

Old town hall: tear it down

Since December, when town council finally decided to abandon its own plans to restore Acton's historic old town hall, there has been an underlying suspicion among some observers that an alternative plan was at hand.

Council quickly moved to put the hall up for sale publicly, thus trying again to save it from demolition, a fate that would understandably shake some Actonians' faith in this odd amalgamation we call Halton Hills.

So it seemed safe to surmise that a private buyer was waiting in the wings. The pieces started falling into place in the last two months. A price hasn't been set for the sale, but the timing and terms are under consideration.

Then, Monday night, clerk-administrator Ken Richardson confirmed that not one prospective buyer has come forward. Suddenly, all of council's deliberations make no sense whatsoever. We were pleasantly amazed that someone seemed prepared to buy the dilapidated and much-maligned old building; now it turns out there is no such person.

Once a thriving community gathering place with as many unofficial functions as there were formal, civic needs met, the old town hall has rested uncomfortably at Willow and Bower these past two years, condemned and boarded up. The admirable citizens' movement to raise funds for

its restoration ran out of steam when the financial mountain turned out to be too high to climb.

The failure of the restoration committee, as fiscally understandable as it was, has had predictable effects on town council. It is interpreted as lack of public support among Actonians, some of whom prolonged the town's interest in the project by correctly citing Acton's need for a central, visible community focus. Regionalization, they pointed out, removed all the trappings of self-government at the local level. Acton's new "town hall" turned out to be the municipal headquarters eight miles away that formerly served Esquesing alone.

It's hard to read actual public support for the town hall's restoration. There is a viable pocket of resistance to demolition motivated by emotional but very rational concerns about losing the old town's identity. On their behalf, we express hope that the community's Leathertown committee can come up with something to replace that sense of belonging.

Alas, the restoration itself is a lost cause, and thus too is any suggestion that the building can be sold and preserved. It is now too far gone and should be demolished to make room for Acton's future. Any persistent efforts by Acton's council representatives to salvage a doomed situation are sheer folly.



Letter from the editor

Paul Dorsey

Laissez-faire

Georgetown: there's a voice in the West crying out for your salvation. Jim Barrett, the hard-working community catalyst who took his family into the "wilds" of Alberta last summer because the balance of political power had finally left Ontario short, doesn't like what he hears from his former home of several years.

During a too-brief residence in Georgetown - part of his apparently endless push west from the Maritimes - Jim got the Halton Hills Elks Lodge off its feet, boosted the Optimist Club of Georgetown and inadvertently stirred up a controversy and a half when he launched the Little Miss Halton Hills competition for three to five-year old girls at the Georgetown fall fair of 1980.

Since moving out west, Jim's been keeping in touch with Georgetown by phoning old friends and neighbors and by reading copies of The Herald mailed to him. You can imagine how the past season's news struck him: Little Miss Halton Hills kicked off in her second year due to a lack of volunteer organizers at the '81 fall fair; the fair itself in jeopardy after 133 years because of minimal public support and interest; and the other proud gem in Jim's community service belt, a co-ordinating liaison council for the town's service clubs, yet to be heard from.

Jim phoned me last week to try and find out just what's been happening to all the projects he'd believed in and interested others in. But what can an old cynic like myself say? Jim was an extraordinary citizen in a small-townish place like Georgetown. He sparked others to action and didn't mind at all if some fellow townsfolk never appreciated his intentions and efforts.

Georgetown has its fair share of community

workers and volunteers willing to contribute their time and effort for worthy causes. At The Herald, we're more than happy to give these people the coverage they want, but for the most part, they are not involved in "news" stories. The annual Red Cross campaign, for example, deserves much coverage but is after all a perennial, promotional event of little news value.

Along comes someone like Jim Barrett with a bold new idea for the fall fair. The initial proposal, we felt, was newsworthy enough (our eventually stated editorial opposition notwithstanding) but the controversy it touched off immediately was something else again.

The service club liaison, intended to keep our clubs and lodges up to date on each other's activities, thus avoiding duplication of services or conflicting events, was a good idea that hasn't taken off.

Jim had already accepted the demise of his Little Miss competition, an idea he'd transplanted from his native New Brunswick, but hearing that the fall fair itself is on shaky ground was quite a shock for him.

I have only sympathy, Jim, but no suggestions. As editor of a newspaper serving 35,000 or so readers but receiving precious little feedback from them, I am painfully aware of our community's laissez-faire attitude, which many active (and frustrated) citizens blame on our "bedroom community" status. That most Georgetowners would shrug their shoulders about the imminent demise of their long-established fall fair does not surprise me. And yes, I agree with you that the end of the fair should not reflect negatively upon those who've struggled these past few years to keep it interesting and lively.

Both the Liberal and NDP conventions here made the point explicit.

Television was everything. Want to hear the speeches of the candidates in leisure instead of in a stuffy, overcrowded hall? TV was the answer.

Want to ask a politician participating in the convention a question? Some TV type would likely be there doing it for you already.

Hope to get a candid opinion of what is happening from a political analyst of one stripe or another? He or she is probably already sitting beside some anchorman on the Tube.

And what about politicians who don't belong to the party that is choosing the new leader? They are up there too, in one little booth or other, giving us words of wisdom.

MEDIA ROOM

A common sight at a political convention now is to see print reporters sitting in a semi-circle around a television set in the media room for at least a portion of the events.



'Opposition mentality' still confounds Conservative MPs



Ottawa Report
By Stewart MacLeod

I had a rather interesting late-night phone call from a Conservative MP who, perhaps suffering from severe insomnia, had been reading one of these columns about the "opposition mentality" among Tories.

That quote had come from Party Leader Joe Clark who, in a year-end interview, was talking about his own difficulties. He said that, because the Conservatives have been out of power so much, "you can develop an opposition mentality and there is some of that among some of our people."

It made sense to me. The party is so used to being on the attack, and criticizing those in power, that some of the ammunition is bound to strike the wrong target. And it seems likely that Clark, and other Tory leaders before him, have been victims of this "opposition mentality," he talked about.

Anyway, when the phone rang late at night and this Conservative MP said

he wanted to discuss the column, I braced myself for the inevitable blast. Why else would he call at that hour?

GOES FURTHER

But, no, he wasn't in that frame of mind. He had, he said, been thinking about this "opposition mentality" and not only was his leader absolutely accurate, so far as he went, but he could have said a great deal more.

"It's not just a question of opposition mentality," said this worried MP. "The fact is, there are too many of our members who actually don't want to see us in government."

Obviously, he shall remain nameless, but he's no dummy and while he didn't make it into Joe Clark's cabinet in 1979, I suspect he was a serious candidate. He strongly supports his leader.

And now, late at night and alone in his office, he was working up a full head of steam. "When we're talking about opposition mentality," he said, "we're just beating around the bush. What we're really dealing with here is a stable group of Conservatives who don't want the party to form a government."

"I am not talking about the young, up-and-coming MPs. I am talking about those who know that they will not be invited into a Tory cabinet. Naturally, they wouldn't admit it, but do you seriously think they would rather sit on the government backbenches than in opposition?"

He thought that many of them who tried it back in 1979 didn't like it very much. "After years of opposition freedom, they were suddenly silenced on the government side. And instead of going home on weekends to attack the government and Ottawa, they were suddenly forced to defend things like high interest rates, higher taxes and funny things like moving embassies..."

IGNORED

"And suddenly they lose all the press coverage that comes with attacking governments. You guys don't write anything about MPs who defend governments. When is the last time you wrote anything about a government backbencher saying anything in Parliament?"

I couldn't come up with an answer to that, so the caller raged on relentlessly. "You can have a lot of fun as an opposition MP, but show me a Liberal backbencher who is having fun defending inflation, high interest rates and high unemployment..."

"And who likes to be humiliated by being passed over for a cabinet job? That's something that can't happen to an opposition MP."

"If every Tory MP were determined to see another Tory government," he said, "we would be too busy to quibble about Joe Clark's leadership." "That," he said, "is our real problem." And with that, he hung up.

News media 'dinosaurs' roam Liberal convention



Queen's Park
By Derek Nelson

The last figures I obtained indicated 889 registered media people were at the NDP convention (although some of those were observers allying in under false guise, since the NDP does not have a provision for guests at its conventions), and about 550 at the Liberal shindig.

Print and radio reporters combined didn't come close to the numbers there from television.

(And for the first time in my experience cable television really came into its own. Cable coverage, while a bit dull at times, was thorough and continuous.)

Television has immediacy. You are there, part of whatever is happening. Even delegates seemed to take their cues from commentators on the Tube.

WHY LISTEN? When you have it before you in living color why listen to a radio? And print has even less direct contact with an event.

Mind you, print still does have a couple of functions.

Print tends to set the agenda for television, for it is mainly print reporters who go on the road with the politicians in leadership campaigns.

who sense moods and watch performances. Print too analyzes the results in a sense that television never attempts.

But television is the primary medium. We are all captives of its glittering eye.

NOT FAIR Still, recognizing its primacy, there are troubling aspects to its power.

One is relatively minor, although it has become a major topic of conversation among media types themselves. On the convention floor the competition and crush of TV people is becoming so thick and dangerous that someone is going to get hurt one of these days. At the Liberal convention one politician was battered so badly as to be visibly shaken.

But there is a more important concern. Television is not a reflective medium. Being first is everything. Politics is a horse race, even worse than by print, as a horse race.

It was no accident that at the NDP convention the cameras were turned off for much of the policy debate. The stuff wasn't jazzy enough. It wasn't entertainment. And that's a worry.

POET'S CORNER

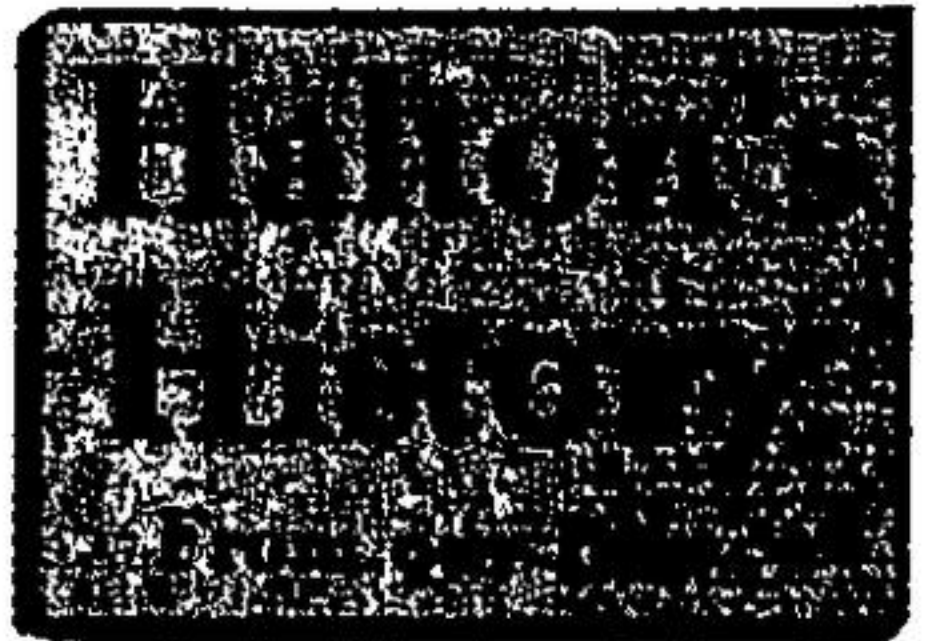
Where are we going, and when we get there
A land of plenty, yet nothing to spare.
You may search and travel, many miles do you roam
May become more wise, but would rather stay home.
We get up in the morning with ideas that's great
With our plans and skills, there is something to wait.
I dream of a job, one with fair pay
Looking in vain, there is none on the way.

Town after town, place after place
Wages too high made prices a bed case.
I would like a car, like the rest I see
But the price is beyond a fellow like me.
Wouldn't plan for a home, if the future was bright
Alas, today, my hopes, way out of sight.
And now it's a million we see on the street
Not wanted, and nothing to wear or to eat.

This is a case, our bankers to blame
Innocent Canadians will suffer in shame.
If our politicians knew how to be fair
Their stupid ways, it's the Devil to care.
So many greedy guys, salaries too high
Squeeze their poor brothers, bring them out dry.
When you get a raise, someone else gets a chop
Without that raise, prices would drop.
—By Albert Brock, RRJ Acton



Guest who's hanging around the Georgetown public library all this month? No, Rags the Furcifer. Cynic doesn't have a new playmate sharing his mascot quarters in the children's library. Actual fossil evidence of this 12,000-year old Eremotherium, or Giant Ground Sloth, has been assembled in the library as part of the ongoing Royal Ontario Museum display series.



THIRTY YEARS AGO—Over ten gallons of chocolate milk, dozens of plates of sandwiches, numerous cakes, (made with boys in mind), generous servings of Jello, several boxes of Dixie cups of ice cream, and favors filled with candy disappeared in a very businesslike fashion when almost 250 members of St. John's Sunday School attended the annual dinner provided by the ladies of the W.A. Friday. Following the dinner, entertainment was provided by the "Rhythmettes" who are rapidly gaining popularity in town.

Georgetown was featured on the radio program "Patrols and Papers" last Wednesday, a 15-minute program heard on CFRB. The show related highlights of the Herald's history and paid tribute to Georgetown's oldest citizen Anna Nielsen, 97. Founded in 1863 by Isaac Hunter, the Herald was a large old-fashioned paper of four pages set by hand until 1928 when linotype was added and the paper converted to eight pages of smaller size. Now, an average issue is ten or 12 pages and occasionally

Miss Rose Percy and two of her female students have been going to Toronto Wednesday evenings to attend dancing lessons at the Arthur Murray dance studios. They are learning how to do the Charleston so if any adult happens to enter the Georgetown High School at noon hour he will see a group of girls kicking up their heels in the main hall.

TWENTY YEARS AGO—Graham Farnell was appointed secretary-treasurer of Georgetown Hydro Commission at a meeting of the commission Tuesday. A veteran member of the three-man Commission he will succeed Mrs. Olive Reid who is retiring this month.

Blasting residents who shovel snow back on the roads after they have been plowed by town workmen, Coun. Fred Harrison moved for a bylaw which would penalize people who do this. "I realize driveways are blocked when we plow the roads, but that's no reason for people to undo our work and block up the roads again," Mr. Harrison said.

Georgetown Industrial Commission received official endorsement by the town council Monday when a ten-man group of Chamber of Commerce appointees was ratified. Council asked the Chamber to form the 1982 group and agreed to the Chamber's request for allocation of a \$1,500 grant for the year.

With 13 other municipalities, Georgetown is embarking on a series of five discussions on regional planning under the guidance of the Credit Valley Conservation Authority. Mayor Sargent explained to council that three counties, three towns and eight townships are involved.

TEN YEARS AGO—The Master Feeds mill in Stewartville was destroyed by fire early Tuesday morning but the store was left untouched. Firemen answered the call at 8:10 a.m. and fought the blaze till noon. By 6:30 a.m. they had it under control but smouldering grain, erupting into flames sporadically, kept firemen at the scene. A large stock of grain, feed and fertilizer was lost. Cause of the fire is unknown and no damage estimate has been made yet. This is the third time a fire has destroyed a mill on this site since the first flour mill was built there in 1847 by William Clay and James Young. They bought the land from John Stewart after whom the village is named.

Georgetown deputy reeve Art Speight and Esquesing deputy reeve Russell Miller welcomed Ken Buikema at an introduction night in the Georgetown council chamber Thursday. Mr. Buikema has been hired as Georgetown's first full-time fire chief and will start his duties in April. The deputy reeves represent their respective communities' fire committees.

GDHS Junior Rebels, crowned East Halton junior high school basketball champions Friday, move on to face Lord Nelson High of Burlington tomorrow for the All Halton title. The Junior Rebels won their league honors by downing Milton Junior Mustangs 57-42 in the second game of their total point series.

A \$150,000 addition will be made to Georgetown's Holy Cross school before September. Halton County Separate School Board this week approved plans for the addition which will include a general purpose room, boys and girls change rooms with showers, a storeroom, a teachers' work room and a seminar room. The general purpose room will be used as a gymnasium. Included in the \$150,000 charge will be the renovation of two existing classrooms into a new library.

ONE YEAR AGO—The Credit Valley Conservation Authority has given the go-ahead for the construction of an addition to Glen Williams Public School. The authority had originally refused permission for the Halton board of education to add a general purpose room to the school because the addition would lie within the flood plain. Since the original decision however, CVCA staff have met with the architect and plans have been drawn up to flood-proof the addition.

Count Dracula arrived in Georgetown Friday at Sacre Coeur Hall. The Georgetown Little Theatre's performance tickled and chilled audiences. Most people are familiar with the legend of the mysterious Count from Transylvania who has the power to turn into a bat and who feeds on human blood, turning his victims into vampires. The play, written by Ted Tiller differs somewhat from the original 1897 version by Bram Stoker. Its action takes place entirely in an asylum for the insane. Directed by Neville Worsnop, the play uses special effects rarely seen in community theatre and features excellent set design, decoration and furnishings.

This past weekend Central Region held their second qualifying gymnastics meet in Burlington and the Halton Hills girls made their presence known in a big way. In the Tyro B division, Gail Cook brought home the gold medal, winning the all-round competition. Gail had an excellent beam routine, placing second with a score of 8.40. She came second on the vault scoring 8.30, fifth on the floor with an 8.06 and sixth on the uneven bars with an 8.15.

The GDHS senior girls' volleyball team won the Halton volleyball championships for the first time defeating White Oaks at General Brock High School three games to one last Friday night. Last year's senior girls' volleyball team only made it to the Halton quarter-finals as they were eliminated before the semi-finals. The senior girls now advance to the Peel-Halton championships which will be held at Georgetown Friday.