

# The Acton Free Press

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Business and Editorial Office

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## From the editor's desk

by Gord Murray

Some weeks when I arrive at council I get a feeling of *deja vu*. I glance over the agenda and am sure the business about to be discussed by the town fathers and mothers has been dealt with previously.

Municipal business, and thus the news, has a tendency to be reshaped many times before it is finally settled. Sometimes it seems issues are never settled.

In recent weeks that's been the case with noise bylaws and liquor permit requests for the Yugoslav Centre, the controversy surrounding overnight parking, financing agreements for Fourth Line reconstruction, location of arcades etc.

Now, don't get me wrong, while I become as frustrated as anyone with the slowness of government, I'm not suggesting council drags its feet on a regular basis or that every decision can or should be made quickly and definitively.

At the same time I can appreciate the complaints of readers who become weary about opening the paper on a weekly basis and seeing the same topics threshed out, even for months on end. Of course, short of not covering the news from council, I'm not sure what we can do about it. Believe me, sometimes we become as tired of writing the same old stuff as you do of reading it.

Democracy is more often than not slow, and thus our coverage of municipal political issues must plod right along.

Which brings me to the subject of this week's column.

The most long, drawn out issue I've covered during my eight plus years as a scribbler in the Acton area has to be the town hall. If there's been an issue which produced more differing opinions, consumed more news column space, has taken up more time at not just council but also public meetings and a subject which readers have become more sick of reading about than the town hall I certainly can't imagine what it is.

As with all prolonged debates or issues which produce many, many views, as time goes by it becomes more and more difficult for editorial writers to formulate an opinion. You begin to see so many slants on the subject and hear so many views it winds up being almost too complex to boil down into a brief, to the point, and clear comment. You wind up seeing validity in virtually every point of view.

That's certainly been my problem with the town hall.

This problem isn't unique to journalists. It's the dilemma councillors must face regularly. And like politicians, reporters must be prepared to change their minds as new views and facts come to light, or circumstances change.

Not having been raised here, I haven't strong attachment, or disaffection for that matter towards the town hall.

The town hall is supposed to be somewhat unique historically, part of the roof to be specific, but I don't think that's reason enough to preserve it.

I've talked to enough people in town and researched the history of the community enough to know that the town hall has played a pivotal role in the social and political life of Acton. On that historical basis it warrants preservation.

Many past and present leaders of Acton life are tied to the building. So many decisions affecting the community's development were made within those walls. It was quite the spot, really a beehive of activity in years gone by, before it was allowed to decay. I don't think the town hall is a work of architectural beauty, but neither do I think it's such an eyesore or so ugly that it must come down.

I do believe the town hall has a role to play in Acton's future development and can be put to good use for public washrooms, a seniors' drop-in, public meetings, etc. It can fill a need which

the old Stone School, because of its location, never could.

I was concerned about the now defunct notion of using grants and local tax dollars to fix the building up. Grants come from our pockets so in my view, in a time when restraint by government is paramount, tax money shouldn't be spent on the hall or anything else. I think money from lotteries should be used to finance government programs which produce jobs, reduce the provincial deficit or the provincial tax bite. And obviously, in these very troubling economic times, I don't think council should be spending on any major projects.

I like to think that if the library-cultural centre in Georgetown was coming up today and not a couple of years ago council would exercise the same restraint. Certainly they can demonstrate they are shying away from big ticket items like the town hall all over Halton Hills by shelving all thoughts of building a central administrative complex for the municipality until such time as the economy improves radically.

So I must confess I would have had problems with council spending \$400,000 plus of tax dollars, regardless of source, on restoration.

I used to think maybe a referendum on the town hall was the answer. However, in recent months and realization that even this isn't a valid solution to solving the issue has sunk in. Except for a few citizens on both sides of the question who feel quite passionately about their views, I don't think the majority of citizens care anymore.

My reading of the most Actonians, that mass of citizens who never say much of public consumption on any issue of burning interest, is no-hum on the town hall. Mind you this isn't a scientifically study based reading, just a feeling resulting from several years of listening to readers.

Most people don't care what happens to the hall, as long as it doesn't cost them anything. They just want it settled once and for all, one way or another, so they don't have to hear or read about it any longer. They couldn't wisely vote in a referendum on the subject because they haven't been interested enough in the past, and won't likely be in the future, to delve into the pros and cons of restoration or absorbed the differing views. And after five years of the town hall who can blame them.

If this all seems slightly confused, it should. I'm confused when it comes to the town hall. I've heard so much and written so much about it I don't know if I'm coming or going on the issue anymore.

But I can't get away from this one nagging feeling in my gut about the town hall. If it comes down a lot of hard work by some citizens will go down the drain. And that's sad.

If the vast majority don't care one way or another about its fate and it doesn't cost any taxpayer anywhere any money, but it might well be a plus to the community and there are some valid historical, social and cultural reasons for saving it, then I can't see what the real harm will be in letting the people who do care deeply about the building taking a crack at restoring it themselves.

Another couple of years with the hall standing won't hurt anyone really. The town need not commit to anything—maintenance, renting space—not a thing, except demolishing it if the supporters fail.

If in the far off distance of good economic times the municipality needs space and the town hall is still around, then the councillors of the day can tackle the question of Halton Hills involvement. Until then it can be a private citizens project, and remain that way forever, if that's what circumstances dictate.

In any event the issue is presumably drawing to a close this summer or fall, so soon the majority will be happy. They won't have to read or hear about the town hall anymore.



## We all grieve

The sympathy of this community and district goes out to the families who suffered the loss of sons in the tragic drownings at Fairy Lake. The whole town grieves that two young lives should be snuffed out in a place where there's so much fun and recreation for the children of the community.

The circumstances surrounding the drownings are indeed strange and an inquest is necessary to sort out what exactly happened and recommendations on how to avoid future tragedies in the same place.

Fairy Lake has had many victims over the years but never in living memory have two lives been lost within an hour of each other. The beach had been a popular place during the hot, muggy days this summer and the water inviting for youngsters but it can also be a dangerous for young children even under the best of supervision. — H.C.

## Drop parking limit

Halton Hills should drop its controversial three-hour overnight parking limit in the period between April 30 and October 1.

The bylaw, in existence for several years now, has two purposes, as far as we can tell. One is to keep the streets clear overnight during winter to facilitate snow plowing and removal. No quarrel there.

The second reason is to keep the streets from becoming parking lots. This is a commendable motive. Few people want to see inoperable cars left on the street or parking on the streets 365 days a year, etc. However, from day one the law has proved to be a problem for many residents, especially in areas such as Kingham.

When he visited council last week Halton Regional Police Inspector Matt MacPherson suggested there haven't been any overnight blitzes since one officer gave out over 120 tickets in one night a couple of years ago. However, many Actonians have complained about the bylaw this spring and summer because there have been nights when it seems 50 or 60 cars are ticketed.

The vast majority of residents only want occasional parking this time of year. Friends and relatives visit for a few days. Where can they park, except on the street?

It's a real hardship in Kingham where the municipality permitted townhouse development without sufficient parking spaces for two car families, let alone guest parking.

Overnight parking regulations are also a problem in other areas such as Lakeview, Glenlea and old Acton as well. With so many two car families filling driveways, the street is the only alternative to accommodate overnight guests.

Town staff should come up with alternate methods of preventing streets from becoming parking lots for a small minority and quit penalizing the majority of citizens who only want to park on the street occasionally. After all, who paid for the streets if it wasn't the people who want to park on them now and again. — G.M.

## Coles' slaw

# Weeds in the creek spoil the view

by Hartley Coles

One of the most scenic spots in Acton is along the grounds of the Robert Little school and the public library. The school creek flows peacefully by the library under an arched bridge, a favorite haunt for couples having wedding photos taken.

This week the grass has been cut and the grounds looked neat and inviting but the school creek is choked with weeds. To further spoil the picture someone had heaved a shopping cart in the water. Pieces of silt and jettam revolved around it and at a small pool just before the water ducks under the Main St. bridge and dissolves into Fairy Lake a few hundred yards further downstream.

It is an idyllic setting and one often visited by tourists and visitors who see the plaque which tells the story of the founding of Acton. An inviting bench ringed by flowers invites people to sit down and enjoy a few minutes of tranquillity.

Over the years many councils of the former Town of Acton, recreation committees and the Acton Beautification Committee recognized this as a unique setting and one which should be kept as attractive as possible. Weeds have been pulled other years by students with grants, the Town has had



a shovel to scoop out the silt and give the bed back to the spring fed creek again. The improvements last for a few months and then the weeds take over again.

We are wasting one of the beauty spots in Acton by letting the appearance of the creek spoil the rest of the picture. It obviously is going to need a study to determine how best to stop silt from coming downstream and log-

ging along the part of the creek which borders River St. The silt is good fertilizer for weeds.

At one time there was a dam upstream alongside what is known locally as The Free Press building. The dam held back a large pond when I was a youngster and it was a summer oasis for swimming and fishing.

The dam must also have kept the silt in the pond because the school creek as I remember it had a gravel bottom. It never looked like the weed-filled morass it becomes during summer months now. The dam was broken by the fury of Hurricane Hazel in 1954.

As a community I guess we should be exploring the natural beauty of the setting more than we do. Others have done so and it adds to the image of their comments as a pleasant and attractive place to live. Milton, for one, took their old mill pond on Martin St. and turned it into a scenic park almost in the centre of the downtown.

Just keeping the weeds down in the school creek would certainly add to the appearance of the library and the school grounds which are often admired by those who pass in their cars and are left with fleeting impressions of this community.

## Back issues 10 years ago

July 19, 1972.  
The Liquor Control Board asked council's approval of their store in Acton staying open six days a week in July and August. Approval was given.

Three Acton grandchildren had "Happy Birthday" wishes for George McPhail on Sunday. He celebrated his 90th birthday with Bruce, George and Susan McPhail, other members of the family and old friends and neighbors at the McPhail home.

Lovell Bros. Meat Market Specials for this week, 1 lb. pkg. Sliced Bacon 89 cents, Fresh Linked Sausage 69 cents a lb., choice Round Steak \$1.29 a lb. and choice Rump Roast 85 cents a lb.

Steve Van Fleet qualified himself for the Eastern Canadian Finals at Etobicoke Stadium last week when he threw the Javelin 200' 11" the furthest he's ever thrown.

## 20 years ago

July 19, 1962.  
The new police radar speed recorder went into operation Friday and according to police it is "very successful." Many people have been stopped for speeding already.

Canada's newest, largest and most modern fully automated quarry development came in for close scrutiny when a group of Esqueving Township Councillors and officials were personally hosted on a project tour by company president, Frederick G. Gardiner.

Specials at Ledger's I.G.A. this week, Wieners, 1 lb. pkg. 45 cents, peaches 25 cents a qt., Salad Dressing 59 cents for 32 oz. jar, Leg O' Lamb 49 cents a lb. and Lamb in a Basket, (roasts, chops, stew) 23 cents a lb.

Mr. and Mrs. Wilfred Coles of Church St., Acton celebrated their 53rd wedding anniversary on Tuesday.

The 50th wedding anniversary of Mrs. Tom Watson's parents, Mr. and Mrs. L. Fulton of Montreal, was celebrated this week at home.

## 50 years ago

July 14, 1932.  
Mr. and Mrs. John Russell are observing their golden wedding anniversary on Tuesday, July 19. They will be at home to their friends from 7:30 to 10:30 (standard time) on that evening.

Arrangements are getting underway nicely for the Acton Community Picnic to be held in the Acton Park on Wednesday afternoon, July 27, followed by a street dance in the evening.

Specials this Friday, Saturday and Monday at Nelson and Co. Mill St.: Acton, 7 lb. bag of Flour 17 cents, 10 lbs. of Sugar 53 cents, 20 Cloths Pegs 39 cents, Choice Blue Boy Coffee 1 lb. for 33 cents, and 3 grapefruit for 23 cents.

The Fifth Annual Re-union of the Dobbie Clan was held at Edgewood Park, Edin Mills, on Friday, July 11, 1932.

Miss Lorna Kennedy and Bernice Reid are visiting with Mr. and Mrs. John Kennedy, at Detroit for a week.

Misses Willa and Mary Van Norman, of Guelph, are visiting at Mr. and Mrs. G.H. Lantz's.

## 75 years ago

July 18, 1907.  
The statute labor of the past week has greatly improved the roads in the countryside.

The funeral of the late Mrs. Alex. Mann was held from the home of Hugh Mann Esq., Queen St. Mr. D.D. Mann came up from Toronto in his private railway car "Athabasca."

The members of Acton L.O.L. 60 strong, headed by Acton Citizens Band, took the morning train to Georgetown to participate in the demonstration there and won a silver cup in competition.

The Messrs. Beardmore junior and half a score of other young men have organized a club for the erection of a club house and equipment for boating on Fairy Lake. Eight or 10 new boats will be purchased.

Some 400 people attended Limehouse Presbyterian church garden party at Mr. Wm. McDowell's.

## 100 years ago

July 13, 1882  
The Georgetown people seem anxious to have Mr. Tolton build his mill there, and talk of offering a little more than Acton, just to get it.

Mr. John Cameron is presently superintending the erection of four brick buildings in Acton, including the town hall.

The merchants and clerks complain of the late hour at which some of their patrons arrive. A good honest day's work up to seven o'clock is all that should be expected of any one.

Mr. Thomas Moore, school principal, caught two foot-long trout in Christie and Henderson's Pond (north of Bower Ave.).

## Our readers write

### Johnson wants probe

Dear Sir:

Cher's Rest Home in Acton (Halton Hills) has received a lot of unwarranted adverse publicity lately, not only in the press, but verbally, by malicious, unfounded, well spread rumors, not one of which has been substantiated. Regional staff can be said to have been inconsistent regarding square footage, and allotment of beds, etc. It could be said that this inconsistency has bordered on harassment. Cher's Rest Home is a rest home, nothing more, nothing less. The doctor who has visited the facility two or three times per week for the last five years states it is no better or no worse than any other facility in Acton. No one would dispute the fact that such a facility is needed in North Halton, on that point all council and staff are in agreement.

Regarding the lock or hasp breaking incident, Mr. Perlin, the Regional Chief Administration Officer, says he can't believe that all the staff members would lie, therefore he believes Dr. Cole did not break the lock or force entry into the medicine cabinet particularly as two people signed affidavits to that effect, and the other three signed statements.

The only way to clear this mess up is for a sub-committee of regional council to interview those who are known to be rumor spreaders, staff, those present at the lock breaking incident, in fact the whole rest home situation in Acton, and that is the basis of my notice of motion for the next regional council meeting.

Until that committee reports, no apologies are due to anyone.

William A. Johnson  
R.R. 2 Rockwood