

Crazy boaters cram the Credit



Inner tubes were everywhere at the finish line in Saturday's Crazy Boat Race on the Credit River. Some were hanging from the Glen Williams Bridge, ostensibly for passing crazy craft sailors to grab hold of and slow down their boats, while others were providing the structural base for some of the crazy boats

themselves. Even after a five-mile paddle down the Credit from Terra Cotta, few of the courageous participants were showing signs of fatigue, beaming instead with pride and exhilaration at having completed the race. (Herald photo by Paul Dorsey)

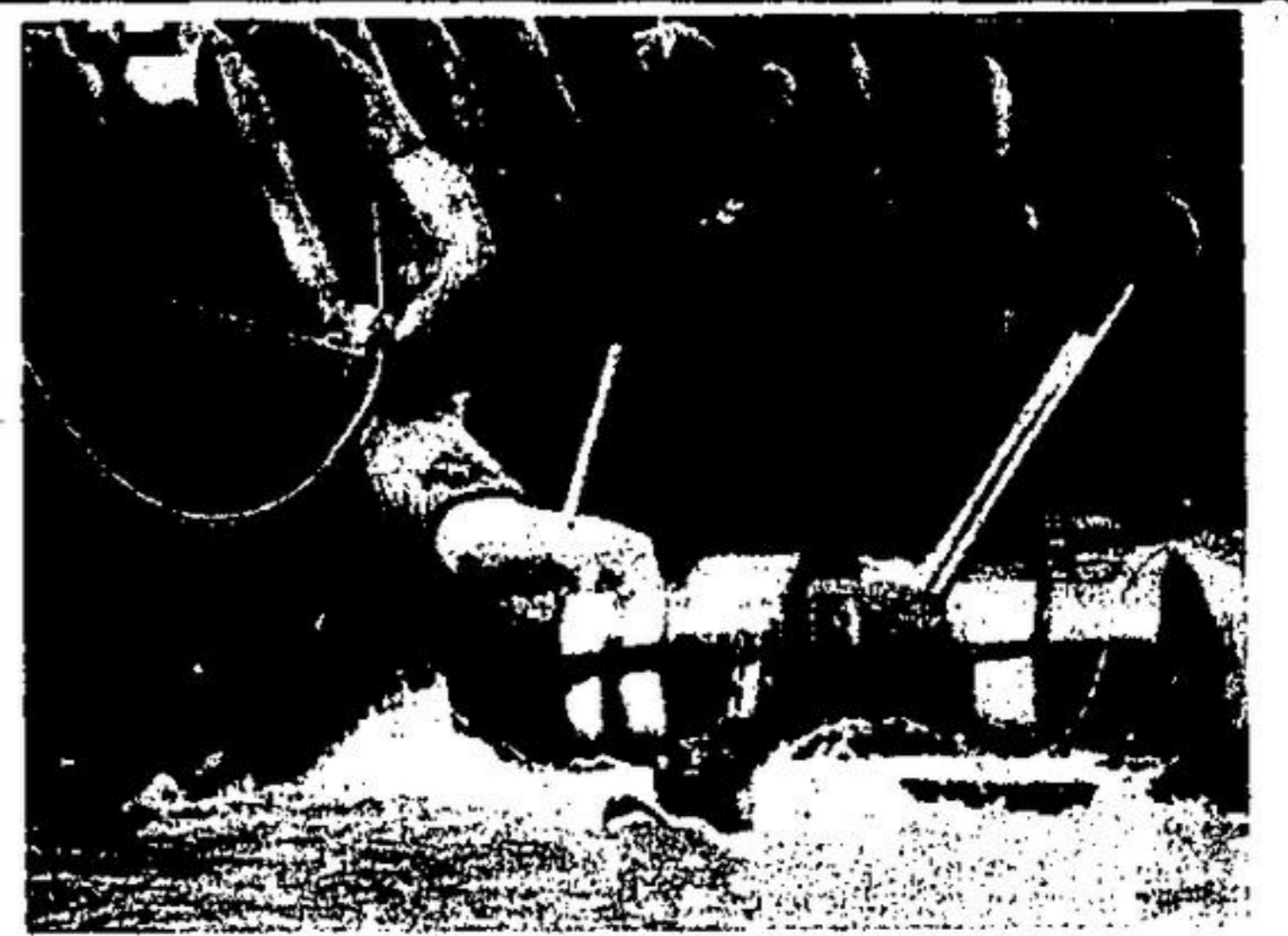


Perhaps the craziest of all, this crazy boat skipper flaunts the irony of his own destiny as he climbs aboard his coffin-shaped craft at the start of the Georgetown Jaycees' and Jayettes' annual Crazy Boat Race near the Terra Cotta Inn. A shot from a

starters pistol held by Mayor Pete Pomeroy prompted a mad dash into the Credit River for hundreds of courageous sailors poised waiting on the bank with their vessels of all descriptions.

RACER MAKES A SPLASH

The Jaycees added some extra laughs to this year's Crazy Boat Race, apparently without realising, when they suspended inner tubes from the bridge in Glen Williams in the hope that passing crazy craft crew members could grab them and slow the boats down long enough to get them into shore. What happened to this unfortunate sailor happened to many: the current was fast enough and many of the boats large enough to make such efforts futile. After clinging steadfastly to their craft throughout the five-mile journey downstream, dozens of crew members found themselves swimming the last few feet to shore. Needless to say, the crowds lining the banks loved every splash. (Herald photo by Peter West)



Going...



...going



...gone

Acton benefits from the region not the town say residents on fifth anniversary of merger

By LORRY TAYLOR
Herald staff writer

Five years ago, Acton was dragged, pushed and otherwise propelled into what many felt was an unwelcome union with Georgetown and the Township of Esquesing to form a community known as Halton Hills.

From the time of the announcement of the formation of the new community, residents of all three communities that were expressed concern about regional government, its costs and what effect the new community would have on the former ones and their sense of their own identity. Actonians were probably the most vocal in expressing their discontent at being lumped in with two other communities with whom they experienced no feeling of kinship — in fact, relations between the communities verged more on friendly, and sometimes not-so-friendly, rivalry.

Now, five years later people in Halton Hills have had a taste of the way regional government works. They have more of an idea of how it will affect daily life in the community and the effect it will have on the growth of both urban areas and the rural area in between. The Herald set out to find out whether Actonians are happy with their lot in regional government, whether they accept the fact that they are "stuck with it" and what effect regional government has had on the former town of Acton.

What came across is that some people have grave concerns about Acton's future in regional government, while others are more hopeful.

Norm Elliott was vice-chairman of

Actonians for Action, a now-defunct group which was dedicated to getting Acton out of Halton Hills, and letting it stand as a separate community within the region of Halton. As far as Mr. Elliott is concerned, Acton benefits from being in the region of Halton, but not from being within the town of Halton Hills.

Mr. Elliott said that during the time he was active with the Actonians for Action group, he was unable, in his research, to certify in writing that Acton received any benefits from being in the town of Halton Hills.

"They never tell us how much we've done for Georgetown, they always tell us how much Georgetown is doing for us," he said. "I asked the town treasurer if it was clearly a cost benefit for Acton to be in Halton Hills, and he said he couldn't honestly answer that because all the costs are thrown in together. The money spent is all Halton Hills — not is divided any more, even if it's just spent in one place."

Regional councillor Ed Wood said Acton has benefited from regional government, and points to the cost of water and sewage facilities in Acton. Without regional government and uniform water rates, Acton would be paying three times the amount it pays now for water, he said.

NOTE LEFT OUT
"Acton doesn't get left out. I'd say they get more now than they ever did before," Mr. Wood said.

Both Mr. Wood and Acton councillor Les Duby agree that the most visible sign of change in Acton due to regional government is the reduction in the actual number of Acton representatives on council.

"Before regional government, there were twelve people on council in Acton, and they were known by everybody; they were your neighbors," Mr. Wood said. "If you had a problem you wanted to discuss with them, all you had to do was grab them on the street and tell them. Now there are only three councillors, so you don't see them as much. People don't have as much opportunity to see their councillors as they had before." It is probably this aspect of regional government which leads Actonians to believe they have no control over their town, he added.

"I think Acton is Acton and Georgetown is Georgetown," Mr. Duby, the last mayor of the former town of Acton, said. "But we don't have a seal of government, and the people in Acton feel they don't have a mayor and eight councillors that they can stop on the street and give hell to."

Mr. Duby said that with all sewers and water under regional control, it is an advantage financially and in the day-to-day operation of the system, but during an emergency, and when repairs are needed, there is confusion about who to call, and problems with getting the job done promptly.

Halton Hills mayor Pete Pomeroy said the size of regional government, when compared with the local municipal government the people in Acton are used to dealing with, does make for some problems.

"In certain areas, control has been taken away from the local level, and given to the region," he said. "The region is much bigger and more impersonal than

local forms of government". Both Mr. Wood and Mr. Duby think that the entire local council is supportive of Acton, and that councillors from Georgetown and Esquesing are concerned about Acton and its needs.

FIRST PRIORITY
"There is a feeling on council that you have to look after your own area, of course, that's your first priority, but when you look at the overall picture, I think many councillors from Georgetown are concerned about Acton," Mr. Wood said.

Mr. Duby said he has seen this kind of support for Acton at the regional level. "Internally on regional council, everyone is prepared to listen," he said. "If it's Acton, there is support from the other areas."

Mr. Elliott said, however, that Acton's relationship with Halton Hills is in bad shape, and getting worse.

"Acton's relationship to Halton Hills isn't good and it won't improve in the future," he said. "It's a natural thing that Georgetown will grow much faster than Acton. Our mayor has practically guaranteed it now. When Georgetown grows, it's likely they will want greater representation on council, so Acton will have less and less to say about what affects us."

Mayor Pomeroy said regional government will be able to help Acton attract industry, and will assist Acton's growth to enlarge the town's industrial base.

"The plaza development proposal was given, I think, one of the fairest hearings since I've been on Halton Hills council," he mayor said. "One thing that came

through clearly is that the people want some growth. We're looking at that, and trying to decide where to implement the growth."

"There is a definite split between those who want to grow, and embrace the regional concept, and those who want to stay the same," Mayor Pomeroy continued. "Look at the board of education — they now have a Georgetown person representing Acton, and it shows they felt they were getting the better person for the job."

CAN'T UNDERSTAND
Mr. Elliott said he can't understand why the decision was made in the first place to amalgamate the two towns, and Mayor Pomeroy said he is not sure the boundary alignment the community ended up with is the best one.

"The ironic situation is that one of the criteria for developing a region is that there must be a community of interest, that the people must have a sense of community. There has never been that feeling between Acton and Georgetown and there never will. There's too much of a geographical gap. People in Acton are more likely to feel closer to Guelph than to Georgetown. The combination of Acton and Georgetown is unrealistic," Mr. Elliott said.

Mr. Elliott advocates that both towns operate as separate entities within Halton Region. The Actonians for Action had requested that the province review regional government in Halton Hills, and realign the community to make Acton and Georgetown separate communities again

The request was turned down. "Acton is going to continue to lose input in what happens in Halton Hills," Mr. Elliott said. "If Acton worked alone in regional government, we could control what happened in our town. We could secure our future."

"I'm not in my own mind satisfied that the geographical boundaries were drawn up that well," Mayor Pomeroy said. "Personally speaking, I find it easy to identify people from Acton, Georgetown and Esquesing — there are three separate identities in town, and I think it will always be that way."

"I don't think you'll ever break down the barrier between Acton and Georgetown, and I don't know if I want to see it broken down," he continued.

HARDCORE
"There's a hard core of people in Acton who'll never be satisfied with one town, and with regional government," the mayor said. "The majority of Acton has accepted regional government, as a concept, and have tried to elect people who will do the best for them."

"Councillor Pat McKenzie stood very strongly on the regional government platform, and that may have contributed to his political demise," Mayor Pomeroy added.

"I think what people tend to overlook is that politicians are charged with making the concept of regional government work," he said.

"Some people never give up hope, but they've got to realize, we're stuck with regional government, and it's up to us to make the best of it," Mr. Duby said.