

# Bid to launch Neighborhood Watch in Acton

Police, local councillors and a citizen involved with both the Acton Social Services and Information Centre and the Halton Safety Council are working together to bring Neighborhood Watch to Acton.

Neighborhood Watch is neighbors watching each others' properties during times when burglaries are likely to occur. A police officer patrolling a neighborhood may not recognize a stranger in your yard, but your neighbors would.

Last year, despite a significant decrease, there were still 2,359 burglaries in Halton region. In total 1,010 homes were broken into and 1,061 businesses, as well as 288 other buildings such as churches and schools.

Last Tuesday morning Halton Regional Police crime prevention officer for north Halton, Constable Scott Pringle, met with Councillors Rick Bonnette and Ross Knechtel, and citizen Pat Little to discuss Neighborhood Watch. Councillor Dave Whiting was away on municipal business.

Mrs. Little applied to be re-appointed to the Halton Safety Council this year and while being interviewed by the selection committee for council appointments the subject of Neighborhood Watch came up. Bonnette sat on that committee and noted at the recent meeting that Mrs. Little gets full credit for raising the subject and working to get it launched.



**Working Together To Prevent Crime**

Bonnette said he is "behind Neighborhood Watch 100 per cent" and Knechtel echoed his endorsement, calling the program "excellent."

Pringle noted Neighborhood Watch began in the United States as a last resort for halting crime's rapid increase. It has been so successful that in some areas crime has been reduced as much as 80 per cent. The Halton police enjoyed success with Neighborhood Watch in Oakville and Burlington and it is now being introduced in Milton. Unfortunately until now, Pringle observed, there hasn't been much interest in either of Halton Hills urban areas.

"It's just neighbors taking care of neighbors. Knowing what kind of car they drive,

the hours they work, their movements. And Acton would be ideal for Neighborhood Watch, it is small enough we could monitor the program's success, if any," Pringle explained.

Neighborhood Watches are set up in blocks of 50 to 100 homes and for it to work properly at least 50 per cent of the homes in a block must be participating in the program.

Pringle said it will depend on public response which areas of town Neighborhood Watch starts in. Lakeview, Bovis, Kingham, Glenlea and the old town all lend themselves to being broken into Neighborhood Watch blocks of a number of streets.

Each block needs a block captain and every time the police are called to a block the block captain is informed so he can pass information on to the Neighborhood Watch members. The police want the Neighborhood Watch blocks to receive feedback on the input they give the force.

The first step in establishing Neighborhood Watches is for people to talk it up in their neighborhoods to see what kind of response there is and then call either the Acton Social Services and Information Centre at 853-3310 or Acton Travel, 853-3580 and give their name, address, phone number and an estimate of support for the program in their area. Once enough names of interested peo-

ple are collected in any area a meeting is arranged at a school in the area. There are usually two meetings before the Neighborhood Watch system is in operation in any area.

Bonnette said they'd like to see Neighborhood Watch operations throughout the town

by June and Pringle said this was "feasible." He emphasized citizens must "want to participate."

There are other benefits to Neighborhood Watch besides improved protection against crime. It has brought neighborhoods to-

(Continued on page 11)

## Senior citizen fends off armed robber, girl 13

An elderly Acton woman got into a struggle with a 13-year-old female armed robber who had surprised her and another elderly woman in a home on Poplar Ave. Sunday evening, Halton Regional Police report.

The two women were in the home at 9.45 p.m. when the armed robber, brandishing a knife and wearing a stocking mask, demanded money and one woman struggled with the robber, according to Sergeant Keith Gregory.

Neither of the elderly women were injured.

A 13-year-old girl as well as a 15-year-old female, were arrested and charged with robbery Monday.

Police say that the younger girl was already in the house. No signs of forced entry were found, according to Sergeant Gregory. The 15-year-old was allegedly on the porch while the crime was taking place.

The robber escaped after the struggle with about \$60 worth of food. A press release issued by the police states that neither of the elderly women wants to be identified.

Sergeant Gregory stated that the robber fled on foot and area police officers chased her for a short way, but she eluded the officers.

The juveniles are not related to the elderly women, but are known to them, police say. The investigation is continuing.

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## Kellar sentenced to life term

The accused killer of a 22-year-old Acton woman has been sentenced to life imprisonment with eligibility for parole after 17 years.

Eric Howard Kellar, 33, was sentenced in Ontario Supreme Court Tuesday morning after pleading guilty to second degree murder in the slaying of Colleen Oates, a Bower Ave. mother of two children.

Chief Justice Gregory Evans remarked that although Kellar will be eligible for parole, his chances of release are slim without "a tremendous effort, a severe motivation" to rehabilitate himself.

"If not, you're likely to spend the rest of your life as a number in an institution," Evans told Kellar.

Kellar surrendered to police five days after the body of Mrs. Oates was found stabbed and mutilated in her home on Oct. 22, 1981. According to evidence presented by Crown Attorney Jim Treleaven, Kellar had been drinking liquor and wine with Mrs. Oates, her husband Kevin, and a few friends throughout the afternoon and evening.

After the friends had left, Mr. Oates had gone to work in Bramalea, leaving his wife alone with Kellar. A neighbor Susan Patterson had joined them briefly during the evening and evidently Kellar had made "sexual advances" to both women, Treleaven recounted from evidence given at the preliminary hearing. Mrs. Patterson left shortly after midnight.

At 2 a.m., Mrs. Oates telephoned her husband at work and told him she was afraid, asking him to come home. Oates told his wife to ask Kellar to leave, and promised to call her back in 15 minutes. According to Treleaven, Mrs. Oates was cutting a pizza the two had ordered when she was attacked and stabbed many times.

According to statements made by police, Kellar ripped the telephone cord from the wall before fleeing the house. Kellar himself told police at the time of his arrest that he was uncertain what had happened. "I knew she was hurt. I panicked."

Oates, concerned about the constant busy signal on the telephone line, returned home at 4 a.m. and found his wife's body. The two children, one aged 3½ years and one infant, were both in bed and unharmed.

Mrs. Oates had been stabbed about 50 times in the neck, chest, abdomen and upper limbs.

Kellar had been released from Ontario Correctional Institute only a few weeks before the slaying, where he had been serving a term for indecent assault. His previous record showed a number of convictions of common assault, theft and possession of stolen property.

Psychologists and social workers had put Kellar's behavior down to a personality problem, alcohol abuse and low self-esteem.

A doctor at the Workman's Compensation Board Hospital in Toronto and a social

worker who had treated Kellar had strongly recommended psychiatric treatment for Kellar while he was at OCI in 1981, treatment which he did not receive.

According to both Treleaven and defence counsel Toomas Ounapuu of Toronto, Kellar had told investigating police that he had an alcohol problem. "I shouldn't drink... I become another person," he is reported to have told police.

Ounapuu pointed out that a psychologist at Penetanguishine's Mental Health Centre had judged that Kellar could be rehabilitated under treatment.

Ounapuu suggested that after a period of incarceration and treatment, Kellar could "return to the community at some future time."

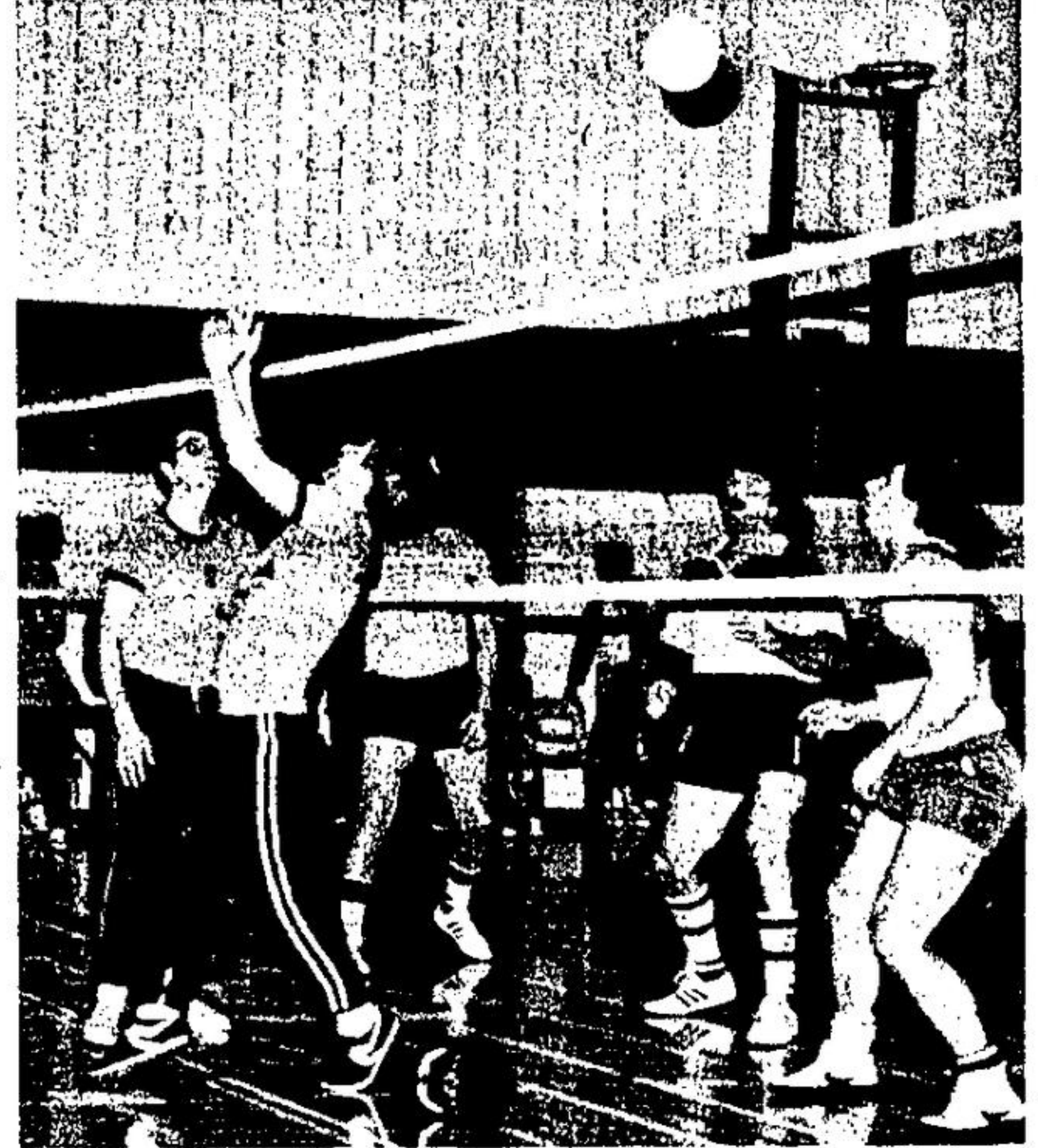
Justice Evans pointed out that the murder of Mrs. Oates is "a horrible killing. She suffered 50 wounds, many of which were imposed following the death of this unfortunate woman."

"I find it difficult to reconcile an attack of this kind with a person not in the category of an insane person."

One wonders," he added to Kellar, "what is wrong with a system which lets you go at large when all those in authority are recommending (psychiatric treatment, in a hospital)." Somewhere along society has failed you."

Calling the killing "a vicious and callous crime" and a "savage attack" on "a woman unprotected in her own home," Evans pointed out that the nature of the crime, as well as a prisoner's demeanor, will be taken into account by a parole jury when opportunity for parole arises.

"I am not a parole officer; I'm a sentencing judge. And unless there is a drastic change in your pattern of behavior; it's not likely you will ever be released from custody."



Acton was fast and furious between the Argos and last year's tourney champs, the Dirty Dozen (Officers working in Halton Hills), when the Halton Regional Police brought their annual Al Ruelens volleyball tournament to Acton High School Friday night. The event raised over \$700 for the Acton Cancer branch and people had a great time cheering on the many teams.

## Police probe towing in north

A senior police officer has been assigned to work with Halton Regional Police administrator Robin Hale to look into the problems of there not being a car compound in Acton and vehicles being towed to Georgetown after accidents.

As promised twice at Halton Hills council after Councillor Rick Bonnette raised the concern and gave each member a copy of a letter from the owner of Halton Hills Collision, Thursday Mayor Peter Pomeroy brought the problem to the attention of Halton Police Commission.

He said he wanted to get the "wheels moving" so some adjustments can be made in the police towing contract. The mayor observed the last time the contract was tendered, two towing areas in the north were welded together into one.

There have been questions about the

fairness of this system from business people in Acton, and he has talked to a number of them about their concerns.

Without a pound in Acton, vehicles are being taken to Georgetown after accidents and so Georgetown autobody shops get first crack at the business or the damaged vehicles must be towed back to Acton.

Police officers aren't properly informing people of their rights at the accident scene with regard to the towing of their vehicle, he added.

Also Pomeroy has found there are some problems with the way towing is being done. Towing forms he's seen don't contain information such as when a towing call came in and when the vehicle was picked up.

He said he'd like to see arrangements made for a second pound in the north for Acton and area and suggested the person who now holds the contract, a Georgetown towing firm, may agree to changes.

Pomeroy noted he can provide details to the police department about the problems.

Police Chief James Harding suggested a senior officer be assigned to review the whole situation with Hale, how the tendering has been done in the past, how towing zones

(Continued on page 11)

## Taxes on identical property are 25% higher in Acton than Georgetown

Taxes on identical industrial-commercial and residential properties can be as much as 25 per cent higher if the property is located in Acton instead of Georgetown.

Monday night Halton Hills general committee decided to delve deeply into property assessment and tax reform through Section 63, (formerly Section 86). Also Councillor Ross Knechtel, who chaired a committee for the last council dealing with assessment reform, will work with treasurer Ray King to have the old report updated with new

information which has become available.

Assessment and tax reform came up because a consultant hired by Frank Heller and Co., with plants in Acton and Georgetown produced some shocking information about problems both in assessments in Georgetown and Acton as well as the tax equalization factors designed to make the tax burden fairer.

Consultant Bob Carruthers told councillors that taxes on identical properties (if everything is equal such as the year a house or building was built, and size, etc.) are as much as 25 per cent higher in Acton. Explained another way, if Acton and Georgetown were adjacent and the boundary line ran down the middle of a street and houses were the same in size on both sides of the road and were built in the same year and had the same market value, the houses on the Acton side of the street would be paying 25 per cent more in taxes.

There are major discrepancies both with assessments in the two urban areas as well as the equalization factors, Carruthers explained. If council opts for Section 63 some assessments and taxes would rise slightly in Georgetown and drop drastically on some Acton properties, but at least then taxes on identical properties would be the same.

Looking at Heller's Wallace St. plant, the former Disston factory in Acton, the present realty tax is \$10,794.65 more because the plant is in Acton than it would be if it was in Georgetown. In addition Heller's pays about \$7,500 more in business tax.

When the equalization factors are applied the market value of the Heller's factory would be \$951,950 if it was in Georgetown but is valued at \$1,159,900 because it is in Acton,

But, Carruthers noted Heller's paid just \$840,000 for the factory so the assessment should really only be \$189,000 based on market value instead of \$260,950.

Carruthers pointed out the equalization factor is supposed to balance out the difference in assessments between Acton and Georgetown, but the equalization factor is really doing the opposite.

Fred Dawkins of Heller's observed the last time Halton Hills looked at assessment and tax reform the majority of Ontario municipalities hadn't opted for Section 63, but that's changed, now the majority have adopted the alternative system of assessment.

Dawkins explained Heller's 1982 tax bill was 10.5 per cent of the purchase price of the plant.

Carruthers pointed to Halton Hills own report which said there were "terrible" inequities in assessments in Halton Hills.

The consultant recalled the province froze assessments at 1970 levels so the many discrepancies resulting from four different systems being used in what became Halton Hills were locked in. He questioned the accuracy of land values, provisions for assessment increases for improvements, provision for depreciation, etc.; all factors in the assessments which were frozen at 1970 levels.

Assessment valuations in Halton Hills were based on different year's construction cost manuals and different criteria.

He also wondered if it would be legal for Halton Hills to adjust the equalization factors, something the province has advised against, because the frozen assessments are based on hybrid values (different years).

(Continued on page 3)

### Inside

The Town says it spent \$46,753.20 on summer sports field maintenance and hydro. More on page 9.

Dave Hall received a suspended sentence for his part in the theft of skins case. Turn to page 8.

Crime was down in Halton last year 5.3 per cent. Details on page B1.

The school board and police budgets are up just 7.6 per cent. More on pages B1 and B6.

Supply teachers are in a militant mood. More on page B7.

That's Life for the Telford's. See photo on page 6.

Police beat is on page 2.

Council cost us \$104,447 last year. See page B4.



The annual Scout and Guide church parade streams down Mill St. on the way to the services at Trinity United Church. It was a beautiful Sunday afternoon for the parade of over 100 Brownies, Cubs, Beavers, Scouts, Guides, Venturers, Sea Scouts and Pathfinders.