

Never a dull moment for Acton Atoms

'Hockey Mom' tells all in trip to Nashville

By HEIDI COLEMAN
 What were forty, supposed-ly sane adults from Acton doing on an overcrowded bus with a bunch of excited children for fifteen hours?
 Answer: a hockey game in Nashville, where seventy-five percent of the population think that "playing hockey" is the Northerner's funny way of saying "playing hooky."
 Indeed, a hockey game in Nashville, Tennessee where there are only two, very new arenas in the entire city. Most boys rent their equipment or drive all the way to Kentucky to purchase gear that can't be found anywhere in Tennessee.
 This unusual Minor Atom trip began on March the 4th. It didn't take parents long to realize that unless the seating arrangement was altered,

Marvin, the bus driver, would most certainly drive them into the Detroit River while pulling his hair out by the roots one by one.
 The children were promptly moved to the back of the bus, somewhat out of Marvin's earshot.
NO CHECK-IN
 Fifteen hours later, the bus rolled into the driveway of the Holiday Inn on Briley Parkway in Nashville, Tennessee. A beleaguered, exhausted group of grown-ups stepped off the bus to find that it was only eleven a.m. Nashville time, and check-in time wasn't until two.
 Mom glared at the pile of suitcases sitting beside her, and wondered why she hadn't thought to put Junior's bathing suit, which was neatly packed at the bottom of a suitcase, into her purse.

Since swimming was momentarily out of the question, there was a mad rush to the electronic games room.
 Around noon I asked, "does anyone want to go on a three-hour bus tour of Nashville?" in my best social director's voice.
 At the sound of the word "bus", I was met with looks that could have killed several times over.
 Luckily, there wasn't any loose gravel around (the hotel lobby was tiled) or I'm sure I would have been the first hockey Mom ever to be stoned to death. One of the bus parents, Jean McKee, did join us on our sight seeing tour of the city but many of the others are still wondering
 Friday evening, at seven p.m., I was in for a new experience. My only son was being billeted out.

I had no idea who my nine-year-old was going to spend the night with, but I certainly wanted to talk to them. I chatted for several minutes with a lady who introduced me to her son, Robert.
 When Fred Buchanan, our coach, began pairing the boys off, I started to rush over to him, intending to make sure that my son would end up with Robert's mother. After all, I almost knew her. Too late! Some strange woman, who I hadn't even said hello to, nabbed my son and another boy, Sean Yamashita.
 She was a short woman with an olive complexion and her jet black hair done up in a bun. I looked around, hoping to see her son. I wanted to make sure he looked happy, but he didn't seem to be around. I rushed

over to the door, as she stood fidgeting, while our two lads got their things together.
 "Hi", I said to her. "My name is Heidi. That's my son." I pointed to the blonde kid wearing a slightly dirty Acton hockey jacket, and a confederate cap he had bought earlier that day.
 "Hi," she replied, with the Tennessee drawl. "I'm Rita."
 "Do you live far from here?" I inquired.
 "No," she answered. "Just ten minutes away."
 "Oh, that's good," I said, trying frantically to think of some way to get more information out of her. She was moving dangerously close to the open door. "I don't see your son here," I commented.
 "No," Rita replied. "He stayed at home."
 "What's your son's name?" I asked quickly.
 "NO TIME."
 "Listen, honey," she said with that wonderful southern twang. "Ah got seven kids at home and I sure haven't got time to start tellin' y'all their names now."
 With that she was out the door, hustling the two boys along in front of her. I had no idea what she thought of Ronald Reagan, how she took her coffee or her views on the metric system. I didn't even know her last name.
 The next morning at quarter to seven, I rushed into the dressing room at the Ice Memorial Arena, where my son was getting ready for his first of three hockey games.



He yelled, excitedly when he saw me approach. "The people we stayed with were really rich. They had two houses."
 "Yeh," Sean Yamashita piped in, "and they had a video player, too!"
 "Yeh," my son added, "we got to watch 'The Empire Strikes Back' until we fell asleep."
 Acton's third and final hockey game turned out to be the climax of the entire trip. We were pitted against a minor hockey team from Huntsville, Alabama, a neighboring state. This team was rated virtually unbeatable, the best.
 We were warmed by the Nashville coach. His wife and I cheered for us. As Huntsville took a two-goal lead in the second period, we heard these cries coming from the Alabama parents:
 "That's it, Huntsville. Show them Northern boys how to play hockey!"
DESPITE THE FACT
 Despite the fact that our boys had very little sleep over the past three nights; despite the fact that our nine-year-olds were playing a team of ten and eleven-year-olds; despite the fact that these Acton Minor Atoms certainly aren't the best in this area (they were eliminated in the second round of playoffs at home), these youngsters settled down and played their best game of the year, beating Huntsville 7-5 in a hockey game that had more excitement than the Toronto Maple Leafs stirred up in an entire season.

Thanks to our head cheerleader, Bev Warren, the parents were all hoarse from cheering the Acton team on.
 There was a certain amount of satisfaction in this overhead comment from a Huntsville parent after the game.
 "If y'll want your kid to really learn how to play hockey, y'all better send 'em North."
 Was it worth it? To the parents who endured a frigid bus ride home Sunday night when the heater broke down; to the parents who shared the hotel with 800 noisy, unchaperoned Baptist youths; to the parents who averaged four hours of sleep a night during the whole weekend because we got up at five in the morning to watch our sons play hockey. Was it all worthwhile? You bet! It was

an experience that will be talked about and remembered; it was a time of sharing and getting to know one another as well as the Nashville parents. These people who live in another country, hundreds of miles from Acton, were some of the warmest, friendliest folks we've ever encountered, and we certainly hope they take us up on the invitation that we've extended to them, to come North for a rematch.
 Thank you Marvin, our patient bus driver, for being such a good sport and chauffeur for us all over Nashville, to dinner, on shopping sprees and to the Grand Ole Opry, while managing with very little sleep.
 Thank you Jim Lowry, Larry McAfee, Bob Yamashita and Gary DeBrune for your extra efforts. And most of all, thank you Fred Buchanan, our infamous coach, for making the whole thing possible.



NORTH HALTON CHAMPS

Progressing to the semi-finals of the Halton basketball championships after winning the North Halton title, the Stewarttown boys can be proud of their season. Seen here are: (front row, left to right) Terry Dixon, Adrian Brakel, Trevor DeBruyn, Ken Janssen, Jay Corson, Ken McDermot, Rob Valentano, Chris McMurray; (second row, left to right) Coach Greg Sera, Mark Price, Anthony Larsen, Don Crane, Jon Brown, Pat Braund, Simon Evans (manager); (back row, left to right) Rich Chivitt, Dale Bell, Jim Manning, Ed Stanley, Al Scott, Darren Shaw, Heath Lockhurst.

Minor Atoms

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 ed to hang onto the lead for the rest of the game.
 It was an entirely different story for the Georgetown Minor Atoms in the crucial fourth game. The locals took control from Mark Lorito's two goals, and then they never looked back.



BONSPIEL WINNERS

The team with the travel bug are Steve and Shirley McDermot seen here with George and Joan Shapcott. They went to Windsor recently and won the Rose City Married Couples Bonspiel.



After a scoreless first period, Lorito netted two goals from help by Mike McElroy, Mike Barnes, Wade Serjeantson and Wes McCauley. Mike Barnes then made the score 3-0 with his goal from Rocky Pasma and Mike McElroy.
 Burlington spoiled Georgetown's shutout with 53 seconds left in the period.
 The Big Game for the Minor Atoms now takes place this Friday (tonight) at 8:45 at the Burlington Skyway arena. Come out and support the Minor Atoms if you can!

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