job.

In addition there will be some new equipment installed in their new facility prior to their present equipment being moved. This new equipment isn't meant for expansion, but improvement of present operations.

Heller's have bought 15 acres from Sandvik, including the approximately five acres taken up by

the 111,000 square foot factory and fenced lot. They have acquired the additional 10 acres to insulate the firm from other plants which may purchase the remainder of the large Sandvik holdings and to allow for possible plant expansion in future years.

While there won't be a negligible increase in jobs right off the bat, there will be some early expansion. Heller's plans to diversify its product line, adding some specialty types of leather which are now imported into this country.

They will also set up a factory outlet at their new home. Dawkins is enthusiastic about opening the factory outlet, feeling with Acton's leather heritage. It can be a boost for the entire town. They will purchase shoes and other leather goods from their customers for sale at the factory outlet and he expects it will draw customers not just from Acton but from many parts of Ontario.

In setting up in the new facility Heller's, which in its three plants now occupies 70,000 square feet, will leave areas vacant in each department for further

expansion.

All three of their existing plants are up for sale, having gone on the market in June. Dawkins said there has been interest shown in all three, with several inquiries about the two factories in Acton. They will sell them individually or as a package.

Talks began in December and by January a tentative purchase agreement was reached.

However, in the ensuing weeks the economy cooled out, interest rates soared and there appeared to be no chance of government assistance.

By the end of March Heller's announced it wouldn't be moving.

In April Mayor Peter Pomeroy and Halton Business Development Officer William Marshall arranged a meeting involving Dawkins and his partner Ron Heller as well as two provincial government industry development officials.

With talks with government officials resumed and interest rates slowly dropping, negotiations got back on the rails.

Dawkins says the drop in borrowing costs has been the major factor in allowing the deal to proceed.

The deal might not have been settled as soon had Sandvik not received an offer to put a warehousing operation, employing only a handful of people, into its Disston plant in May.

Sandvik was very interested in the community and had always sought a manufacturing operation for its closed factory, so they came back to Heller's one more time and the deal was completed.

Another hurdle in completing the deal was cleared last week when Halton's Land Division Committee (LDC) approved the severance of the property being purchased by Heller's. The remainder of the land stays with Sandvik and is zoned for industry. Sandvik is trying to sell that property.

Sandvik lawyer Gord Chapman told LDC "we're only concerned about getting a local business going again."

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No funding new school

Acton has been "shafted" and political considerations are preventing a new separate school from being built here, according to the president of the St. Joseph's Parents' Association.

Vince Whelan said in an interview this week he will recommend parents don't send their children back to St. Joseph's this September, adding the building isn't safe.

"It's another example of Acton being shafted," Whelan said.

In a press release Halton Separate School Board chairman Robert O'Brien said that the Ministry of Education has reviewed Ontario boards' 1980 capital forecasts and allocated \$1.5 million for a new separate school in north-east Oakville.

Director of Education Cliff Byrnes said a new separate school in Acton has been and remains a high priority with the board. Byrnes explained the board sent in applications for capital funding for two projects, the school in Oakville and Acton, both having equal priority.

This surprises Whelan. He said he and other parents have long been assured Acton was the number one priority of the board.

Whelan asked how there could be two number one priorities. "We were given assurances, both verbally and in writing, that Acton was the number one priority. That obviously wasn't true. You can't have

two number one priorities. Then again, maybe you can in politics.

Byrnes said the board wants to arrange a meeting, possibly as early as this week, with provincial officials to discuss the pressing need for a new separate school in Acton.

He said there has been an indication from Queen's Park that priority capital funding will be reviewed this September so there's a chance the new Acton school will be approved then.

Whelan said he knew of the decision not to fund the new school here a week ago and was contacting politicians, like Minister of Transport and Communications and Oakville MPP Jim Snow, for help.

He recalled when the school opened in the fall of 1977 it was on a two year trial period and if enrolment went up a new school would be built.

The separate school board rented the old Stone School from Halton Board of Education expecting about 90 pupils. The first year there were 115 students and that figure swelled to 209 last year and is expected to hit 225 this September. Whelan observed that obviously the time period for building a new school has expired.

He complained three years after Acton's first separate school was opened all the board has done is purchase property for a new school, and Whelan

suspects that was only done because of pressure from parents.

In late May the board bought the five acre Nellis property west of the Acton Legion at a cost of \$15,000 an acre for the new school. The purchase came after over a year's search for a site.

Whelan observed while Oakville will have a new separate school, taking pupils from two other overcrowded schools, Acton must continue to get by with a sub-par facility, one which has been "condemned in two reports, one from the fire department and another from the health department." Whelan noted the parents' association has copies of letters detailing the fire and health reports that the board sent to the province.

"We don't get a new school because we (the provincial riding of Halton-Burlington) is Liberal and likely will remain so and Oakville is Conservative and likely remain so," Whelan declared. This statement is significant considering Whelan is one of two directors from Acton for the Halton-Burlington Progressive Conservative Association. He added Snow says that wasn't the case, that the Oakville MPP wasn't aware of the decision to build a new separate school in his riding.

The parents' association will send a delegation to the board later this month and then hopes to get (Continued on page 2)



Lillian Thomas who lives near Brookville is proud of "her" Nassagaweya Township and just as proud of a memorial stone she placed in her backyard. The stone, donated by her blind neighbor John Henry, has a plaque commemorating the township name that disappeared when Nassagaweya was swallowed up into Milton six years ago.

Memorial remembers township

By Roy Downs

Governments may come and go, but Nassagaweya will always be there, and people will still refer to the township by its original name whether it be part of Milton or of Halton.

That's the opinion of Lillian Thomas of Guelph Line, who has done (and will continue to do) her part in preserving the township name long after the current politicians are gone, she says.

Mrs. Thomas, a widow, has commemorated the township name for posterity, with a three foot round Nassagaweya rock she had planted, cairn-like, in her back yard.

There's a flower bed in front, a flag pole with a six foot Canadian flag behind, and on the rock is a bronze memorial plaque which bears a special part in her life.

Mrs. Thomas agrees with the current protest by Nassagaweyans who are still miffed over the township being forced to join with Milton and portions of Esqueping Township, Burlington and Oakville when regional government was forced on Halton in 1974.

"I'm still Nassagaweya, and so are my neighbors," Mrs. Thomas told this newspaper.

A retired nurse who spent most of her life on private duty nursing, she was a great fan of the late Dr. H. R. McDonald of Kilbride. He used to say "Nassagaweya is all sticks and stones," and so a few years ago Mrs. Thomas decided to commemorate the township with her memorial rock.

She asked her neighbor, Nassagaweya's famous blind carpenter John Henry, to let her have one of the rocks beside his workshop. It took a great effort — three men and a truck — to pick it up and move it. Then her brother-in-law Peter Thomas, Milton, drilled for three hours to set a bronze plaque into the face of the hard-head rock.

It says: "1975 — Donated by blind neighbor John R. Henry to Lillian Thomas, Nassagaweya."

"I put it in there a year after the region came in," Mrs. Thomas said. "I'm not Milton, I'm Nassagaweya."

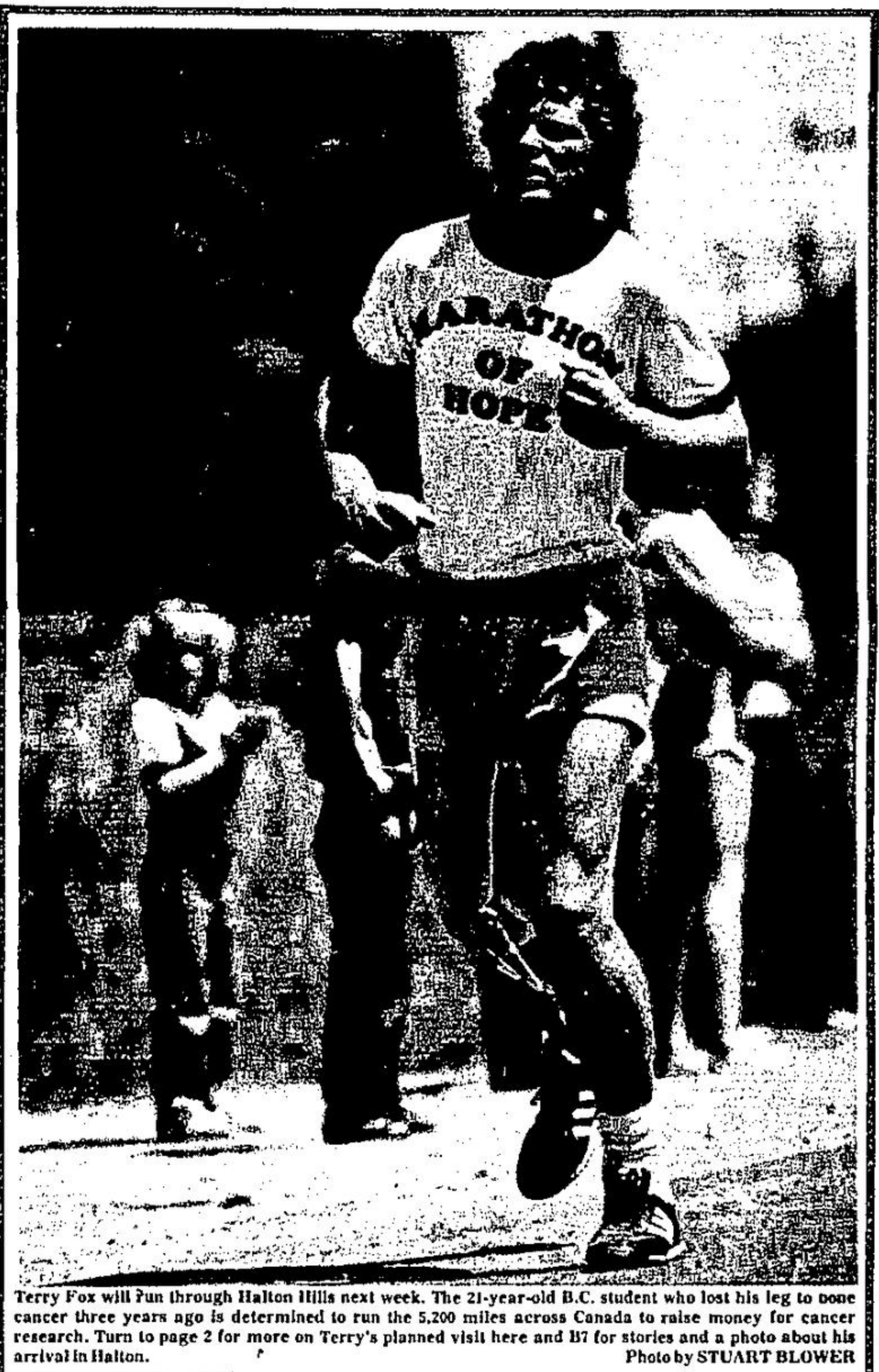
Now Mrs. Thomas has decided she cannot live alone in the country much longer, it is too hard to keep her house going and keep the large yard looking neat. She has listed the house for sale, and plans to move to an apartment in Milton.

"I'm going to miss Nassagaweya, I have a lot of friends here and I'll miss the birds that live in the sanctuary behind my home. I feed them all winter."

The stone she describes as "a memorial to John Henry and myself and Nassagaweya Township." She hopes whoever buys her home will preserve the memorial in its present state.

Mrs. Thomas was born in Nelson Township and moved to her present home in 1936 after her marriage to George Thomas. He was a trucker for Nassagaweya Township and Halton County, and for many years plowed the township roads. George died 12 years ago.

She said she nursed in nearly every home in Nassagaweya during her years as a private nurse. In the depression years there was no money and she furnished the house with what little she earned as a nurse. She later nursed at Halton Centennial Manor, Milton.



Terry Fox will run through Halton Hills next week. The 21-year-old B.C. student who lost his leg to bone cancer three years ago is determined to run the 5,200 miles across Canada to raise money for cancer research. Turn to page 2 for more on Terry's planned visit here and B7 for stories and a photo about his arrival in Halton. Photo by STUART BLOWER

Former resident killed on bike

A former Acton and rural Georgetown resident was one of three young women killed in a tragic accident in Burlington earlier this month.

Lorraine Robertson, age 24, died July 6 after slipping into a coma when she and three other bicyclists were struck down by a car early one morning on Plains Road.

Mrs. Robertson (nee Lavigne) lived first with her family at the Cedar Springs Motel, RR 1 Georgetown, and after her marriage on Church Street in Acton. She moved to the area in about 1969-70 and then moved to Hamilton around 1976-77.

She graduated from Stewarttown and Acton High Schools.

The mother of three, one child, Tanya, was born in Acton, was buried following a funeral in Hamilton July 8.

Two other women, Elizabeth Sarrazin, 24, and Marilyn Jessop, 17 were also killed in the accident while Joanne Jessop suffered minor injuries.

The Burlington driver who struck the bicyclists

inside

The new Halton Hills Centre on Highway 25 is a pretty interesting place. Turn to page 5.

Halton Police have a number of tips to help vacationers avoid a ruined holiday by returning to a burglarized house. Story on page B5.

You'll find Profiles on page 2, News Digest is on page 3, page four has G. Leavell and Bill Smiley and Rockwood Digest is on page 7.

down has been charged with dangerous driving, careless driving and operating an unsafe vehicle.

Mrs. Robertson is survived by her husband John C. Robertson, children Tanya, Kelly and Corri, her mother Alice of Georgetown, her father Charles of Ashgrove, brothers Richard and Dennis of Hamilton and Michael of Georgetown and her grandmother Mrs. C. Beaulette of Sudbury.

Her family operated the motel near Silver Creek eight-and-a-half years.



Lorraine Robertson, a former area resident was killed in an accident recently in Burlington. Two other women who were cycling with Mrs. Robertson also died. Mrs. Robertson is pictured here with one of her three children, Corri.