

Legalized Sunday shopping gets mixed reactions

By BEN DUMMETT
the Herald

This past weekend marked the first time that large grocery and department stores could open legally on Sunday and a survey of the local store managers revealed business met their low expectations.

"It was the slowest day of the week and that's what I expected," said Patrick Bagin the manager of the Georgetown IGA, Monday.

Chris Bootland, the manager of Miracle Foodmart in Georgetown said that business was "lighter" than when the store was open on Sundays last December. "There is the same amount of business just spread over seven days instead of six," said Mr. Bootland. "It's the small independents who will get hurt the most (from wide open Sunday shopping)" he added.

"Fairly good" was the phrase Georgetown A and P manager Ed Lee used to describe business at his store.

Ron McEachern, manager of Loblaws, was the only store manager to say that business was better than expected. "It was definitely better (this past Sunday) than when we opened during Christmas holiday season."

Georgetown Zellers associate manager, Mike Jensen, would only say of the day's business that he didn't have any expectations because the store was only open for a few hours.

IGA in Acton wasn't open this past Sunday but it will open this Sunday, said a store spokesman.

The other managers said they would open this coming Sunday. Mr. Bagin said his store would be open every Sunday until at least September 24. That's when the Ontario Court of Appeal will decide whether to overturn the recent Ontario Supreme court decision declaring the Retail Business Holidays Act unconstitutional. The provincial Attorney General's office has launched the appeal.

Halton Hills Mayor, Russ Miller, wouldn't comment on whether there should be wide open Sunday shopping, saying "it is a provincial matter...I'm glad to see that the issue has been taken off our plate."

Before the Ontario Supreme court decision it was up to individual municipalities to decide if stores in their area could open Sundays.

"If there is going to be open Sunday shopping, it should apply across the province," added the Mayor.

The store managers said customer reaction to the opening was favourable. But as one said, the customers wouldn't, except for the court ruling, otherwise have been in the store.

But Georgetown resident John Mazuran said, while leaving Miracle Foodmart, he was against wide-open Sunday shopping. "It disrupts the family fabric." He explained. He argued if there is Sunday shopping, "you're going to take advantage of it."

Mr. Bagin said three or four of his customers voiced opposition last Thursday and Friday about his store opening Sunday. Some even threatened to stop shopping at his store if he continued to open Sundays, according to Mr. Bagin.

A large number of customers who were approached by the Herald as they were coming out of the large grocery stores in Georgetown on Sunday, had mixed opinions about the seven-day shop-

ping week.

"I think its great," said Georgetown resident Paul Eckert. Mr. Eckert had just returned from Florida and he said, "the situation is now just like it is in Florida."

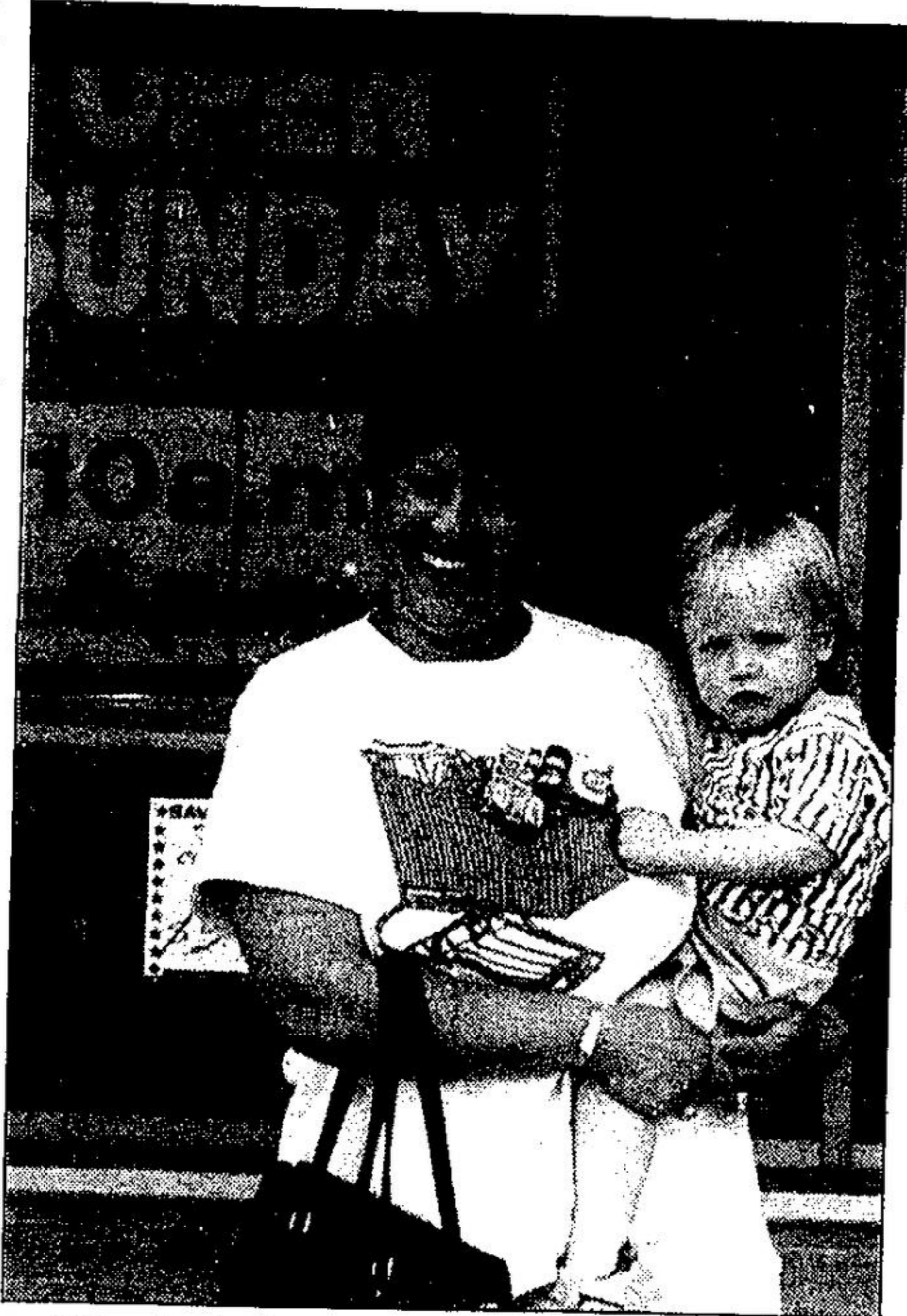
But another Georgetown resident Ron Nelson said "I have mixed

feelings...I like the convenience," he said, "but I'm not sure whether the employees have the option to work. All of the store managers said that working on Sunday is completely voluntary. They said the employees are currently being paid overtime

because working on Sunday is under negotiations."

But Father Cote of the Holy Cross Church in Georgetown said he thinks the employees are being forced to volunteer to work.

Father Cote isn't surprised there is wide-open Sunday shopping. "The way things are going it was inevitable, but it's not a positive sign," he explained.

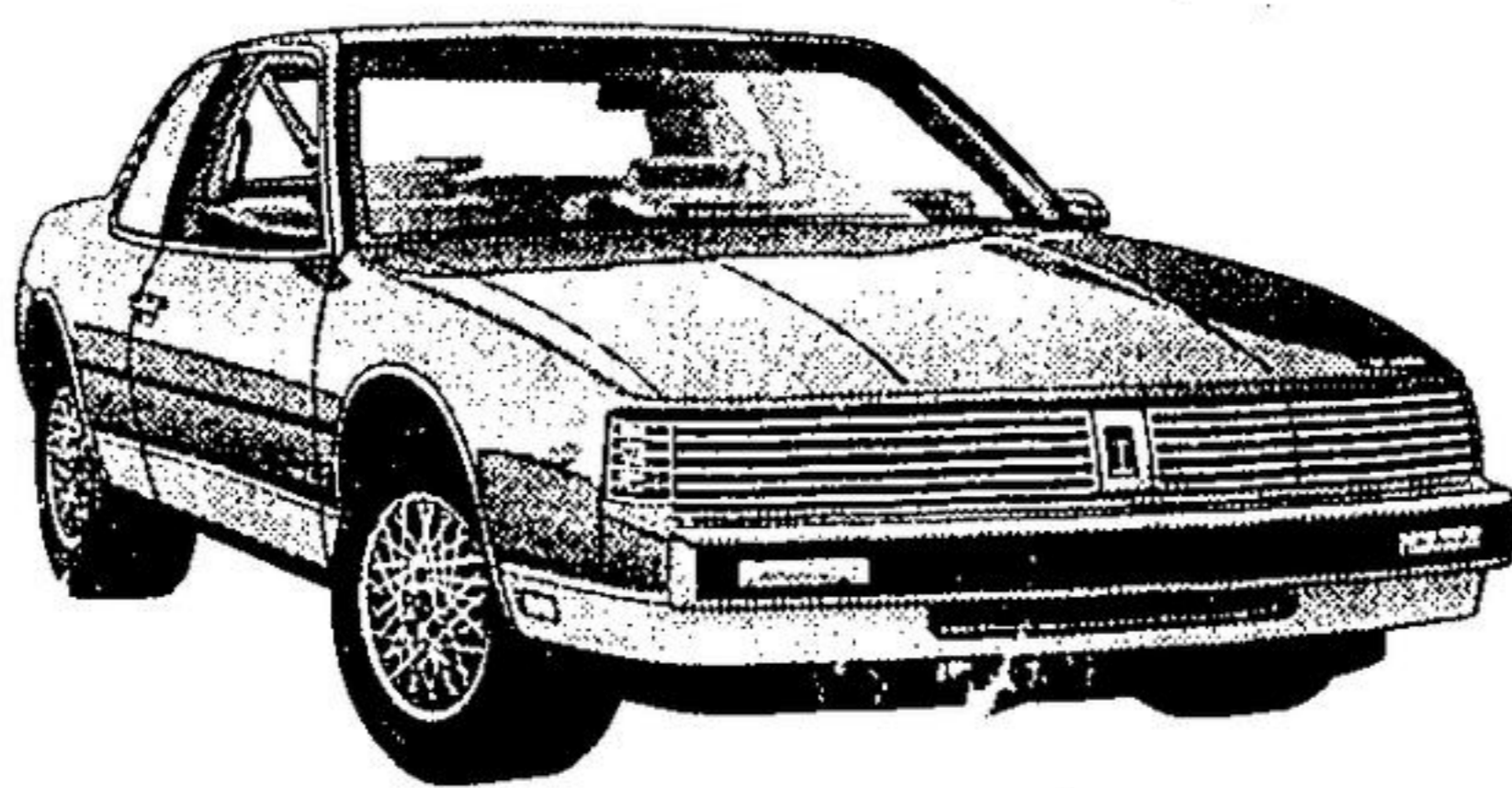


Sunday shopping is great, says Georgetown resident Alana Sargent outside the A and P in Georgetown, Sunday. "Our country is turning into a police state so its nice to see somewhere we have a choice," she said. Ms. Sargent is standing with her grandson Chad. (Herald Photo)



Georgetown resident, Paul Eckert thinks wide open Sunday shopping is "great" "It's just as it is in Florida," from where he just returned, he said outside the Georgetown IGA store, Sunday. (Herald Photo)

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