

# The Acton Free Press

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## Have we lost faith?

Nassagaweya Councillor Bill Johnson's dire warning of radical public action if the province didn't smarten up in general, and smarten up in particular on the aggregate issue, may yet come to pass.

Johnson warned people will only take so much from Queen's Park, especially after the province imposed regional government and cut Halton Hills in half with a big power corridor. He predicted this area could witness civil disobedience, people lying down in front of machinery, etc. He gazed into his crystal ball back last fall when the aggregate issue first erupted.

Certainly, Johnson's prediction took on more credence at the recent public meeting with Alan Pope.

The audience, nearly 300 strong, was in no mood to put up with weak assurances and platitudes from the Tory Ontario government. You could almost reach out and touch the anger in the crowded auditorium.

They have probably never said it so eloquently. They've lost faith in the democratic and public participation processes. They feel it is futile to play the political game by the book, a waste of time and breath talking to government.

But have people had it with just Ottawa and Queen's Park?

We think not. While regional and local councillors are in no hot water, and justifiably so, over the aggregate issue, we think there was still a message that night for them.

In fact the mood helped solve a puzzle for us. On two issues which have cropped up in this first year of the new council term there wasn't the public eruption we expected.

Council is now following a proper, well considered and apparently public process in dealing with the central administration or municipal complex issue. However, we were expecting a huge uproar when it came to light (we admit the controversy was fueled somewhat by our obvious indignation) that for months council had been studying the possibility of locating its new building on a parcel of land in Georgetown but didn't make this a

matter of public record with a deposit on the land until two weeks after the election.

Well, there was no uproar. To be sure we heard from some citizens questioning the legality and ethics of the action. There were lots of people grumbling about the \$10,000 land deposit and \$20,000 spent on site studies. But just as many people commented that what could you expect, that was politics and politicians. The recent study and \$4.4 million price tag has also produced grumbling, but no delegates to council.

When the property tax reassessment issue came up again, backed by convincing evidence that Acton industries and business were paying more taxes than those in Georgetown, we again expected a big uproar. All we heard was "that's what we've been saying for years," Acton's paying more than its share.

We suspect people have lost faith in the public participation process with all levels of government. Part of the problem may be our local politicians have been tarnished by the actions of those in Ottawa and at Queen's Park, painted with the same bad brush.

Some say there's no point in complaining, they always have an explanation or excuse. We've heard people suggest you can't talk to councillors about an issue while it's still in its infancy because it is being studied and there's no need to worry. But by the time an issue has come close to the decision point most council minds are made up and they have their justifications solidly in place.

We believe that protesting to our councillors still works, not every time, but often enough to make the exercise worthwhile. At the same time citizens must be realistic. You can't go to council or drop-in and expect instant results.

But, if the message is that people are fed up with talking to their councillors too, then councillors had better stop assuming everything's fine if they aren't hearing a lot of beefs and viewing packed galleries.

Maybe the message of the aggregate meeting crowd to all politicians was to not talk, just listen, and try to take the pulse yourself a little more often. —G.M.



## From the editor's desk

### To print names, or not

Part three  
So, the Free Press doesn't print names of people charged with crimes for fear of embarrassing people.

Try and tell that to the 28 people whose names were printed and their cases covered in this newspaper in 1982. Try and tell that to their families, for that matter.

I went through all of last year's editions of the Free Press and surprised myself. I didn't realize we'd carried as many court stories as we had.

In terms of general crimes we published 46 stories (arrests, remands in court, preliminary hearings being held, trials, sentencing) which ate up 426 column inches of space (there are 10 columns on a page, and columns are about 12 inches wide).

Among the charges were deer poaching, criminal negligence causing death, noise bylaw violations, car theft, theft of goods of high value and cash, vandalism to sacred public property, assault police and obstruction of police.

Then there were 13 stories dealing with arrest and court appearances, trial and sentencing of two people charged with murders last year. Coverage of these cases consumed over 26 column inches.

Add to all this nearly 1,100 column inches of coverage of the Dominion Hotel second degree murder trial, sentencing and appeals. This story was broken down into 29 articles and earned the Free Press a second place finish in the Best News Story in the Ontario Community Newspapers Association competitions in which our coverage was judged against the best news story entries of all community papers in the province. Our hotel fire trial coverage beat out articles on subjects such as Canada's first test tube baby's birth and the Litton plant bombing.

We also covered the legal manoeuvres involved in the appeal of the lenient sentence given to a Burlington man who ran down several women riding their bicycles in that city in 1980. One of the women killed in that accident was a former Actonian. There were two stories taking up 27 column inches dealing with that case.

Several of the cases we started

covering last year weren't settled until this year, a few are still pending.

So, I'd say we do print names and cover court cases, though obviously not as many as some readers want.

I won't explain our policy again or delve into the reasons why we don't print more names or the criteria for a case being covered in court.

Instead I'd like to turn to some personal experiences I've had dealing with this contentious issue. I mentioned one reason why after printing a name we cover the case continually in court is that people's names are cleared on technicalities.

I can tell you people do get off on technicalities, because I did. "About six years ago I was in a car accident. I caused it and was charged with failing to yield."

The day I went to court I pleaded guilty, why not, I was guilty. However, when it was all over I wasn't fined, I didn't lose any points. My name was instead totally cleared.

After hearing the evidence and learning I agreed with it, the judge said he was entering a not guilty plea on my behalf. I was stunned as he explained the summons period for this crime was 21 days and I haven't received mine until 24 days after the offense. Why hadn't I received my summons on time? It was delivered on time, but I wasn't home, I was away on vacation.

Alas, the guilty aren't always punished. Turning to another personal experience, I remember one Acton mother who was always telling me we should run the names of all people charged. We'd discussed, or maybe argued is a better description, the point a number of times.

However, her tune changed quickly when her own son was charged with an offense and the name wound up in the paper because it was a serious crime carrying a jail term (the accused did go to jail).

Suddenly she could see all kinds of arguments for not printing names in a small town. She pointed out she was taking a lot of abuse from friends and it wasn't fair, her son was an adult now, he'd lived



by Gord Murray  
Free Press editor

away from home for several years. Why were people holding her responsible for what he'd done, she couldn't possibly control him any longer. To boot, while she was very embarrassed, her son didn't seem to give a hoot.

Another experience we've had here wasn't personal, the family involved knew Hartley and not me, so they called him. But he passed on all the details to me for my own information.

We ran a teenager's name who was charged with a crime which outraged the public. The parents were taking a lot of abuse. The kid didn't seem a bit embarrassed when we saw him in court.

This youth had a long record of trouble. He'd been a big problem for his parents for some time. They'd tried everything they could think of to straighten him out. Nothing worked for very long. They were at wits end. The wanted him behind bars in the hopes someone else would have more luck. There were other extenuating circumstances surrounding his behavior too.

But now, after trying their very best and enduring a lot of pain caused by this punk, they were faced with public humiliation.

It's no picnic for an editor hearing a story like that and it really makes you think about never running a name again because every time you run a name you don't know what extenuating circumstances might be in play, you don't know about what increased pain you may be going to inflict on the innocent.

There was another case I discussed with a close friend of a family whose child's name appeared in print. This youth had admitted to police he hadn't perpetrated the deed alone, but re-

(Continued on page 7)

## Back issues

### 10 years ago

May 2, 1973

Acton Bowling League's Superstars were the winners of the league championship. Members of the team included Norbert Langlois, Kevin Clarke, Jerry Buchanan, Barry Dempsey, Doug Furguson and Captain Donna Schink.

Gordon Johnson, long-time mechanic at L & L Ford and Thompson Motors, was honored with a special retirement party at Acton Meadows Golf Club last Friday.

More provincial grants means less taxes for property owners in Acton. Pat McKenzie, chairman of the town's Budget committee, said council decided to pass the savings on to the taxpayer rather than use the extra funds for town projects.

### 20 years ago

May 2, 1963

John Goy has been named Citizen of the Year by Acton Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Goy is the fifth Acton citizen to receive the award.

About 30 head of dairy cattle were saved just minutes before fire engulfed a barn on the farm of Mr. and Mrs. Sam Snow of Erin Township, Thursday evening.

An oriental theme was chosen for Acton High School "At Home" held Friday evening. Students and guests were greeted by Principal and Mrs. E.A. Hansen, Trustee and Mrs. Dwight Engel, Mayor Les Duby, Student Council President Bonnie MacDougall, and vice-president Randy Daly.

Shuet Chun Yee saw her bridegroom for the first time only weeks before they were married at Knox Presbyterian Church this week. She and Acton resident Kong Wong had been pen pals for about a year. They became engaged while she was still living in Hong Kong, and the bride arrived in Acton at the end of March to meet her groom-to-be.

### 50 years ago

May 4, 1933

Black Creek Fishing Club has been formed with J.M. McDonald president, W.K. Graham and Jos. Kentner vice-presidents, G.A. Dilla secretary-treasurer, and committee members W.D. Talbot, C.H. Harrison and Dr. E.J. Nelson. The club has secured fishing rights to practically all of the Tannery Creek from the second to the fourth lines and it is their intention to place fry in the creek each year.

A rehearsal was held in the Town Hall of all the music to be presented by Acton scholars at the Halton Music Festival. There was a crowded house. Among those singing solos were Ethel Franklin, Dora Hansen, Jackie Bruce, Sammie Brunelle, Marie Brunelle, Bertha Bristow, Beatrice Taylor, Jean Evans, Gordon Gibbons, Melvin Hall, Vernon Agnew, Robert Loutlet, Jessie Coles, Dorothy Dunn, Charlie Tyler, Bella Roszell, and Victor Bristow.

Acton Baseball club has some newcomers. The Morton boys, Bus and Norman, have moved here from Toronto. Dave Anielle and Mr. Gifford, minister of the Baptist church, are also turning out.

### 75 years ago

April 30, 1908

A stack of hemlock bark caught fire at Acton Tanning Co. The steam engine was promptly on the scene. Only 20 or 30 cords of the bark were destroyed. There are about 1,000 cords of bark in this section of the yard and it is worth between \$8,000 and \$10,000.

Messrs. Beardmore and Co. have closed their chopping mill on Mill St. and farmers are obliged to go elsewhere.

The old Adams residence at the corner of Main and Church, erected over 60 years ago, is to be moved nearer to the new house on the property and converted into a double tenement. This will leave a very eligible building lot on the corner.

### 100 years ago

May 19, 1883

A list is given of all those who planted a total of 321 shade trees in the village this spring. There were 43 trees planted at the public school grounds.

Through the untiring efforts of our reeve, Mr. W.H. Storey, Messrs. Beardmore and Co., Toronto, have been induced to re-establish their very large sole leather manufactory in the village.

Mr. C.S. Smith employs a gardener during the entire season and has without doubt the finest garden in town. (The old stone school was his home.)

## The flour mill has been here from the beginning

The old flour mill at the bottom of Mill Street has been sold to a new owner and the business will continue just as it has since the Adams brothers, founders of Acton, built the first one on the site over 150 years ago. And of course, it is from this mill that Mill St. got its name.

It was happenstance rather than design that Mill St. became the main street in Acton with most of the business places on it. The street intended for the main business section was Main St. It is wider and more suited for the business section. But villages in those days grew like Topsy, in every direction. Natural growth turned Mill into Main and Main into highway.

It was water power that attracted the Adams brothers, Rev. Ezra and Rev. Zenas and Rufus Adams, who settled here in 1828. Fairy Lake then was a "purling trout stream" to quote Acton's Early Days. By the purchase of 300 acres and the damming up of a stream it was converted into a water power sufficient to operate the flour mill.

There was a saw mill near the site of the flour mill at one time

just below the dam but business there was discontinued about 40 years after the dam backed up the waters of the mill pond into the 88 acre body of water we call Fairy Lake today.

No mention of that mill would be complete without saying something about Dave Lindsay who operated it for decades and turned out some of the best flour in the province. Dave was also an avid horseman and hunter and both his horses and hounds were familiar sights around Acton. He had a barn at the back of his house on Park St. where he kept his Standardbreds and his hounds were constant companions in the Packard he drove, which was frequently parked at the mill.

It was a common sight to see trucks lining up at the mill when Dave Lindsay operated it, bringing wheat to be ground into the flour which made the mill famous.

The owners since have kept the business "flourishing" if it is not a bad pun. Now a new owner has taken over a business which was here when Acton was only a collection of cabins, probably fashioned out of logs from the thick woods

which enveloped this part of the province.

Fairy Lake shores were also heavily wooded with cedar, hemlock and hardwood. Stumps still in the lake attest to that.

Acton's Early Days says: "In the subdivision of the Adams farms, when Acton was largely surveyed into village lots, the peninsula jutting out into the lake, westward from the section of lots on Main Street, was secured by Ranson Adams, a nephew of the founders. This property contained 14 acres, as it does to-day. Its shores were also wooded, as I can remember quite distinctly. There were cedars, and birch, and wild cherry, and balm of gilead and basewood.

In those, we boys, after a dip in the lake, at the present old swimmin' hole, would regale ourselves with cherries from the black and fire cherry trees, and with carrots from the field of white carrots, which was invariably the crop then grown by "Old Ranson," on his land, which now comprises Acton's public park.

"Mr. Adams always had a

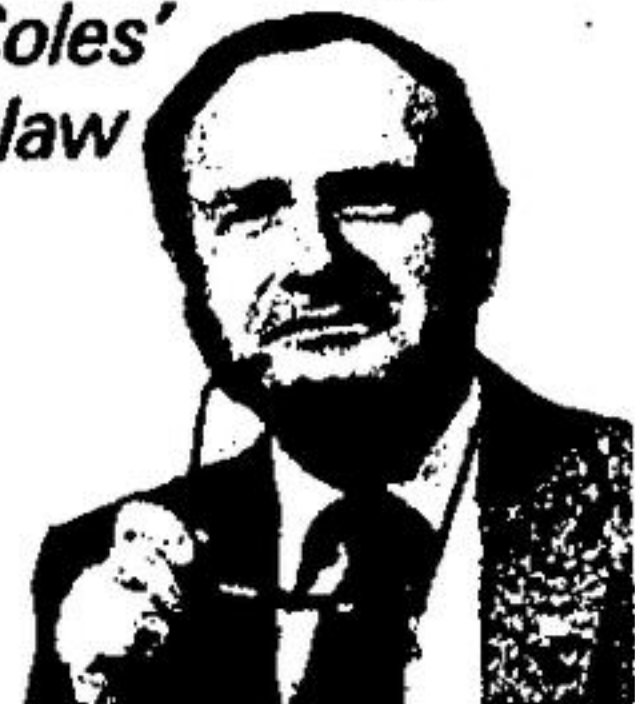
stableful of horses, used the crop carrots—left by the boys after their summer feeding—to feed during the winter months to the horses.

"In those early days there was fine trout-fishing in the old mill pond. Speckled trout, and no amount of other fish abounded there. There were a number of boats and punts on the pond and these facilitated the sport of the fishermen when in quest of "speckled beauties."

There's no trout in Fairy Lake today but lots of pike, bass, suckers, catfish and sunfish. When I was a kid occasionally someone would haul in a rainbow or a speckled from the waters of Fairy Lake but the knowledgeable anglers invariably said it had escaped from the "fish ponds" on the Third Line, on the property now occupied by the Acri family.

If you want to catch speckled beauties today try on of the sparkling clear streams that still flow in this area. Number one son, an avid angler, says he caught two nice sized speckles from the Erasmus River up the First Line last weekend when the season opened.

### Coles' Slaw



by Hartley Coles  
Managing Editor

Yes, the mug shots on columns on this page are something new. They have a dual purpose. They can be placed on your wall as a target for darts, placed in the bottom of your bird cage so your budgie can hit the target or even used as insulation against the cruel, cold world.

They are really artificial. Gord Murray was trying to look pleasant when he was shot by the lens while I was trying to look intelligent, an impossible task for either of us, according to a colleague.