

# Seniors make their voices heard

## Loneliness is a problem in Acton

Loneliness is a major problem facing seniors in Acton, a group of about 30 senior citizens told representatives of the Halton Region's elderly strategic planning committee at a meeting held in the Acton Baptist Church last week.

And David Evershed of A.R.A. Consultants, which is preparing a long-term social service and health service plan for seniors in Halton, told the audience seniors across the region share their concern.

Solving this problem is one of the Region's top priorities, he said.

The elderly strategic planning committee hired A.R.A. consultants to ask seniors across the Region what services they wanted implemented during the next 10 years. Research gathered by the consulting firm will form the basis of a report to be submitted by the planning committee to Regional council in September 1990. The committee is comprised of four senior citizens, a care giver, five health care representatives and five social service representatives.

The Acton seniors who attended the meeting said seniors themselves can't rely solely on someone else to find them companionship.

"It's up to the individual to join things," said one senior.

The woman used the Golden Age Club in Acton and the many church lunches as examples of activities available to seniors.

But the group didn't have an answer for those seniors confined to their houses.

To this the executive director of the United Way of Halton Hills, Arlene Bruce, supported the use of volunteers who would visit the homes of seniors. But Ms. Bruce warned it's important to first ensure that the visitors and senior are compatible.

And all seemed to agree some seniors prefer to be left alone.

Mr. Evershed asked the group for input on the availability of transportation for seniors in Halton. Peggy Balkind, of the Acton Social Service Information Centre, said the group provides a van for seniors during the week, but some seniors are reluctant to ask for the service.

Eunice McGowan, a social worker for the Georgetown and

District Memorial hospital, who presided over last week's meeting, said the study of services for seniors was started because seniors want to live in their homes as long as possible and "home care" is acknowledged as being cheaper than institutional care.

But one senior said seniors will only be able to stay in their homes if the Region provides better home care during the evening. Seniors can always go to their neighbors if they need help during the day, but they are reluctant to call on them during the evening, said the woman.

There is also a lack of suitable housing for some seniors, said Ms. Bruce. There needs to be more housing that is "a stepping stone" from a house owned by a senior to a nursing home.

Mr. Evershed agreed and suggested two alternatives the Region is considering. One alternative would be seniors sharing their own house. The second would have a group of seniors sharing a large house.

Most at the meeting said the first alternative would be "tricky" because it would be difficult to find a suitable roommate. They were more supportive of the second alternative. It would provide the residents with a live-in care giver. This person would do the "heavy chores" such as the grocery shopping and be on hand if anyone needed help, explained Mr. Evershed.

The seniors agreed it is difficult to find people willing to do heavy chores even when they offer to pay the person.

## Region-wide survey may not produce results - senior

A Georgetown senior said she had doubts a Halton Region elderly strategic planning committee meeting held last week would produce any new programs.

After the meeting she commented that a similar planning committee meeting two years ago produced no results.

A.R.A. Consultants is preparing a long-term plan for the health and social services of seniors in Halton.

Joseph Boronstein told the audience there were problems region-wide that have been discovered through a written survey last July and a random phone survey of 100 seniors. He added the consulting firm is trying to obtain as much information as possible before it creates its plan and shows it to Regional council in September 1991.

One of the major problems the audience saw in Georgetown was a lack of volunteers.

Betsy Cornwell, Halton Hills'

chief librarian, said volunteers are "becoming" an endangered species.

Another audience member said if people do not start volunteering when they are young, they will find it tough to start after they retire.

Mr. Boronstein said recognizing volunteers as an important part of the workforce was one issue that came up in the earlier surveys.

Another main topic of discussion was the need for a Georgetown senior centre. One idea suggested at the meeting is that a possible new arena may house a senior centre.

Mr. Boronstein told the audience many seniors "turn to their families" when it comes to heavy chores. A senior noted that he needs help to shovel snow and clear ice from walkways. He says the sidewalks should be made clearer. Even taking out garbage can be a hefty chore, another senior noted.

Another audience member complained that most household cleaning services "don't do windows".

Mr. Boronstein said a particular problem for Georgetown was the access to homemaking services in the rural areas.

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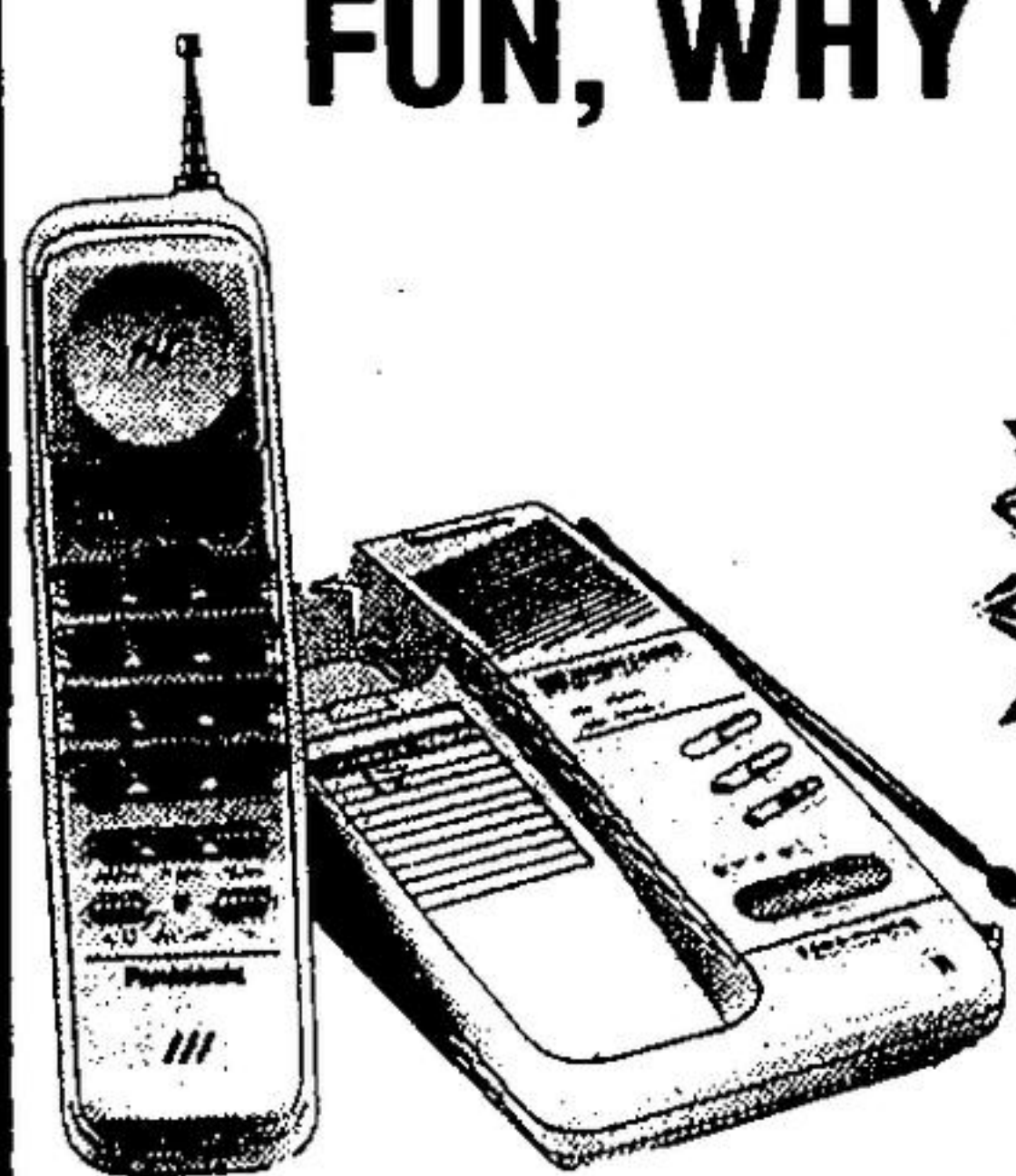
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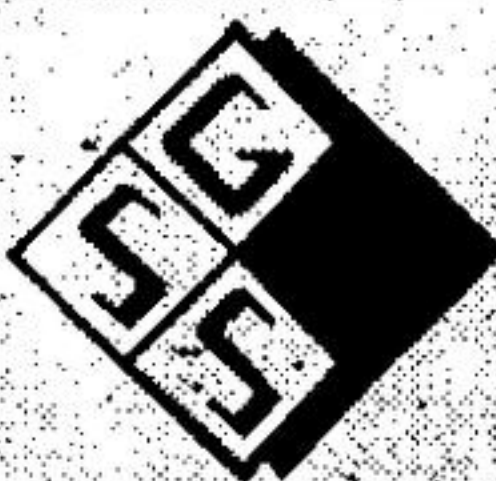
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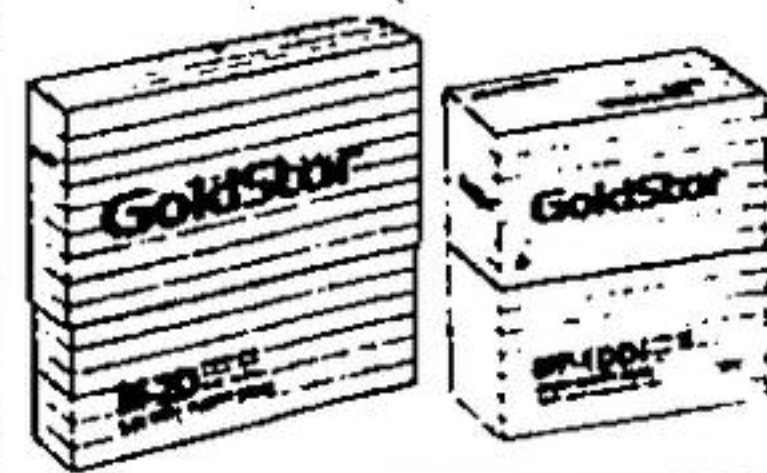
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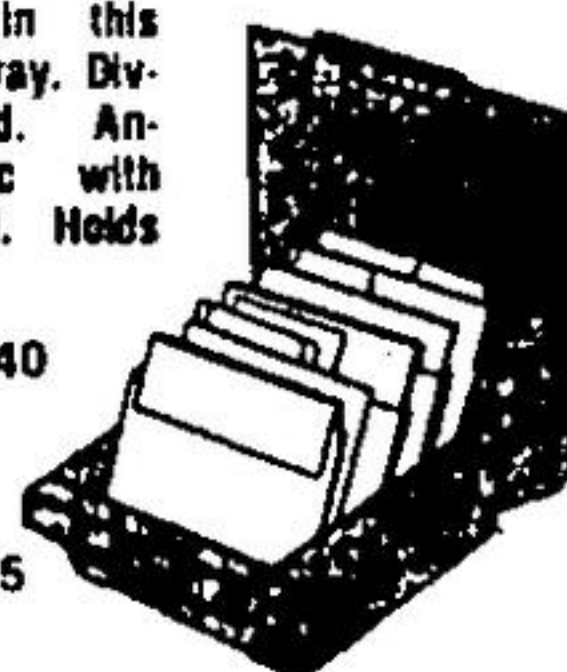
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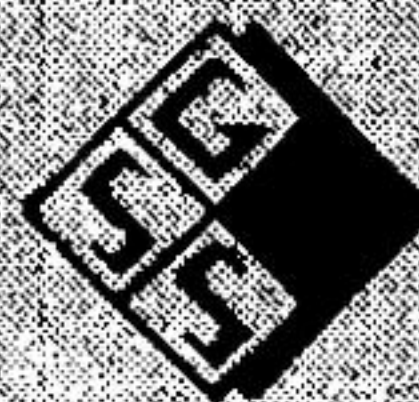
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