

**REVIEW**

**'Bye Bye Birdie'**  
is a smash hit

By PAUL DORSEY  
Herald staff writer  
Fifteen months after Elvis Presley's death, he is still very much a living idol to millions, with nearly as many Elvis impersonators, it seems, filling the few psychic spaces that the rock 'n' roll king's spirit may be leaving behind.

There is someone onstage at Georgetown District High School these days who models the Elvis personality with panache as well as capturing a few essential facets of his spirit. That person is Conrad Birdie, fictional star of the hit Broadway musical Bye Bye Birdie, and the kids just LOVE him. A true, all-American rock 'n' roll hero in the world of the late 1950's, Conrad is all swagger and sullenness in the fine, slouching tradition of James Dean that is being kept alive to this day by one Arthur Fonza-relli.

**REVIVED LOCALLY**  
Bye Bye Birdie, written early in the last decade by Mike Stewart, is being revived locally by the same breed of high school students who provided subject matter for the original manuscript some 20 years ago, and that factor alone should do the local production ample justice in comparison with the Broadway and movie versions that preceded it.

Bye Bye Birdie debuted at the high school Friday night and continues through this Friday and Saturday evenings.

High school theatricals, and particularly musicals, invariably suffer from intermittent outside support, amateurish sets and props, actors' stage fright and a few poorly-timed deliveries. There may also be a few high notes in the score of Bye Bye Birdie that are considering taking legal action as a result of damages inflicted upon them during the local opening night performance.

Such problems, of course, must be anticipated and then disregarded with a view to the fine efforts of Georgetown high schoolers overcoming in the end, any and all production shortcomings that may have marred the surface of the play.

In fact, director Vera Macdonald, a founding member of the Georgetown Little Theatre and an award-winning actress in her own right, has done a magnificent job of smoothing over the rough spots and allowing the youthful cast of Bye Bye Birdie to ascend to dizzying heights.

Ms. Macdonald is ably assisted in her task by producer Bob Morrow, who was instrumental in having the school present such highly-regarded and well-executed musicals as L'il Abner and Godspell, and musical director Ralph Ursel, who leads the high school band and provides excellent piano accompaniment throughout Bye Bye Birdie.

**LARGELY DYNAMIC**  
The cast itself is largely dynamic and well-rounded, with a few bright stars and dozens of supporting characters striving, with varying degrees of success, to capture the personalities delegated them.

The main characters are not only successful but memorable as they sing and dance their way from New York City to Sweet Apple, Ohio, that quaint little mid-west town into which superstar Conrad is lowered by record company angels as adolescent females swoon and collapse like so many rows of cards.

The classic "queen-for-a-day" story of how the girl next door is somehow singled out from among millions of other teenage dreamers to give Conrad Birdie, her all-time heart-

throbs, a farewell kiss as he leaves to join the U.S. Army is retold with at least as much credibility as the original story and the events on which it was based had, and a great deal of admirable energy besides.

As Conrad, John Casey is cool, very cool. A slick-haired and easy-going rock singer, Casey depicts Conrad well, a vital and brilliant force suddenly channelled into a sleepy hamlet where a teenager's evening entertainment involves whittling the hours away at the local community centre church basement.

**TURNUED HEADS**  
Melissa Bell turned a few heads with her portrayal of an Amazon princess in the Little Theatre's recent production of The Rape of the Belt and does the same again as the outgoing, fun-seeking Rosie Alvarez in Bye Bye Birdie.

"She came across the border for the fruit-picking and stayed to ruin a mother's life," laments Susan McGowan as Mrs. Peterson, whose apron strings are still being tugged by her son and would-be promoter Albert Peterson (Peter Clarke).

McGowan and Clarke deserve special commendation for their roles as the elder and younger Petersons. Both captured their characters in a way that is surprising for high school actors, coming up with the kind of portrayal one can only hope for in a good television comedy series or a fine Broadway play.

Others in the cast - Greg Cazanov as Harvey, Becky Reid as Alice, Cathy McGowan as Margie-Ann, Julia Coleman as Debra Sue, Maureen McGowan as Ursula Merkle and Janine Prouse, Jennifer Booth and Mark Robinson as the bewildered MacAfees - are also deserving of much applause in the roles made famous by such stars as Dick Van Dyke and Paul Lynde in the movie version of Bye Bye Birdie.

Also providing creditable performances were Paul McGrath as the Mayor of Sweet Apple, Patti McKee as his wife, Andy Timleck of Hugo Peabody (the forlorn boyfriend who ends up getting "drunk" on milk), Shelley Farrar as Gloria Rasputin and, with Margaret McGrath, the sad girls, Kim Romanas as Mrs. Merkle, Alex Gunn and Cathy Arbuckle, with Greg Cazanov, as reporters, Dave Robinson as a TV cameraman, Bill Kent as Charles Maude, Ken Marchant as Mr. Johnson.

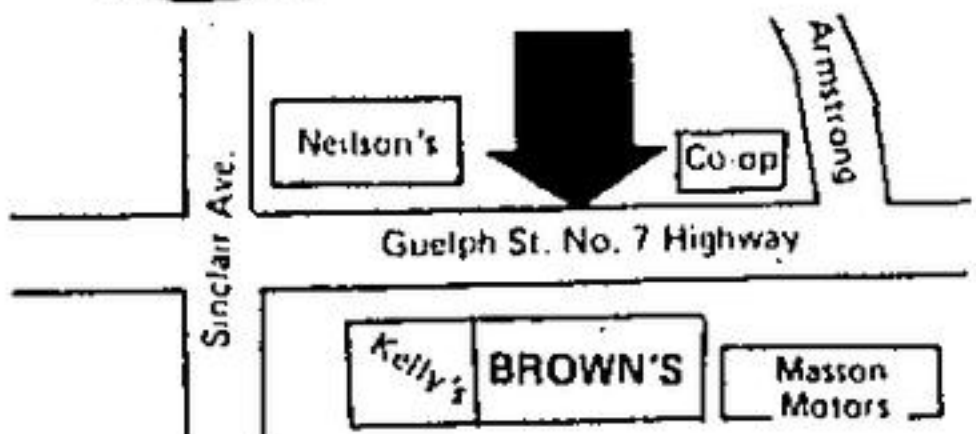
**TEEN QUINLET**  
Collectively portraying a teen quintet are Christine Gorin, Jessica Hannah, Evelyn Schlereth, Carolyn Coulter and Christine Hay; as the Shriners in pursuit of Rosie, Dave Robinson, Ken Marchant, Greg Cazanov, Paul McGrath and Michael Gibson; and as those heartbroken teenage fans, Bill Marchant, Cathy Arbuckle, Alex Gunn, Mairi MacKay, Adele Hunt, Brenda Yestadt, Toni Mills, Troy Osbourne, Linda Mayhew, Evelyn Schlereth, Christine Gorin and Suzanne Bew.

It must be noted here that those teenagers listed above yielded what was easily the most credible, authentic performance of the play. There are few sounds created in this world that are as intensely real as the screams of two dozen frantic adolescents in search of a hero. Elvis, the Beatles, Shaun Cassidy and, of course, Conrad Birdie all faced the possibility of going deaf as a result, and it appears such a fate may befall those in the first few rows at the high school.

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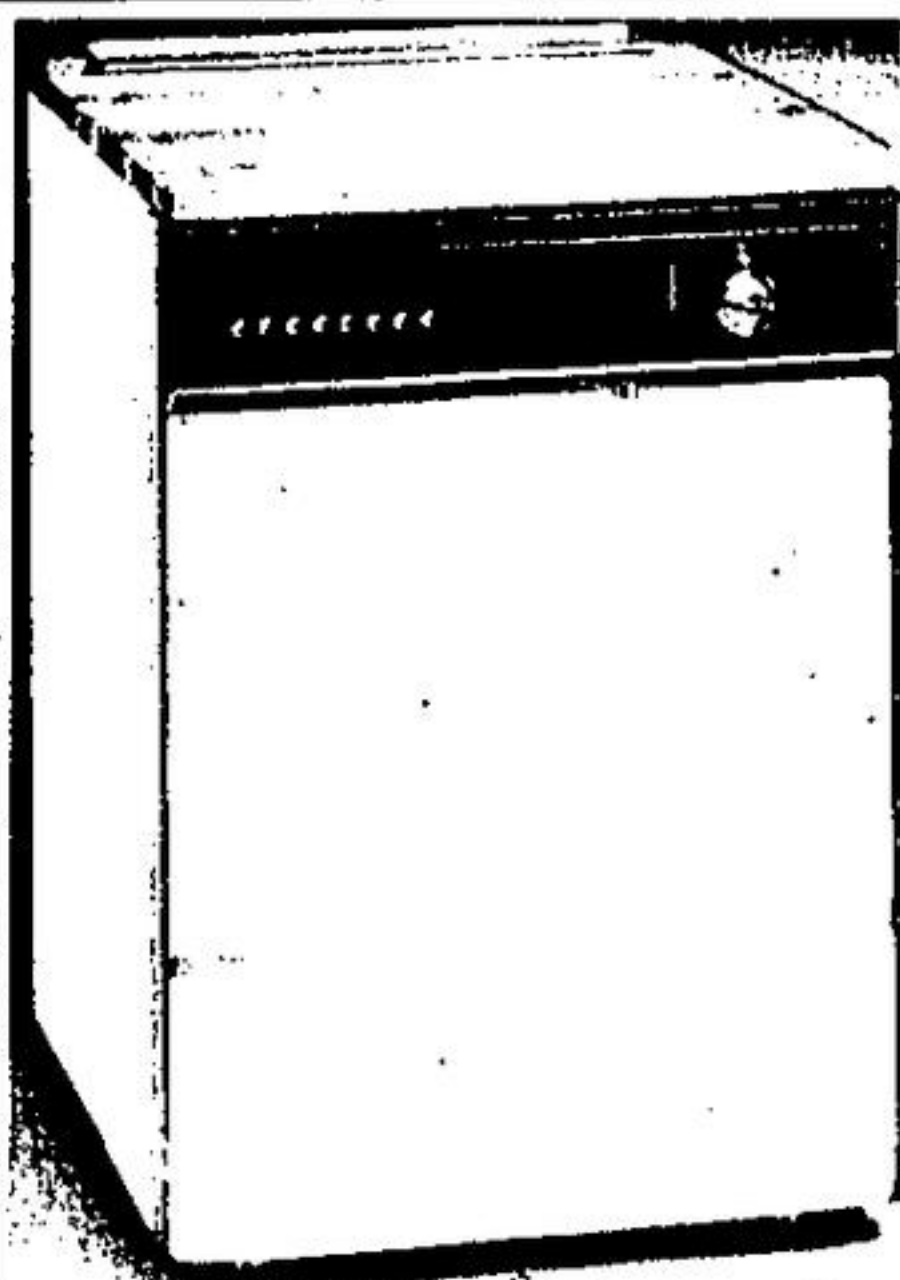
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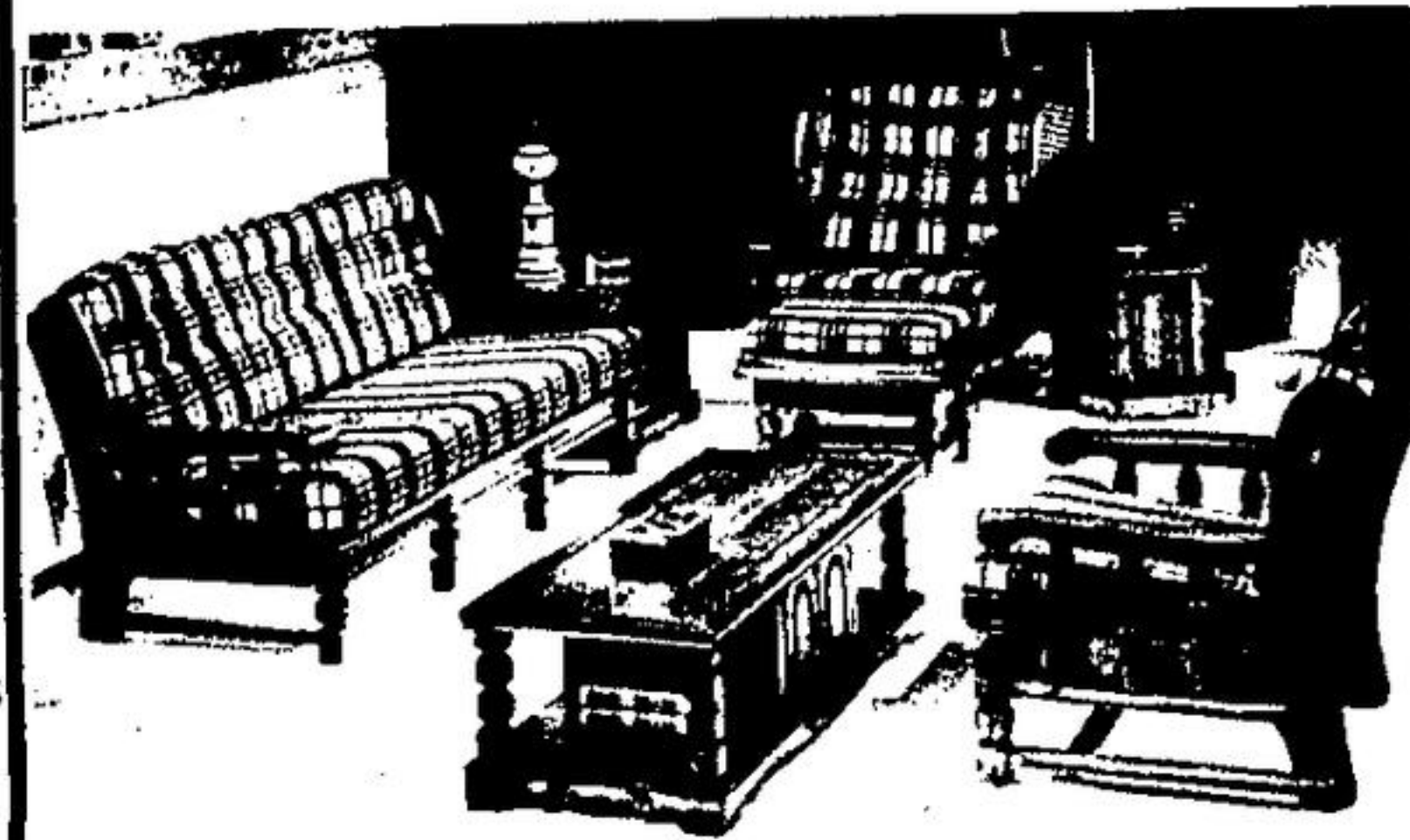


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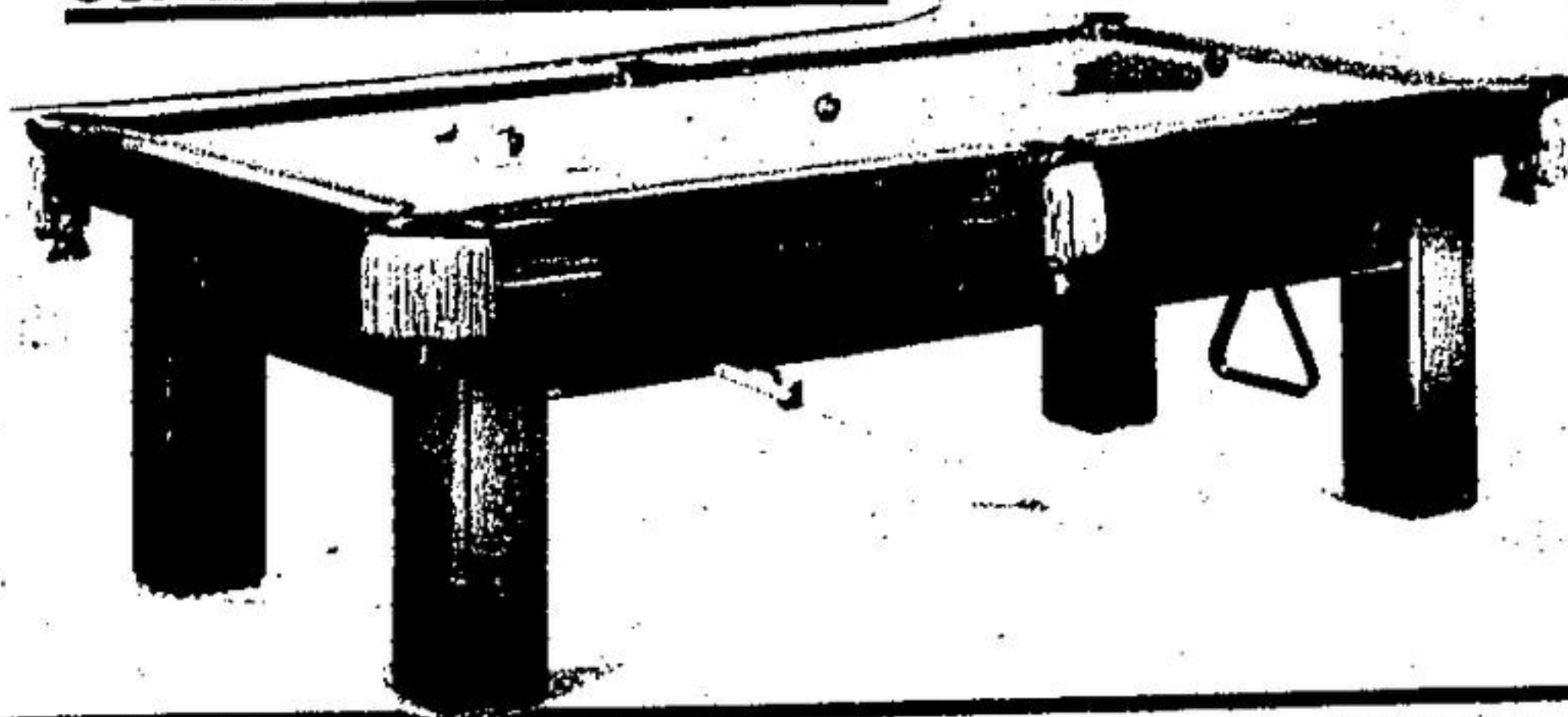
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**Wolf attacks moving truck**

Halton Hills residents are not in danger from marauding wolves even though a wolf attacked a pickup truck and a car on the Ninth Line near Glen Williams last week said the manager of Halton Hills Animal Control Centre.

Joseph Kirley said that the animal's head has been sent for tests to determine if it was rabid but he sees nothing in the incident to cause great concern.

"People sight wolves all the time," he said. "They have been increasing over the years but there's nothing like packs, or anything. Usually you just see one but occasionally you'll see two together. There's lots of them around, just not every-one is seeing them. I wouldn't say there's any reason for alarm because of this incident."

Concern about Halton's wolf population was raised after a wolf attacked a pick-up truck driven by Bob Tyler of Mill Street, Georgetown as he was driving along the Ninth Line less than a mile from the village, on Wednesday.

**PAWSON TRUCK**  
"I saw its paws on the back of my truck before it fell off," he said. "It jumped on the

right hand side of the cab." Tyler said the injured wolf, which was as big as a fully-grown German Shepherd, then attacked an oncoming car.

Halton Regional Police Constable Dale Stanton was called to the scene and shot the animal.

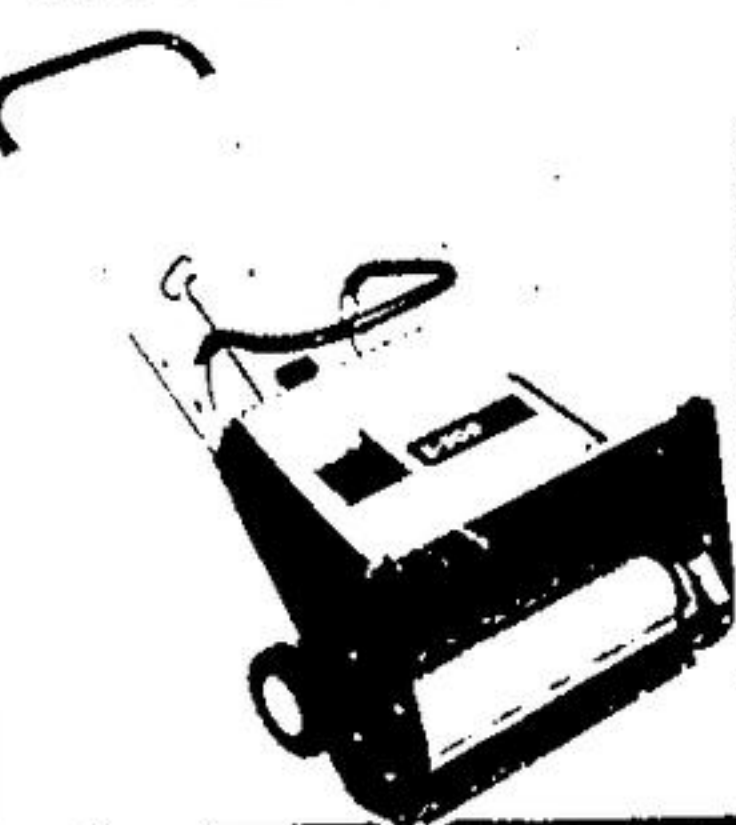
Superintendent Alex Taylor said that while there have been occasional reports of other animals doing strange things this is the first time a wolf has been involved.

"We all have to be conscious of animals we don't know," he said. "And give them a wide berth if they're acting strange. The papers say there's a wild dog pack running in the Milton area but this is the first involvement with wolves."

Dr. R.A. Beattie of the Health of Animals Branch of the federal Department of Agriculture says that they have received no results on the tests yet but expect them by end of the week.

"Tests are done first on anything involved with a human," he said. "We'd have those results in 24 hours. But it takes longer if it came in contact with an animal. This thing didn't even do that as I understand it, so it takes about ten days to get results on it."

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