

Chinchillas, they're cute but costly

by Jennifer Barr

The ultimate luxury for many women is a chinchilla coat. Made from one of the most expensive furs, a chinchilla coat costs an average of \$20,000 whereas a similar mink coat would cost a quarter of that.

Is it any wonder chinchilla breeders are doing well?

The only chinchilla breeder in Acton and area is Cliff Lilly of R.R. 2, Rockwood, who bills his ranch as "Ontario's largest chinchilla ranch." Currently his barn boasts 1,100 gopher-like animals. Usually his stock numbers closer to 1,400 and he plans to raise his herd to 2,000 when his barn is automated.

Retiring from his job with Ford in Oakville three years ago, Cliff makes chinchillas a full time job. He's also Canadian marketing representative for the national Chinchilla Marketing Board.

Lilly chinchillas not only bring home the bacon, they bring home many show

trophies too. In their 14 years as breeders, Cliff and Audrey Lilly have won many important coups at national and international shows including several coveted master breeder awards.

Chinchilla ranching is no get-rich-quick scheme, Cliff explains, although many people can make a lucrative hobby out of a few chinchillas in the basement.

Initial investment is high. A breeding nucleus of five animals plus feed and supplies for a year and stock guarantee costs of \$1,500. However, feeding a chinchilla is cheap, costing one-and-a-half cents a day for prepared pellets.

A female chinchilla can be bred at 9-10 months and produces two or three young after 111 days gestation. Ranchers plan for an average of 3.5 young chinchillas per female a year although they often get more.

Babies stay five weeks with their mother before weaning. After ten months the pelt is mature and the chinchilla is killed. The

carcass is usually thrown away although, Cliff says, some ranchers eat fried chinchilla meat.

Cliff justifies producing animals solely for fur by saying chinchillas would be extinct if breeders weren't preserving the stock.

Indigenous to the Andes Mountains in South America, 11 chinchillas were imported to the States in 1923, the start of the North American chinchilla ranching.

The charming little creatures with cloud-soft fur come in a variety of colors from common blue-grey, browns and belges to charcoal, silver and the rarest black. Each chinchilla is provided with a daily bath in fine sand to keep its coat shiny clean.

Pelting is heaviest in winter months but pelts are harvested year round. Controlled temperatures of 60 degrees F insure good coats.

The average ladies full-length coat requires 80 to 120 pelts. Cliff sells most of

his pelts for \$25 although he gets \$70 to \$80 for a black pelt. He sells pelts through the national board, mostly to New York. Canadian chinchilla breeders used to be tied into the Hudson Bay Company by the board, but are now free agents.

In addition to selling pelts, Cliff enjoys helping new breeders set up in business. His stock is also much in demand by established breeders for showing and upgrading stock.

All the Lilly's get in the chinchilla act. Audrey and Cliff are primary farmers but youngsters Richard and Louise are active. Like animated stuffed toys, chinchillas are so attractive, it's no wonder children enjoy them.

Even though she's mucked about with chinchillas for 14 years Audrey Lilly has yet to earn her own chinchilla coat. However, Cliff is saving black pelts to have an exclusive coat made for his wife. It's likely to be one of the most valuable in the area.



Cliff Lilly with one of his prize black chinchillas worth an estimated \$500—one of the 1100 he raises on his chinchilla ranch south of Rockwood.

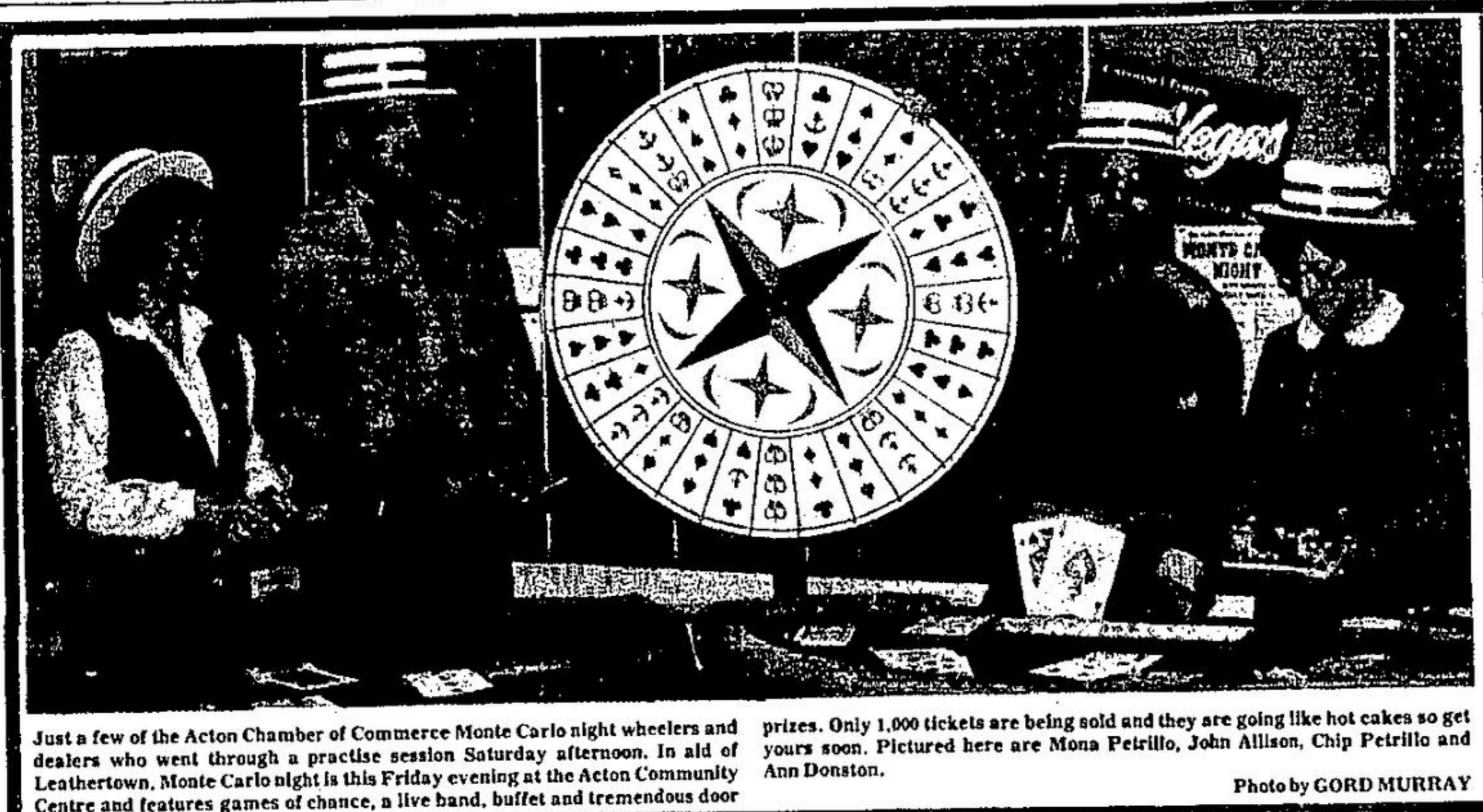
The Acton Free Press

An Inland Community Newspaper

One Hundred and Sixth Year—No. 42

ACTON, ONTARIO, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29, 1981

Twenty-Four Pages — Twenty-five Cents



Just a few of the Acton Chamber of Commerce Monte Carlo night wheelers and dealers who went through a practise session Saturday afternoon. In aid of Leathertown, Monte Carlo night is this Friday evening at the Acton Community Centre and features games of chance, a live band, buffet and tremendous door prizes. Only 1,000 tickets are being sold and they are going like hot cakes so get yours soon. Pictured here are Mona Petrillo, John Allison, Chip Petrillo and Ann Donston.

Photo by GORD MURRAY

Heap praise on Gary Dawkins

In a touching emotion filled 30 minute program about 200 relatives, friends and colleagues paid tribute to the late Gary Dawkins, first principal of McKenzie-Smith Middle School, last Wednesday night.

Principal John Simpson, Director of Education Em Lavender, former McKenzie-Smith vice-principal Carl Hymers, friend and colleague Tom Gibson and former McKenzie-Smith teacher Robert O'Driscoll heaped praise on Mr. Dawkins, who died suddenly in July, 1979 at the age of 40. He had been a principal and teacher in the Acton area for 19 years.

Simpson told the audience a special staff committee had been planning the night of tribute for 18 months as a demonstration of the "warmth and respect" they had for Mr. Dawkins. The staff felt "Gary should be part of the school forever."

The "uniqueness" of Gary Dawkins was revealed to everyone who knew him in a different way, Hymers observed. Under his leadership the founding staff, each hand picked to meet his criteria, formed a special bond.

Hymers noted the late principal "created the climate and set the example" for his colleagues to excel and set "benchmarks" for McKenzie-Smith's future.

All still felt the hurt and shock of his passing and his "glowing spirit holds a special place in our memories."

Pointing to Mr. Dawkin's love of the outdoors and fishing, Hymers closed his remarks with a poem by famed outdoorsman Red Fisher.

A short slide presentation, set to lovely music by Neil Diamond, showed Mr. Dawkins at work in the school, inspiring both teachers and students.

Lavender, who dedicated the school's library as the Gary Dawkins Memorial Library and presented a plaque, described the slide presentation as beautiful and sensitive.

He said it was special for him to be at McKenzie-Smith Middle School, named after two great Acton educators, to make a dedication to Gary. He said Elmer Smith was a "good and gentle" man. Pat McKenzie was "vigorous, active and enthusiastic" and Gary Dawkins was "stout hearted, jolly" and an "optimist."

Like Hymers, Lavender recalled Mr. Dawkins' love of the outdoors and their years of swapping fishing stories. He said if there isn't a book in the library now about trout fishing he'll see there is one and noted, unlike a lot of peoples' fishing stories, Mr. Dawkins' were always true.

Mr. Smith, Mr. McKenzie and Mr. Dawkins were all "exemplary citizens, fine teachers and excellent principals." He added it was impossible to measure

\$35,500 winner

An 18-year-old Eden Mills resident won \$35,500 playing McDonald's Build a Big Mac game.

Janet Tolton says she plans to get her car fixed and bank the balance of her winnings. It is the first time she has ever won anything in a contest.

She split the \$71,000 prize with a Guelph resident. They won the contest at a Guelph McDonald's restaurant.



Robert O'Driscoll presents Gary Dawkins' wife Rosealee with the OPSMFT diamond Jubilee Award in tribute to her late husband's contributions to education. More photos from the special night in Mr. Dawkins' memory on page 3.

Mr. Dawkins impact on the lives of Acton residents.

He dedicated the library to the "good name, good life and good memory of Gary Dawkins."

Gibson, who unveiled the painting of Mr. Dawkins which was done by his son, said he was deeply honored to pay tribute to his friend.

O'Driscoll presented Mrs. Rosealee Dawkins with an Ontario Public School Men's Teachers' Federation Diamond Jubilee Award.

Speaking on behalf of the family, Don Dawkins said it was a "bitter-sweet" evening, wonderful to hear the tributes to his younger brother, but also painful to recall Gary was no longer with them.

He advised the audience to enjoy his brother's 40 years in the community and not dwell on the fact he is now missing.

His brother didn't like coming in second, Don Dawkins said, adding he never quite felt Gary forgave him for being the first born. On a lighter note he joked he and Halton-Burlington MP Julian Reed were part of "an exclusive club," not forgiven by Gary because they prevented him from being number one. Reed, who was on hand for the evening, narrowly defeated Mr. Dawkins when he ran under the Progressive Conservative banner in the 1975 provincial election.

He thanked the board and school staff, especially Gail McHugh who worked with his brother at Spycside, M. Z. Bennett and McKenzie-Smith schools, for the evening.

Push Divide and Conquer 10.7% in Acton participate

The town is planning a promotional push to persuade more Acton residents to participate in Divide and Conquer.

Divide and Conquer, a garbage recycling program, was launched in Acton a year ago this month after a couple of successful years as a pilot project in Georgetown.

Works Superintendent Frank Morette said in an interview this week he is pleased with Acton's support for the program but thinks it can be increased.

Recently compiled figures show 10.75 per cent of Acton households participated in Divide and Conquer. In this program bundles of papers and bags of tin cans and glass are put out the same day as regular garbage but picked up separately. In Georgetown the participation level is around 25 per cent, but Divide and Conquer has been better promoted and more established there.

One odd thing the review of Divide and Conquer statistics points out, Morette said, is that Acton contributes 30 per cent of Halton Hills' regular garbage but Acton only accounted for 21 per cent, a difference of nine per cent, of the refuse collected for Divide and Conquer.

The town collected 543.84 tons of paper, tin and

glass through Divide and Conquer, 114 tons of it from Acton.

A month by month look at Acton participation statistics shows levels going up and down. Participation and volumes followed the same trend as the town finds in collection of regular garbage, volume is up in warm weather as compared to winter. Last April, the first month of Divide and Conquer here, 9.75 per cent of Actonians participated in the program. In May 11.5 per cent participated, 14 per cent in June, 13.25 per cent in July, 8.75 per cent in August (when many are away on vacation), 10.25 in September, 11.75 in October, 12 per cent in November, 8.75 in December, 9.75 per cent in January, 9.25 per cent in February and 10.50 per cent in March.

"It appears the people in Acton who are recycling are doing it all the time," Morette said.

He explained the town has found there is more competition here in the recycling field. There is a paper bin at the Becker's Plaza which raises funds for the Christian Reformed Church and The Acton High School Outers used to collect glass. The Outers went out of glass collecting, blaming Divide and Conquer for killing this fund raising program for them.

(Continued on page 12)

Administration building \$1.6 M project in capital forecast

Plans for financing a new \$1.6 million Halton Hills administration building were included in a capital forecast for 1982-1985 unveiled at last Tuesday's meeting of Halton Hills council.

Councillor Harry Levy, chairman of the budget committee, pointed out funds have been accumulating for a new municipal building from lot levies over the years and now have reached almost \$600,000. However, the original estimate of \$400,000 in debentures was now out of line. He estimated it would take \$1 million in debentures along with the \$600,000 in reserves to construct the building now.

Levy noted he had been opposed to any new administrative building when the project was first broached some years ago. Now he sees the need. Several years ago council rejected a \$900,000 addition to the Trafalgar administration building, just

outside of Georgetown, after receiving petitions from the public.

Levy told council he could now see a great deal of savings if the Town had its own municipal building. He said the Town had no debentures for many years and now sits in a good position regarding debenture debt.

Levy also noted that the figures and projects in the four year forecast were just that.

He noted the figure of \$1 million shown as possible debenture debt in 1982 represents a general indication of intention rather than a firm commitment to actually debenture that amount. The budget committee has recommended that the town continue to allot lot levies for the administration building.

"The four year forecast for each of the four years represents a general, overall plan which is realistic in terms of the ability of the town to finance," the committee notes in the document, recognizing that some priorities will change in the future and in an effort made to minimize debenture financing as capital budgets are considered each year.

Levy noted that the forecast has not allowed for a switch in the Cobblehill sewer works in Acton with the Glenlea roads. He said the matter was left for Acton councillors to decide.

Town engineer Bob Austin told council it was not an equal exchange since there was a six year pro-

(Continued on page B5)



Brian Lawrence and Brian Nellis were among the Acton High School science club members who built bridges out of popsicle sticks and then loaded bricks and blocks on them to see how much weight they'd hold. Story and more photos on page 5.



It's volunteer week. Pictured here, left to right, are just four of Acton's many volunteers, Herb Dodds, Brenda Looyenga, Catherine McGillivray and Carol Clark. See story on page 9.