



Alanna Bowen

Two chosen for Rotary exchange trip

Acton Rotary Club has selected two Acton High School students to represent the club and the town in an international student exchange.

However, final approval must be received from the club's regional offices before Alanna Bowen and Stephen Sojka are officially on their way.

Alanna and Stephen were chosen from five applicants for the year long exchange anywhere in the world where the Rotary Club operates. Club president Ken Grubbe explained students are chosen on their personality, type of ambassador they would make, and their school marks.

At present, the Acton club has another local student, Denise Dilbey in Japan for a year.

Grubbe explained that Acton is allowed to send out as many students as they bring in. In the past few years, Acton has accepted three exchange students from other countries while only sending out one. Thus, Acton is entitled to send out two more. However regional office could veto Acton sending two students.

Sixteen-year-old Alanna, daughter of Allin and Linda Bowen, Wynford Place, has named Holland as her first choice of countries to spend a year in. Sweden is her second choice and South Africa third. Alanna explains The Netherlands is her first

choice because it is situated near two other countries she would like very much to visit, Germany and France. While she would like to see Sweden, it is not as convenient (location-wise) for seeing other countries.

While this was the first year Alanna was old enough to apply (16 to 18 years are preferred), she was busy last year thinking about it. She wants to travel and learn a new language and felt this was the best way.

Alanna is finished high school this spring, taking four years in three, just as Denise did. While in Holland, or any other country she is sent to, she will be attending high school and will not be getting credit for it. However, because she is a year ahead of herself, and finished this year, the year off will not be making any difference in her academic life.

When she returns, Alanna plans to either work for a year and then go to university, or return to high school for her grade 13.

Stephen Sojka, 80 Elmore Drive, hopes to be living in Denmark this time next year. The son of Renate and George Sojka, he applied for the student exchange to travel and become more independent.

He has listed Holland as his second choice and West Germany as his third.

Stephen explains the reasoning behind his three choices is due to the sound economic and political situations in those countries. He feels they are safe from political strife, and quiet countries.

The 16-year-old grade 12 student is already familiar with Germany and its culture, being the son of German immigrants. In fact, he has relatives still in Germany in the Black Forest, where he hopes to be able to go at Christmas. Stephen is already fluent in German, and thinks learning Danish or Dutch should come easier to him because of this.

Stephen sees his year away as preparing himself for future travel and future plans. He wants to get to know the people and culture.

When Stephen returns home from his year away he will be going into grade 13. From there he hopes to join the Canadian Armed Forces and attend the Royal Military College in Kingston. His ultimate aim is to be an air force pilot.

Stephen looks upon the year as a challenge. "It is a big step to go away for that length of time," he said. "It is going to be quite a challenge in all aspects, not just leaving home but trying to be a good ambassador for the country as best I can. Everything is a challenge."



Stephen Sojka

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Driver shot in scuffle

A 30-year-old Acton man suffered a superficial gun-shot wound after his car was "allegedly" forced to stop on a rural road early Thursday and a rifle placed against his head.

Staff Sergeant Les Graham, Halton Regional Police, said Daniel Perron was treated and released from Georgetown Hospital for a superficial wound to his upper left shoulder.

Perron was driving on 25 Sideroad and was being followed by a 1973 brown Cougar when he was cut off by the other car around 2 a.m. about a half-mile from Highway 25. The car Perron was driving was loaned to him by Frank Jones of Acton.

Two suspects got out of the Cougar and one pulled a rifle on Perron and placed the end of the barrel against his forehead.

A scuffle occurred, Graham said, and Perron was wounded.

Perron went to the Canadian Style Donuts shop at the Main-Mill corner in Acton and the police were called before he went to the hospital.

The suspect who shot Perron is described as being about 6 feet tall, approximately 200 pounds, and has short dark hair and a moustache. He's approximately 30 years old. The assailant was wearing a dark blue ski jacket and had a day's growth of beard. The only description of the second suspect is male and white.

Police say they have not determined the motive for the incident yet, but they have ruled out a case of mistaken identity. It has been rumored around town that Perron was mistaken for someone else. The investigation is continuing.

Murder hearing April 13

The preliminary hearing of Eric Howard Keller, charged with first degree murder in connection with the stabbing death of Colleen Oates, in October, isn't expected to last much more than a day.

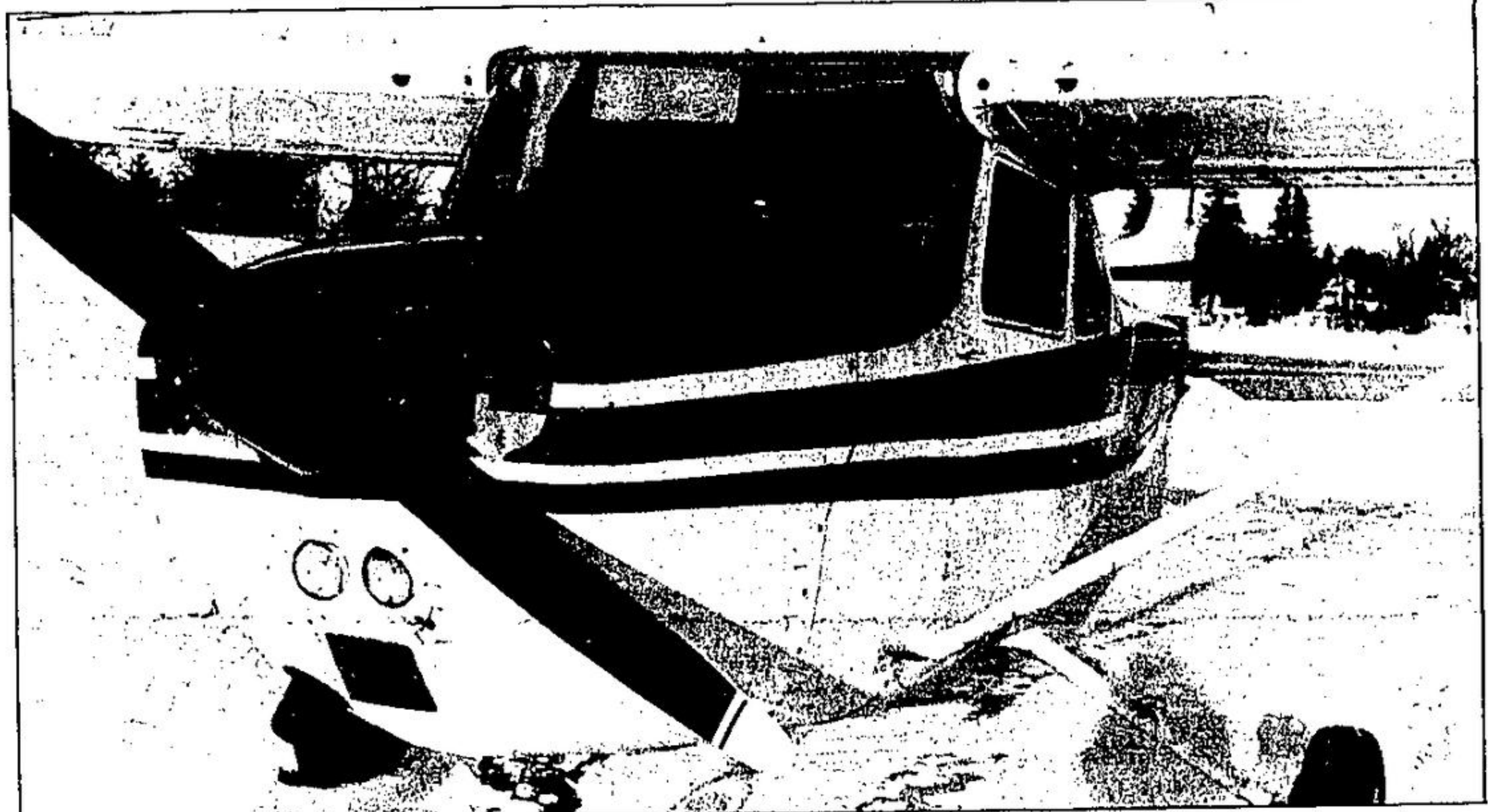
Keller appeared briefly in Provincial Court in Milton Monday and April 13 was set for the preliminary hearing. A preliminary hearing is held to determine if there is sufficient evidence against an accused to warrant a trial.

Crown Attorney James Treleavan told Judge Douglas Latimer that he has provided defence counsel Fred Leitch with two volumes of evidence and witnesses' statements pertaining to the case. This is called the Crown's trial brief.

Both lawyers told the court they didn't expect the

preliminary hearing to last more than a day, though another half-day might be needed. Latimer said the half-day of proceedings could be held on April 19 if it is needed, though that date wasn't set aside. Leitch concluded that "based on what I know now" one day will be adequate.

On behalf of his client, Leitch waived the criminal code requirement that an accused kept in custody must be brought back to court weekly. Keller won't have to appear again until the preliminary hearing. Leitch also said they have not applied for a bail hearing and "aren't planning to at this time." Keller was remanded following his fourth court appearance in custody to the Hamilton-Wentworth Detention Centre.



Frozen gas line is suspected as the cause of an emergency landing of this Cessna 172 Thursday on Fairy Lake.

Plane makes emergency landing on Fairy Lake

No one was injured when a four-seater airplane was forced to make an emergency landing on Fairy Lake Thursday.

Emil Meshberg, 43, of Toronto and Inga Izisca of Mississauga were taken into the Gibb home, 69 Elizabeth Dr., after their Cessna 172 developed mechanical problems while flying over Acton around 4 p.m.

The plane was moved over to a more sheltered part of the lake beside the Legion until yesterday (Tuesday) afternoon.

John Wallace, aircraft maintenance engineer from Toronto International Airport, explained it is believed a frozen gas line caused the difficulties, and he and apprentice Brian Hastings, of Georgetown, spent part of yesterday de-icing the line and warming up the engine. Joze Welner, a pilot of 12 years, was brought in to fly the plane away.

Welner told The Free Press he does not trust single engine planes in extreme cold. Once a pilot opens power, cold gets in and chokes the engine.

After the engine was heated by a propane powered heater, Welner and Wallace spent several minutes taxiing the lake before attempting to get off the ground. Once in the air, the pilot circled the lake three times to ensure all was working well, before heading off to Malton.

Hastings pointed out the craft will get a thorough

check-out at the airport, before being flown again.

Gwyneth Gibb explained that Meshberg is a flying instructor and Izisca his student. Izisca was flying the plane when the problems began.

Gwyneth said she and her brother Rhys were watching the craft in the air circling Acton and heard the engine cutting in and out. They watched the plane land on the lake at the end of Elmore Drive, beside the Papillon home. The pair ran to the plane to offer any assistance they could.

The plane's occupants spent about one-and-a-half hours at the Gibb home, making telephone calls and getting warmed up.

They told the Gibbs they were flying out of Toronto International Airport, and were doing touch and goes (a landing exercise) at Guelph Airport. After leaving Guelph, the engine started sputtering. By the time they were over Acton, it became worse and they were losing altitude. At this time, they started looking for a place to land.

Meshberg has been a qualified instructor for 22 years, he told Gwyneth, and this is the first time he has had to land on a lake. When the problems started, he took over the controls and brought the plane down to the safe landing.

Izisca said she wasn't nervous when the trouble started because she knew her instructor would be able to land. The incident has not discouraged her

from continuing her lessons.

Doreen Cooper, of 111 Elizabeth Dr. was credited by Guelph Airport for locating the craft.

Mrs. Cooper explained she was shovelling her driveway when she heard the plane overhead, sputtering and cutting out. When she finally spotted it, it was flying very low. She watched as it circled the lake three times, each time getting lower and lower.

On the third circle, the craft's nose was pointed down and Mrs. Cooper feared to be going to crash in a field.

She ran into the house to telephone Guelph airport to ask if they knew of an aircraft in trouble. She was told they knew, but did not have radio contact, Toronto was in contact with the troubled plane. When asked the present location of the plane, she ran back outside, but could not see or hear the plane.

A while later, the airport called her back to tell her the plane had landed safely on Fairy Lake and thanks to her, they had been able to locate the plane and send another out after it.

Mrs. Cooper said she used to live in Hillsburg where there were a few pilots who would go up and deliberately cut their engines and glide. However, something told her this was not the case this time.

Protect Alert

Button sends doctor running



Jack McKerracher's family can rest easier now that he has ProtectAlert system installed in his home. At the touch of a button, medical assistance can be on the way to his home in case of an emergency.

by Helen Murray

Jack McKerracher created quite a running stir in the Church St. apartments recently, and is he glad he did.

While McKerracher, 90, sat quietly in a friend's apartment having a cup of tea, his doctor and an ambulance driver rushed into his apartment with the building superintendent expecting to find the senior citizen ill or otherwise incapacitated. He was oblivious to all the fuss until everyone had gone back home.

But for the elderly apartment dweller, the commotion was a reminder of the wisdom of his investment in ProtectAlert.

ProtectAlert a personal security and medical alarm system which he rents on a monthly basis, could mean the difference between life or death in an emergency situation.

Owned and operated by Extendicare and its subsidiaries (the Extendicare Group), ProtectAlert made its Canadian debut in July, and already has saved several lives.

Originally designed for senior citizens who must live alone, the system has been rented out to people who work alone and fear robbery, or to those with ill children or babysitters.

ProtectAlert consists of a small transmitter about the size of a firefighter's pager. This can be clipped onto the belt, or, as in McKerracher's case worn around the neck on a chain.

In fact, it works much like a pager, but in reverse. When pressure is applied to a thumb-size square in the centre of the transmitter, a radio signal is sent to the base unit, which is hooked into the telephone system. The base unit

in turn sends signals to the central response centre in Toronto, where there is an operator on duty 24 hours a day.

When the signal is received, the operator telephones the subscriber back and lets the telephone ring three times. This is done to ensure that the transmitter was not set off accidentally. If there is no answer, the operator proceeds to call various people on the subscriber's list.

In McKerracher's case, the operator is to first call his doctor, then his son, then the building superintendent, and then a friend in the same building.

Within minutes of the emergency, help can be at the door.

Many people with poor hearts, or in wheelchairs who are alone a lot find the roughly \$20 a month cost very reasonable, considering it could save their lives.

The base unit is plugged into a telephone jack to send the messages to Toronto. At the same time, it also runs on electricity. In the event of a power failure, a battery automatically kicks in which is good for six hours.

The transmitters are supposedly good up to a distance of 200 feet from the base unit. However, McKerracher found out differently. When his went off accidentally, he was in another apartment, on another floor, doing his carpentry work. When the ProtectAlert operator telephoned him to see if it was an emergency or false alarm, they failed to get an answer, and immediately dispatched help.

After the excitement died down, the superintendent found McKerracher having a cup of tea after he was finished hammering.

McKerracher says he had never had cause to test his system. Sure, he says, there were the regular tests of the equipment, but that was when everyone was expecting the transmitter to go off. Now that he has seen the actual process unfold, he is reassured with its effectiveness. He is also impressed with its working more than 200 feet from the base unit.

He highly recommends anyone living alone to look into a ProtectAlert. It is well worth the cost, he says.

As far as he knows, he is the only person in Acton to have the home security system. It cuts down on the fears of living alone in an emergency and also cuts down on family's fears.

So while the doctor and the ambulance driver may have made an unnecessary trip, for which he apologizes, he is glad that indeed the system does work, and has seen it in operation before it is needed in a real emergency.



Acton's new 1,500 gallon tanker was delivered to the fire hall Monday afternoon. Ian Borland, (light colored coat) of Mobile Tank Industries, 1981, Agincourt, receives a cheque for \$50,000 from Halton Hills Councilor Ross Knechtel. Left to right, firefighters, Doug Andrews, Ted Curtis, Borland, Knechtel, Halton Hills fire chief Mick Holmes and deputy fire chief Bob Hyde. The tanker will be used on all rural fires, and will be the second back up to mutual aid in Georgetown.

Lay-off 25 at Heller's

Frank Heller and Co. has become virtually the last Canadian leather firm to lay-off workers this week.

Spokesman Fred Dawkins said 25 workers out of 165, most with six months or less seniority, were laid off indefinitely effective Tuesday (yesterday). The lay-off affects all areas of plant operation.

Dawkins said the firm hopes to call the workers back by mid-March. Heller's has a "lot of potential orders" due in March, but with the present state of the economy and so much uncertainty they can't be definite the workers will be called back then.

This is the first lay-off at Heller's in 20 years, Dawkins said, and since the firm is in lower priced leathers which are usually safe from economic downturns it indicates how bad the economy really is. He said they are virtually the last leather firm in the country to have lay-offs and there have also been a lot of lay-offs in the leather industry south of the border.

Another indication of the level of uncertainty in the economy is that Heller's has enough contracts to keep operating at full staff but can't obtain color specifications from their customers.

inside

Keates Organs is sending an instrument to B.C. Turn to page B4.

Acton Chamber of Commerce held its annual general meeting Saturday. Details on page 5.

Halton Hills is looking at possible arcade regulations. More on page 2.



Groundhog Day, February 2. Will he see his shadow?