

Firefighter saves 3-month-old

# Smoke-filled house no obstacle for baby's rescuer

By LOUI TAYLOR  
Herald Staff Writer

Firefighter Bernie Egerton is at a loss to explain how he was able to find his way through a smoke-filled basement to rescue three-month-old Reni Adema, although he had never been in the house before.

Mr. Egerton and his fellow firefighters conducted a desperate search from room to room in the basement of a burning home on Mackenzie Street Friday morning, searching for the baby, who had been sleeping in a room in the basement when the fire started.

Although it took several minutes to find the baby's room, Mr. Egerton realized after it was over that he had been able to find his way through the basement without running into any furniture or walls, although he had never been in the house before.

"I went in the back window of the house, and I had never

been in there before, but when it came time to take the baby out, I just went up the stairs and out the front door like I'd been there before," Mr. Egerton said. "I knew my way around the house and I'd never been there before. As far as I can remember, I didn't bump into the wall or into any furniture."

**BABY SATISFACTORY**

The baby is in satisfactory condition in Sick Children's Hospital in Toronto, where she was transferred from Georgetown and District Memorial Hospital. Reni is the granddaughter of the owners of the house, William and Jane Vanderkooy. She and her mother, Tracy Adema, were visiting from Alberta.

Mrs. Vanderkooy told police the baby had just been fed and was sleeping in a car bed in a spare room in the basement when she and her daughter heard a long bang in the basement. They ran downstairs, but couldn't reach the

baby because of the dense smoke, so they called the fire department.

Fire chief Mick Holmes and Mr. Egerton, who is deputy district volunteer, left from the hall when the call came in without waiting for the other volunteers to take the truck out.

**VERY UPSET**

Mr. Egerton said when they arrived, there was a large group of neighbors around the house, all appearing very upset. When the women saw them, they began shouting that there was a baby in the house.

"Somebody, I don't know who, guided me to the back of the house," Mr. Egerton said. "The mother had kicked in the windows to try and get to the baby. I went in one of the windows, and the smoke was so dense that I had to crouch down."

Mr. Egerton didn't have an air pack and mask on when he first went into the house, so he

had to hold his breath as much as possible while he searched for the baby.

"Somebody yelled that the baby was in the crib, but I couldn't find the crib," Mr. Egerton said. "I was holding my breath, but I needed some air, so I went back to the window to catch my breath, and went back in."

**FOUND NOTHING**

"That time I found the crib, and I reached in through the side and couldn't find anything, so I stood up and felt around the crib, and I still couldn't find anything. So I went back to the window again, and I yelled out that the baby wasn't in the crib."

Someone at the window, who Mr. Egerton believes was either the child's mother or grandmother, called out that the baby was in a car bed beside the crib. Mr. Egerton went back in and searched around the crib, but couldn't find the car bed.

He went back to the window, and by this time Fire Prevention Officer Larry Brassard and Lieutenant Bob Paul were at the window, both wearing their air packs. Mr. Egerton took the air pack from Mr. Paul and resumed his search.

"We have a set procedure for searching for someone, and I followed it, but it took me a bit longer, because there's supposed to be two of us. But I still couldn't find the baby."

**NOSIGN**

"By then Larry had come in through the front, and we looked around together. He gave me one of our big flashlights to use. I checked around room, that I think must have been a bathroom, because I remember pushing a curtain aside, but still no sign of the baby."

"I went into another room that had one of those plastic sliding doors on it, and I ripped it practically off the hinges — we were getting a little excited

by then. Then I bumped into the car bed. I think I must have dropped the flashlight there, because I picked the baby up."

Mr. Egerton called out to the others that he had found the baby, and Captain Bruce Lewis, who had joined into the search, called out, "Get the hell out of here."

"I took my air mask off and gave the baby mouth-to-mouth respiration on the way out. She was really limp, and hadn't made any noise the whole time we were there."

Mr. Egerton made his way out the front door with the baby and carried her to the waiting ambulance.

**SIX MINUTES**

In spite of the difficulty in finding the baby, Mr. Egerton estimates the search took only about five or six minutes.

"Every minute seems like hours when you're down there," he said.

Mr. Egerton said the baby's family has contacted him to



BERNIE EGERTON

express their appreciation, but he is quick to praise his fellow firefighters for their efforts, and the neighbors who helped calm Mrs. Vanderkooy and her daughter.

"The women in the neighborhood were fantastic in comforting the baby's mother and grandmother," Mr. Egerton said. "They took them to another house and calmed them down."

When it comes to talking about his own efforts, however it's a little different.

"Every man on that department, from the newest rookie to the senior man in the department would have done the same thing in the same circumstances," he said. "Our guys were fantastic there. They worked very well."

The fire department is still investigating the fire, but at this point, the blaze appears to have started near a freezer in the basement, possibly in the electrical circuits.

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Home Newspaper of Halton Hills

Wednesday, July 23, 1980

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## BLAIR GETS BUBBLY

Blair Potter of Acton tries his best to puff out the largest bubble during the Acton Public Library bubble gum blowing contest held Saturday. All 21 of the participants won a certificate crediting them as first rate gum chewers and bubble blowers and

the event provided an amusing show for the spectators. A similar spectacle held in Georgetown last Wednesday was attended by 104 participants. See also page B5.

(Herald photo by Chris Aagaard)

## Snow severances irk farmers -region will appeal to OMB

Ontario transportation minister James Snow was expected to justify two severances to his Hornby farm last night (Tuesday) before the Halton agricultural advisory committee.

Members of the committee, set up to advise regional council on agricultural matters, were among the most vocal critics of the recent Land Division Committee (LDC) decision allowing Mr. Snow back-to-back separations for the construction of homes for his sons.

A spokesman in Mr. Snow's Queen's Park office acknowledged receipt of the committee's invitation for the minister to attend last night's meeting in Milton, and said as far as she knew, Mr. Snow planned to be there. Confirmation of Mr. Snow's attendance was unavailable at press time.

Halton planning director Raj Mohammed had indicated his intention to file a routine notice of appeal against the LDC decision with

the Ontario Municipal Board. Whether or not the appeal proceeds, he explained last week, is up to regional council, which objected to the severance application before the LDC.

Mr. Mohammed said he will advise the regional planning committee August 12 to appeal the decision, a move expected to receive the full support of committee chairman Roy Booth of Halton

Hills. "There's no reason why (Mr. Snow) shouldn't adhere to the rules like everyone else," Coun. Booth commented.

(Continued on page 2)

## Cruise for Hornby trio turns into nightmare

A pleasure trip on Lake Ontario turned into a 24-hour battle to get to shore for a Hornby area man and his two young cousins from Hungary.

Les Dorgo and his cousins, Erica Link 14, and her brother Alex, 9, were stranded on the lake after the fanbelt snapped on the trial-run of Dorgo's new speedboat.

The three left Oakville on Wednesday afternoon to go

swimming in Wilson, N.Y. They were spotted near the north shore of the lake close to Oshawa, a day later and almost 100 kilometres from where they had set out.

Dressed in light clothing and with only a bottle of cola to share, the group huddled together. For extra warmth, Mr. Dorgo draped them with a towel, a torn sheet and a plastic bag.

Mr. Dorgo said he tried to paddle, but heavy waves

snapped one of the oars.

Mr. Dorgo's brother, Mike, reported the missing boat to Halton police around 1 a.m. and, far to the west, coast guard boats, police and a Canadian Forces helicopter scanned the water.

A seaman on a Canada Steamship Lines freighter saw the boat about 1 p.m., and alerted the coast guard who towed the boat to Cobourg, where relatives met the shivering trio.

## Regional plan still unsigned following dispute

By CHRIS AAGAARD  
Herald Staff Writer

An eleventh-hour disagreement between developers and the provincial ministry of housing over one section of the new Halton regional plan has caused housing minister Claude Bennett to delay his endorsement of the plan.

The postponement of the official plan's formal signing last Wednesday at regional headquarters in Oakville sent a wave of anger through council members who were convinced their six-year struggle to prepare a fair and comprehensive plan was about to end in success.

An announcement that ministry officials and developers had failed to agree on the "wording" of the plan's section dealing with Oakville's population forecast came minutes before council's regular meeting was to begin, riling councillors and eventually scuttling the scheduled 2:30 p.m. signing.

Despite assurances from regional chairman Jack Rafilis and planning committee chairman Roy Booth that the necessary amendments could be deferred and need not interfere with the signing of the plan, councillors accused the government of trying to impose more changes without proper debate.

"It seems that a lot of cabinet ministers are telling us, 'Okay, guys, here are the changes,'" Burlington Coun. Joan Allingham protested. "It makes a charade of the whole thing."

Milton Coun. Bill Johnson accused the government of giving developers "special privileges" while "taxpayers and council have to take a back seat."

Councillors complained that they had already come to a compromise agreement with the developers and the ministry which had been accepted by the cabinet. The compromise set Oakville's population growth to 141,000, about 11,000 more than the region's original figure.

Housing ministry representative Phil Remington told council that the most recent negotiations with a consortium of developers began that morning (Wednesday) although the dispute had been brewing since May 30.

Mr. Remington said that the developers are upset that the plan's wording concerning Oakville's population "does not adequately reflect the government's or the region's agreement or the 'interpretation' of the wording approved by cabinet. Mr. Remington recommended that council sign the new plan, leaving out the population issue for further study.

But councillors were still not satisfied, insisting that the document be signed in its entirety, thus forcing the issue to arbitration before the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB).

Oakville Coun. Mac Anderson said that the official plan should be "an entity...an entire package."

"The plan is not of the developers but of the people of the region we represent," he said.

Oakville Coun. Carol Gooding accused the ministry of being "heavy-handed."

"I really don't see why we've been given a deadline of 2:30 p.m.," she said.

In a last-minute effort to salvage the signing, Coun. Booth presented a motion calling for the document to be endorsed, with any further proposals being made to the OMB. Earlier Coun. Booth hoped to have the plan signed without the inclusion of the Oakville population problem until it had been settled by negotiation.

The motion carried, and a delegation consisting of councillors Booth, Steven Toth of Burlington, Oakville Mayor Harry Barrett and regional planning director Raj Mohammed took the motion before housing minister Bennett, who had secluded himself in a committee room.

But after 45 minutes of closed-door discussion, Mr. Bennett balked at signing the

plan, choosing to stick by the government's original position to settle the dispute through negotiation, rather than having it referred to the OMB.

At a press conference following the meeting, Mr. Bennett called the disagreement with the developers "an honest difference of opinion" and said that negotiators would try to find "a happy medium" to resolve the issue.

Coun. Booth was disenchanted with the outcome of the afternoon's events.

"I'm very embarrassed for the region," he said. "It's a disgusting thing that we have done here."

Coun. Booth added that because the plan was not signed, it "would still allow other people to come forward with more objections for referral and deferrals."

Mr. Bennett said he would return to council to sign the plan and indicated that this might take place in "a couple of weeks."

## Men hospitalized

Herald Special

Two men are in hospital following an early morning collision on 15 Sideroad just east of the townline.

Kenneth Morland, 28, of Acton, was transferred to Hamilton General Hospital from Milton District Memorial Hospital where he was taken from the scene of the accident. A hospital spokesman said Mr. Mor-

land is in the intensive care unit in critical condition with multiple injuries.

Dennis Mitchell, 25, of RR2, Rockwood, was taken to Georgetown and District Memorial Hospital where a hospital spokesman lists his condition as satisfactory. Mr. Mitchell has a fractured shoulder and multiple abrasions, cuts and bruises to his head.



## GOLF CHALLENGE MET

Georgetown Chamber of Commerce president Bill Crawford presents the Union Gas trophy to Phil Henley, top chamber golfer. Henley shot a 75, but lost the championship in a tie-breaking hole.

## Cricketers hit by lightning

By MARK CLAIRMONT  
Herald Sports Editor

A Georgetown Cricket Club member and an opponent from the host Oakville team were struck by lightning Saturday during a game in which several players from both sides, including two umpires, also suffered slight shocks.

Ashley Windsor of Georgetown and A. Jaggernaught of Oakville were treated and released from hospital the same day.

According to Georgetown player Ken Jones, the sudden thunderstorm which featured hailstones "as big as one's thumb," caught competitors and spectators by surprise, sending them fleeing for cover in near panic as the two injured men lay stricken on the field.

Georgetown had just completed batting and were on the field for the Hamilton and District Cricket League game when Mr. Windsor prepared to bowl his third ball of the first over to Mr. Jaggernaught.

The bolt of lightning struck a transformer located 25 feet from the playing field at Appleby College and ricocheted, hitting the two cricketers.

Mr. Jones, who was standing beside Mr. Windsor, said the fall-out from it was like "being hit with a sledgehammer." He and several others on the field experienced nerve ending injuries to the front and back of their heads during the shattering explosion which also sent what Mr. Jones said felt like a blast of wind out their ears.

The game naturally had to be called, with Oakville taking nine points for the shortened contest while Georgetown received five. Ashok Kumar led the locals with 38 not out, Lloyd Jones had 16 and R. Mongru had 12.

Georgetown's next game will be at home on the Yoder field Saturday afternoon when they host West St. Catharines.



Minister of Housing Claude Bennett (centre) fielded questions following the ministry's decision not to sign Halton region's new official plan last Wednesday. A strong protest was raised among Oakville councillors concerned about a disagreement with developers over Oakville's population figures as

predicted in the plan. The government has decided to take the issue to negotiation rather than refer it to the Ontario Municipal Board. Regional chairman Jack Rafilis (left) and planning committee chairman Roy Booth, (right, background) were also on hand to answer questions.