

**February fire**

# Guilty plea in \$110,000 arson

A Flamborough man has pleaded guilty to setting a \$110,000 fire in Halton Hills last February during a five-month crime spree.

John Altenau, 26, pleaded guilty in provincial court Thursday. He will be sentenced July 31.

Mr. Altenau, who has been described as being "mentally defective", was sentenced to two years less a day in reformatory after pleading guilty to four charges of arson, five counts of break, entry and theft and theft of a truck in Hamilton.

The arson and theft charges were the result of an investigation into incidents in Flamborough, Cambridge and Guelph between December, 1979 and April, 1980.

Most of the fires were set following break-ins in private

homes. Mr. Altenau said he set fire to a house belonging to Gordon Early in Halton Hills after breaking in and stealing a television set.

"I set the fire so no one would know I was in the house," Mr. Altenau said in a signed confession.

**UNDER BRIDGE**

Mr. Altenau told police he smashed the television and other stolen items under a bridge near his girlfriend's home in Brantford.

Neil Brennan, Mr. Altenau's lawyer, said his client's problems started when he abandoned a family business in Flamborough last year and became involved with a woman in Brantford.

Mr. Altenau, who had never had a close relationship with a woman before, went overboard in his efforts to

please his friend, Mr. Brennan said. Within a few months, he had spent his savings from the family business (about \$7,300) buying gifts for the woman and her family.

Mr. Brennan cited a psychological report prepared on his client, which said Mr. Altenau has an I.Q. of 77 and is functioning as a "mental defective". He dropped out of school in Grade 8 and joined his parents in their bait business, collecting dew worms and selling them to anglers.

Mr. Brennan said any sentence handed out to Mr. Altenau in connection with the Halton Hills fire should be served concurrently with the reformatory sentence handed down in Hamilton.

Acting Crown Attorney Anthony Vale argued that Mr. Altenau's problems with the law may have been related to his relationship with the woman from Brantford, but that he will be confronted with other personal problems in the future and society should have some protection in case he decides to go on another crime spree.

Judge John Robinson said he needed more time to consider the arguments, and postponed sentencing to next week.

# Biologist convinces council mosquito spraying needed

A biologist's concern over the current mosquito problem in Halton Hills, and particularly Acton, has convinced town council to further consider a control program during this fall's budget discussions.

Although council had earlier declined to recommend the program's implementation, a proposal outlined by Dr. G.A. Surgeoner of the University of Guelph's environmental biology department last Tuesday night persuaded members that mosquito control is feasible.

"It would be impossible and impractical to annihilate the mosquito population," Dr. Surgeoner advised, suggesting a year-round control program which would include the mapping of breeding grounds, actual spraying and the monitoring of effectiveness in late summer.

Dr. Surgeoner explained that there are two basic ways to control mosquitoes: one program would involve "seeding" ponds and waters with insecticides to kill the larvae, usually done in the late spring or early summer. A second method involves spraying clouds of insecticide in mosquito-infested areas to kill the adult insects before they have a chance to breed.

Dr. Surgeoner said that the chemicals used in either method are not dangerous if used properly, but admitted that there is "a certain amount of risk... just as there is when I take a drive in my car."

Coun. Roy Booth was concerned about the program's

effectiveness if private property could not be treated.

"There's no way you can walk onto someone's property to spray rainbarrels," he said.

Dr. Surgeoner said the type of mosquito in the area which feeds on human blood is of the "spring aedes" species, while the species which breeds in rainbarrels prefers to feed on birds. Bird-feeding mosquitoes are often responsible for transmitting the encephalitis virus.

An intensive spray program would not seriously deplete the food chain of certain wild animals, Dr. Surgeoner said; he assured council that spraying would not be done without careful study and the consent of the ministry of environment.

Halton region already has qualified personnel to handle a spray program. Town engineer Bob Austin said that if council decides to proceed with a program next year, the town's mosquito mapping which was done during the encephalitis outbreak in 1975, would have to be revamped.

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