

PROFILES

with JENNIFER BARR



Some men never grow up. Even though Ted Hilton of R.R. 2 Acton is in his 30s, he still loves mucking about with worms and earth.

Of course, he makes a good living at it. Ted is one of the growing number of worm farmers in the Toronto area producing bait for North American fishermen.

Ted produces no ordinary dew worm, the several thousand worms in his garage are super worms created in Japan after extensive research and ten years of cross breeding from three African species.

The resulting "National nightcrawler" is superior for fishing to commonly used dew worms and commercially grown red worms. The nightcrawler is approximately the same size as a dew worm but much more active, lives 24 hours underwater, needs no refrigeration, and is generally easier to handle. Dew worms, unable to be commercially raised, are hand-picked and highly perishable. Red worms, currently the largest vermiculture (worm farming) industry, are small and fail to attract a lot of fish. The tastiest morsels by far are said to be the new national nightcrawlers.

So much for the worms—how about our local vermiculturist.

Ted Hilton is not only into worm husbandry but he is a representative for National Green Products of Mississauga, the northern offshoot of National Nightcrawlers, who started the whole ball rolling.

1,000,000 in a garage

At first glance, the compact garage on the Hilton property looks an unlikely place for worm farming. Neat white pails line shelves, machinery for separating worms and bins for mixing food are arrayed neatly down the centre. The whole is much brighter and drier than one would associate with a worm. It's hard for the uninitiated to believe there are thousands of worms quietly reproducing in the antiseptic-looking pails.

However, every two weeks, each pail is opened and several hundred worm eggs are removed. Each worm produces two eggs every two weeks. Each egg will hatch two or three minute worms that grow to breeding age by three months. An added bonus is the fact that every worm produces eggs. Worms are hermaphrodite and possess the power to be both mother and father to their eggs, although two worms need each other to fertilize their respective eggs.

At 200 eggs a pail per fortnight, Ted could produce 16 million worms a year. Fortunately his quota is for only a million worms per year so he discards the eggs he doesn't need. When one sees how tiny those worm eggs are and how they resemble tiny crumbs of soil, it's amazing how Ted can even separate a few from each pail.

"See the little point on each end," he remarks. "That's how you tell an egg from soil." I can't see anything but a brown blob of earth!

At the time the pails are opened, the worms are fed a mixture of peat loam, dried cow manure, shredded newspaper, and a grain and vitamin feed. They live in this mixture for their required two weeks, laying eggs and turning their feed into highly profitable worm castings (manure) which can be sold as high potency fertilizer for gardeners.

Revenue from castings can offset the price of feed, Ted explains, leaving the sale of worms as profit.

With a million worm quota a farmer could expect a return of \$15,000 to \$20,000 annually after feed deductions of approximately \$1,500 per year. Initial investment is \$850 for worms, quota, and access to the technology of national nightcrawler raising. A farmer should be prepared to spend \$3,000 before he sees any return, Ted warns.

Family business

Time spent on the business works out to about 25 hours a week. Ted rotates his worms and services half his pails every week but some farmers have every worm on the same two week

schedule and prefer to spend two or three days doing nothing but separating their pails of worms and re-feeding all at once. Individual worms only need attention once a fortnight.

In the Hilton's case, the whole family is involved. If Ted is busy with his regular job, wife Dorothy, daughter 11 and son 8 take over.

Although a company representative and very knowledgeable about vermiculture, Ted hadn't got a clue about worm farming until ten months ago.

He read an ad in the newspaper and inquired about the livelihood offered. He checked out the company and the reliability of the investment, taking three weeks to make up his mind. Then he was suddenly up to his armpits in worms.

He's made a study of the business and now spouts information like a seasoned farmer of 20 years. He says National Green Products have been the source of all his assistance and knowledge. Worm farming is such a new business, farmers need all the help they can get. Before National Nightcrawlers started producing their super worm, very little was known about raising worms at all. Now business is expanding in leaps and wiggles. National Green Products intends to put 1,000 farmers in business and currently has room for 250 more.

Worm farming sounds attractive to those familiar with other forms of livestock husbandry. Worms aren't noisy, they don't smell, they don't run all over the place. Neither do they bite or kick. I wonder if they can be saddle broken.



Ted Hilton

Region receives financial statements

Regional Administration and Finance Committee members will start getting quarterly financial reports in order that a cash flow problem can become identified before it gets serious.

During budget discussion earlier this year an outflow of more than \$100,000 in the public works department came to light and there were, at first, no explanations.

Later it was found the money was for major equipment but it started being purchased right after the 1979 budget was approved.

Administration and Finance Committee members have been critical in the past three months of the way accounts are being handled.

Members of the Association last year

Parents after answers, action about Acton Catholic school

by Jennifer Rowe
A bus load of Acton parents packed the separate School Board office in Burlington last Tuesday evening looking for answers and action. They got neither.

Acton doesn't meet Ministry criteria

St. Joseph's school in Acton might not get funding from the Ministry of Education for a new school, even if they're the only priority of the Halton Separate School Board, according to the chairman.

Chairman Robert O'Brien, Director of Education Cliff Byrnes and vice chairman and local trustee Hartley Sherk recently attended a meeting with Regional Director for the Ministry John Storey, who said St. Joseph's would probably not be approved even if they were the only priority.

"Acton would not receive money by itself right now from the Ministry since their criteria for allocation of funds is based on funding new pupil places," O'Brien told parents.

O'Brien said Acton and Oakville were of equal priority and Oakville received the funding on its own merits since they met the Ministry criteria for growth of pupil places. He added the Minister would receive a request to redirect the funds to Acton although it is unusual.

O'Brien said Acton would remain a Ministry priority during the fall allocation should funds become available. "Acton remains a Board priority," he said.

Trustee Hartley Sherk said if the Halton Separate School Board applies only for funding in Acton they stand a chance of not receiving any grant from the Ministry.

Told by the Board in the fall of 1979 that the new school in Acton was the Board's number one priority, Acton parents were angry when they learned the funds for the new school had been allocated by the Ministry of Education for the Board's number one priority... Oakville.

Parents' Association spokesman Mike McMahon said they were deeply concerned over the communication problem existing between the Acton parents and the Board, between the director and the Board, between the Board members themselves and between the Board and the Ministry of Education. "Our first concern deals with a communication breakdown, in fact it borders on the question of misrepresentation," McMahon said.

During his presentation, McMahon said they were assured by Chairman Robert O'Brien, the director of Education Cliff Byrnes and local trustee Hartley Sherk that they were the Board's primary priority.

"In the school year 1979-80, we have been continually assured of our top position on the Board's priority list. Realizing that the

Ministry only grants money to Boards according to their submitted priority lists we felt confident of receiving the necessary funding. The only way we wouldn't would be if our Board received no grants at all," he said.

McMahon criticized the Board for their use of the term, number one priority, without explaining to the parents they had two schools of equal priority, Acton and Oakville. "Perhaps we hadn't listened carefully enough to Mr. Sherk, the director of the chairman and the board. Perhaps we didn't ask the logical

question like What else was the number one priority?"

McMahon outlined the need for a new facility, the problem with toilets overflowing, inadequate number of toilets for a school now with 225 students, no gymnasium, no library, or special education facilities.

To demonstrate its commitment to and support of Catholic education in Acton the Association asked the board to hold its next full meeting, August 26, at the school in Acton. They also asked the Board to submit a letter of intent no later than August 15.

A recommendation by the parents to the Board asking them to go to the Ministry along with a member of their group to request the reallocation of funds from Oakville to the Acton project was tabled.

Following the meeting, parents outside the Board office said they were disappointed and disgusted with the behavior of the Board. Some felt they had wasted their time attending the meeting, which for the most part consisted of a discussion of the parliamentary procedure used to run the meeting.

Cops host kids

The Halton Region Police Association is sponsoring a day outing for students of the Halton Development Centre in Milton.

The Association is planning to take 22 students and staff teachers to the African Lion Safari in Rockton Wednesday August 13.

Inspector John Barrett, a member of the Association said the tour represents the organization's commitment to help handicapped children.

Students at the Halton Development Centre are mentally and physically handicapped.

raised funds to purchase a waterbed for the students.

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Members of the Association last year

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dishwasher p.p. 2.79 cascade 50 oz.	2.69	Highliner frozen 32 oz. In batter - fillet portion fish stick.	3.28
Palmolive liquid detergent 1.5L.	2.79	Totino's crispy deluxe or frozen pepperoni 4 pack pizza 380g. or 370g.	1.78
Baggies sandwich bags 100's.	.99	Farm House frozen 24 oz. apple pie.	1.38
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Weston pkg. of 6 cinnamon butterhorns	.79
Intensive care lotion 200 ml.	1.68
Head & shoulders family shampoo 100 & 175 ml.	1.99
Dry Idea (50% more) roll on 75 ml.	1.99
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00 Mazda GLC Regular Hatchback	\$4,610

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