

HALTON'S PEOPLE

Developer wants 'hamburger housing'

By MAGGIE HANNAH
Herald staff writer
Builders and developers are blamed for all kinds of housing problems in Canada by the public and by some politicians as well, but if you listen to the developers you'll hear a different story.
Georgetown developer Al Pilutti would like to see the government make some sort of

survey showing to what extent the high cost of homes is contributing to modern social problems.
"If our government can spend more than a million dollars for Judy LaMarsh to tell us that violence on television is not causing social problems then I think they could afford to do a survey that shows whether or not the

break-up of homes and related social problems are related to the high cost of homes in this country," Mr. Pilutti says.
Speaking in "parables", which is his natural way of explaining himself he says, that he is quite concerned about how the high cost of homes forces wives to go out to work, "and then what are the kids up to?"

On top of that there's the situation where "husbands drive to Toronto in the snow and the blizzards to get better salaries. Then when they bring home their paycheques and their wives expect \$100 for a new dress or something, they have to say 'I'm sorry dear but the mortgage comes first and there isn't any money for your dress.'"

"How many times does that happen before the wife begins to tell him he isn't working hard enough or he's a failure? And how many times does she run him down before the husband turns to a secretary or someone in his office who makes no demands on him and eventually he stops coming home and the family breaks up."

NO SUBSIDIES
Developers don't need government subsidies, he says. What they need is a clear-cut statement of what type of housing is needed in a community "so that we can build accordingly."

"The Canadian food industry does a far better job than the building industry of providing for people," he continued. "If you go to the meat counter of any super market you find great piles of hamburgers, some roasts and chops, a few steaks and maybe a bit of filet mignon. The housewife looks at the meat and wishes she could buy the filet mignon, but she knows she can't afford it so she goes back to the staples and buys hamburger. In the housing industry we've got all kinds of filet mignon homes and no hamburger. There may be 20,000 homes in southern Ontario but none of them are low cost."

"I got 200 applicants for 40 low cost condominiums two years ago," he says, "so the other had to reach for high cost homes they couldn't afford."

"If anyone in Southern Ontario expects new construction of rental accommodation without government subsidies then they're just kidding themselves," he says. "Rental units are the hamburger pite. As a developer I'd like in future to be able to go to the politicians and say, 'Tell me what the average workers' income is so we know what he can afford.'"



AL PILUTTI



S'WANDERFUL, S'MARVELLOUS

Providing a lesson in adaptability, the swans at North Halton Golf and Country Club find shelter from the snow and wind inside a culvert that links ponds on either side of Maple Avenue. Like their feathered cousins on Acton's Fairy Lake, the swans evidently find enough food to warrant year-round

residency in the colder climate this side of the sunny Caribbean, which is fine by the Georgetown citizens who have come to appreciate the ever-picturesque sight of waterfowl at leisure.

(Herald photo by Paul Dorsey)

Acton war museum owner reminds public of past

By MAGGIE HANNAH
Herald staff writer
In the 34 years since the end of World War II a whole generation of Canadian youngsters had time to grow up with no real understanding of what their country contributed to the war.

Among those who would like to see something done to correct this situation is Dr. Bill Gregg, a former university professor and medical researcher who now farms west of Acton. His interest is in acquiring Canadian military vehicles and restoring them for display purposes.

While Dr. Gregg was too young to see service in the war himself he has memories of what returning veterans had to say and his father was in the artillery during World War I.
Dr. Gregg has 25 Canadian military vehicles which are restored or in restorable condition as well as about a dozen other part vehicles. Since his budget is too small to stretch around all the things he'd like to do he has set his priorities on acquisition rather than restoration, he says, and he is investigating more vehicles he knows about with a view to buying them.

"There's still a lot of stuff around in service if you know what to look for," he says, and points to like the 1942 Dodge aircraft refueller which DeHavilland just gave him a couple of weeks ago when it was retired from active service, or the 1944 Ford fire tender originally used at Trenton air force base during World War II and retired from active use by the Alton fire department in November.

Dr. Gregg has set up the Canadian Military Historical Society Inc. in the eventuality that his collection might one day be turned into some type of museum and its directors will meet soon to consider opening the society up for membership.

NEED MEMBERS
"We need members to do the restoring and see that the vehicles are properly looked after," he says. "They are simple vehicles mechanically and don't require the finishing up necessary for an old car, for example. Really they're ideal for collectors."

"The story of the development and production of military vehicles in Canada is virtually untold," he says.

"In September, 1939, Britain had about 50,000 military vehicles including motorcycles

and impressed vehicles. When they escaped from Dunkirk they had to leave 45,000 of them behind. The 5,000 vehicles left included 2,500 motorcycles. No other commonwealth country had the motor industry we had, so it was natural that we were the ones they turned to."

"Col. Carr was with National Defense in Ottawa and he saw it coming. He had no budget but he managed to import a couple of Guy Gun Tractors in 1937. One went to Ford in Windsor which wasn't a American subsidiary in those days, and the other to General Motors in Oshawa. By the time the war broke out, a structure had already been set up to get things going to produce vehicles for the war."

"From a standing start in the fall of 1939 to the end of 1944 Canada produced an excess of 800,000 military vehicles. We supplied not only the majority of British army vehicles but also a large number of the vehicles used by India, Australia and New Zealand. We also sent nearly 100,000 vehicles to Russia. Although many of the vehicles were fairly conventional, nearly 500,000 of them were specialized ones designed in Canada and known as Canadian Military Pattern (CMP)."

UNKNOWN STORY
"Although the vehicles were extremely successful and considered superior by various countries using them the story is almost unknown in Canada," he concludes.

"I want to establish a piece of history here and let it be seen. I want to set up a cross section of Canadian vehicles. The war museum in Ottawa covers the broad aspect of military artifacts but there is still room for private collections just as there is in other areas of interest."

"Our chapter gives us the right to start a museum but there are administration problems preventing it at the present," he says.

Dr. Gregg houses his collection in a 5,000 square foot building which he bought, dismantled and reconstructed on his property. It was the sheds used to shelter horses of families driving to church at Dornoch, a small community north of Durham.

"It saved a nice old building and it worked out ideally for storage," he says.

Among the vehicles he has stored are an Alworthy 1942

Tiger Moth (ex-RCAF No. 3847) used in flying training school in Windsor, the 1942 Dodge aircraft refueller recently retired from Malton, the ex-Trenton air base 1944 Ford fire tender, a 1942 Otter light reconnaissance car which was the first attempt at a wheeled armoured vehicle, a 1940 Ford Field artillery tractor type 1, and a 1917 munitions carrier built in Kitchener.

He dreams of the day coming when he has enough of his vehicles restored to be able to exhibit small groups of them at local events like the Steam Era Show in Milton.

GET IN TOUCH
"I'd like to be able to get in touch with local Legions and individuals who used these vehicles so that if we put on such a display we could man it with ex-servicemen who had used the same type of vehicle during the war," he says. "You'd be surprised how excited some of these fellows get when they see these old vehicles they remember. It's far

enough away now that a lot of the Second World War veterans are beginning to look at the thing romantically now. The bad memories are fading and the nostalgia and romance is coming forward."

In addition to his own historical venture Dr. Gregg is a shareholder in Quad Productions Ltd., of Paisley, Ontario, the publishing house behind Quad Magazine. This is a military interest magazine available in hobby shops and advertised in the Royal Canadian Legion magazine, The Legion.

Quad is also producing a book which should be available in the next couple of weeks, Dr. Gregg says which indicates all the vehicles used in the European campaigns. Canadian Military Vehicles in Europe is basically a reprint of a handbook issued by the Canadian military headquarters in London, England, in 1944 and should be an excellent resource book for collectors. It will be distributed by mail

orders rather than through book stores, he says, and anyone interested can make inquiries directly to Quad Publications or to the Canadian Historical Military Society, Inc. R.R.2, Rockwood. If sufficient interest is shown in this book a second, more detailed book, based on notes from the Dept. of Munitions and Supply in Ottawa may be published later.

Quad is also interested in Canadian military human interest stories from any branch of the service, Dr. Gregg says.

"We're not a commercial venture," he says of his society. "We'd like eventually to get a display set up that Legions could bring tours to or school children could benefit from viewing. Maybe what we need at this point is a little publicity so people will know what we're looking for."

The society would welcome any leads on vehicles as well as any stories on military service and vehicle production in Canada, he says.

You tell me what the house is going to sell for or what the apartment rent will be and I'll tell you what I can do for that." It gets frustrating because the finger is pointed at us when it shouldn't be."

Alfio Pilutti came to Canada with his mother in 1951. Since that time he has started his own business, married a Canadian woman, raised three daughters and taken up residence in Georgetown.

Although he quickly refused to give any hint of his age, he talks about leaving school to start working as a photographers' assistant in Milan at the age of 11. He lied and said he was 16 so he could get the job.

Mr. Pilutti left school after five years in his native Italy and two days in Canada.

"I started going to night school to learn English and I was amazed at the amount of time they were spending trying to teach me to spell rather than to talk."

PET PEEVE

English spelling is now one of his pet peeves and he jokes that since we've simplified our measurement system by introducing metric we should now hire the experts to sort out our spelling system so that any given sound can be produced by only one combination of letters. Just think of all the teachers we could lay off if we didn't have to waste all that time teaching youngsters to spell, and all the money that move would save taxpayers, he says.

Then he winked and asks what other national problems the reporter wants him to solve.

When they decided to emigrate, Mr. Pilutti's aunt and uncle in Toronto sponsored them and found them a place so that they had a couple of rooms to live in when they arrived.

Mr. Pilutti says when he arrived in Canada he knew no English, "just how to swear and a bit of counting", thanks to the occupying forces he had come in contact with around his home 100 kilometres north east of Venice.

He arrived in Toronto in early November and landed his first job two days later laying pipes on a construction site in Clarkson. The boss saw him and figured that because he was young he should go on the front of the line picking a trench for the pipes in the frozen soil with a pick axe. Two hours later he had to go to his boss and show him his hands because they were bleeding.

"I'd been a photographer's helper," he explains, "and my hands were really soft. After he saw them the boss put me on the end of the crew where they were filling the trench in with loose dirt over the pipes and it was much easier."

His trade in Canada is a carpenter and Mr. Pilutti says he began carrying "two-by-

four joists" in 1952-53 on a job west of Toronto. He worked about 1 1/2 years for a sub-contractor. Then he bought an old car and a skill saw and went into business for himself. His first job was working for Harold Foberl on a project in Georgetown. Gradually he became a builder on his own with about 100 townhouses and 120 apartments and 10,000 square feet of industrial space. Over the year he's been associated with at least 50 partners, he says.

The only company he owns out right is a numbered company.

"You don't always have capital to do a whole project on your own," he explains, "so you find partners to help you. I try to stick to people in the building trade. I find that works best."

Mr. Pilutti says he has stuck very closely to Georgetown because of his speech impediment. He has grown used to the Georgetown politicians and thus has the self-confidence to make his own presentations to council when he is planning a development.

EVERY ELECTION

"I know every election that at least part of the old council will be re-elected and that's what gives me the courage to keep on working here," he said. "I'd never start again from square A with a proposal to go before Milton or Mississauga council. I just couldn't talk to them. I'd stutter so badly I couldn't do it."

Mr. Pilutti makes his own presentations rather than dealing through a lawyer because he feels politicians prefer to deal directly with the developer.

It also saves him money, he feels, to make his presentations in person. If a proposal required a small change and council asked a lawyer about it he would have to go to Mr. Pilutti and consult him before giving council an answer and such delays cost money. If Mr. Pilutti makes the presentation in person he can give an on-the-spot decision on the change council requests.

He is not much on hobbies, he says. He likes fishing and hunting and a bit of gambling since he owns part of a few race horses but basically he finds sports and other things a waste of time.

It is Mr. Pilutti's belief that the high cost of owning or renting a home across Canada, especially in the industrial area, is one cause of our high unemployment rate.

"I can't comprehend how and why in the United States, even in the metropolitan areas, you can go anywhere and buy a lot to build a house on and pay an average of around \$10,000. And it could be less than that. How can 230 million people have the luxury of doing that and only pay \$100 a month in interest while in Canada the cheapest lot you can buy to build on will cost the buyer \$30,000 and the interest to

carry it will run \$300 a month," he says.

"Houses cost at least \$20,000 more here than in the States." In other words, Canadians have to earn \$200 a month more than the Americans just to be even with the American standard of living. Considering that Canada is a cold country from border to border our energy costs for heat are higher too."

DISPOSABLE INCOME

The amount of disposable income available to Canadians should be considered after the cost of food and shelter as well as income tax instead of just after income tax, he says, since these have to be essentials ahead of other family expenses.

The reasons Canadians strike so often is because they need so much more money for a comparable job to keep abreast of their American neighbours.

When he began as a builder in Georgetown in 1964 a house cost \$10 per square foot to construct and lots cost \$2,500. Today houses cost \$25 a square foot to build, which is an increase of 150 per cent. Lots however, run at \$30,000 each now, which is an increase of more than 1000 per cent.

"The land isn't making any demands," he says. "It's just a piece of cold ground lying there."

SEWAGE DISPOSAL

"You can't give me the argument that sewage disposal plans have been what created the shlarlage of lots," he continues. "I consider the perfect plan of subdivision in a suitable location would be where the homes have town water and septic tank disposal systems. Like in Glen Williams, for instance, which was built 100 years ago. It was built in a valley where the water table was high and the lots were only 5,000 square feet yet they had to support both a well and a septic tank."

"If you go 20 feet above the water table you will have eliminated at least 40 per cent of the problems they are having there now after 100 years. By increasing the lot size to 12,000 to 15,000 square feet you will have eliminated another 40 per cent of the problem. If you were to pipe in town water you'd eliminate another 40 per cent of it. That's 120 per cent of the problem cured and the disposal plant not involved at all."

"All sewage disposal plants do is pollute the river downstream with hard chemicals it can't break up," he said.

What he recommends to correct the situation is a crash program to improve the installation of septic tanks or other means of sanitation, an opening of the boundaries choking development in metropolitan areas, consideration of each application on its merits and the tailoring of projects to the income of the people who would use it. Doing these things would go a long way to solving the problems, he says.



Bill Gregg poses with a museum piece.
(Herald photo)