

THE HALTON HILLS WEEKEND

KEN NUGENT
Publisher

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Second Class Mail Registration Number 6869. The Georgetown Independent is a member of The Canadian Community Newspaper Association and The Ontario Community Newspaper Association.

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Welfare: don't deny teenagers

Dear editor:

This letter is in answer to Mr. Greenaway's thoughts (Deny welfare to teenagers, councillor urges, Halton Hills Weekend, Dec. 6)

I am quite surprised to read councillor Doug Greenaway's thoughts on the young people 16 and 17 year-olds. His feelings come through loud and clear to me, he either doesn't know anyone of this age, or most likely doesn't care to know any young person. May I suggest he meet up with some of these young people who as he puts it don't like the rules at home before he classes high schools as a more or less breeding place for these young people getting welfare money. At least they are still going to school so they can eventually get the education needed and get a job.

Let's face facts, to get welfare you have to show a reason why you badly need money to help take care of yourself, a place to stay, food to eat, regardless of clothes on their backs. Maybe councillor Green-

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away could ask around to find out a place that's needed badly for these young people to live until they can afford to really go out on their own. Before this they have to complete their education, — 16 and 17 year-olds have a lot to learn. I also feel Mr. Greenaway has a great deal to learn. Let us put them on the right track. Please believe in them and be ready and willing to help them. Let us look at ourselves before finding fault of others. I feel ashamed.

Sincerely,
Kathleen (Molly) Crowhurst

Let parents take care of their teens

Dear editor:

I was thrilled to read the article about denying teenagers welfare (Weekend, Dec. 6). I totally support councillor Doug Greenaway as I

know so many other people do today. We are tired of our taxes increasing to pay for young people's rent and food when the family should be responsible for their upkeep and not us.

Many people think this is uncompassionate and hardline, but where is this mentality leading us? It is leading to the erosion of the family unit and causing our teenagers not to have any consequences for their actions. Also it can easily lead the parents into the attitude of "let the government take care of them."

I believe it is the parent(s) responsibility to take charge of their teenagers and when the going gets tough, we (social services) are too quick to bail them out.

I find the statistics of 95 per cent of teenagers on welfare are attending school rather high since I personally know many young people on welfare who are not attending school or are currently unemployed.

A note to councillor Greenaway: Keep up the good work and you have many more supporters than what you have been lead to believe.

Yours sincerely,
Mary M. Turner

The cost of eating

Daily we see images cross our television screens of the starving people in Somalia and Bosnia and it brings into focus the abundance of food in Canada. Even those who cannot afford food have access to food banks.

But still people complain about the cost of food, many while chomping on snacks or sitting in a restaurant. Recently, Wellington county's agricultural representative W.J. Baxter wrote an article entitled, What does it really cost to eat? His comments were enlightening.

"For example, for breakfast I might want two slices of bacon, an egg and a glass of milk. That breakfast costs me about 75 cents. Throw in a glass of orange juice and a couple of slices of bread, butter, some jam if you like, and you're still looking at less than \$1.25 for a breakfast, high enough in energy, protein, vitamins and mineral requirements to sustain a working man or growing child.

Food prices are not high. Of course, you can buy your food already prepared. If you want to do this, please be willing to pay someone else's wages to prepare your food for you. But don't call it food cost. It's preparation and packaging cost.

Agriculture Canada, which monitors food prices in all major cities across Canada, tells us that it costs about \$1.50 per meal to properly feed the average person in Toronto. Of course, we can eat more than we need in both quantity and quality and pay more accordingly.

Food in Ontario is a real bargain, both in price and quality. As long as Canadians are spending less than 16 per cent of our take-home pay for take-home food, we should consider ourselves very fortunate. That's the lowest anywhere in the world, and the quality is the highest. If another one or two per cent would keep fresh Ontario produce on our tables, we should consider it part of the cost of the high standard of living we enjoy so much."

We don't have much to complain about, do we?



There's something special about a real tree

Last week I had a brainstorm. After visiting a few Christmas tree lots around town, I found some of the trees on sale were reasonably priced. I happen to suggest to my family this might be the year for us to decorate a REAL tree.

"No way!" said one of my daughters, "The last time we had a real tree, we had needles all over the carpet within a couple of days. Besides, it's a waste of a living tree."

But Christmas trees are grown to be cut," I protested, "They're a cash crop, and planted for the sole purpose of being cut for Christmas."

I even suggested we could plant a seedling in the spring to help replenish the supply.

But my kids wanted no part of it. It was the artificial tree and nothing else. I was voted down.

It struck me as ironic, how times have changed.

I recalled how my parents

anguished over the decision to buy an artificial tree years ago. Living in the rural area, with a bush growing right on our farm, we had always had a real tree.

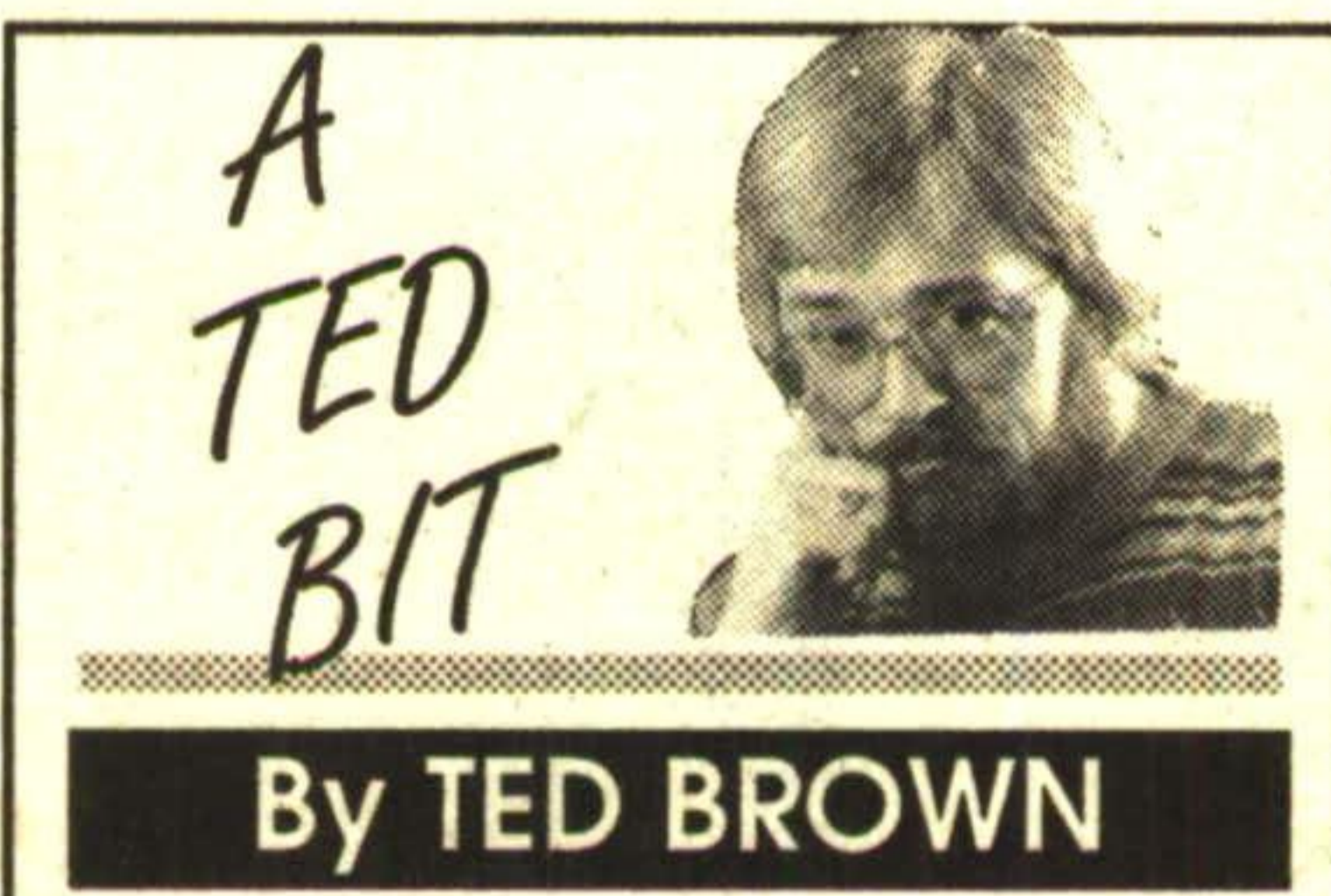
As a little boy, I would accompany my dad as he headed out in search of that special tree.

The wooded area where our trees grew still sits just below our house, and is hardly more than a swampy little area, a few hundred yards across. But when I was a little boy, it seemed like a huge deep, dark forest, into which Dad and I ventured, saw in hand, to cut that tree.

I imagined fierce wolves and foxes hiding behind every tree and expected to see a moose or two amongst the brush as the bush swallowed us up.

Instead, we were lucky to see a couple of rabbits scamper away.

With Dad, cutting the annual Christmas tree was not something one took lightly.



It was a ritual.

We had to trudge through knee-deep snow, (knee-deep for me, ankle-deep for Dad,) saw in hand, as he looked at this tree, then another, and noted one that could be used in the future, then back to the first.

He even trimmed likely candidates a year or two in advance, so they would grow into a good tree for a future Christmas. I was certain he must have trekked through the area during the summer months, just to check out trees for Christmas.

"Well, that one will be okay for

next year," he often said, as he nipped off a couple of branches to balance it out. "Last year, I cut off a little one beside it, so it wouldn't have a flat side."

And so continued the search.

After what seemed like hours, (but was more likely thirty minutes) Dad and I returned to the house, with our trophy dragging behind us.

And my family would assemble in the living room that night, to decorate it.

Later years, when we weren't as ambitious, Dad and I would drive into Georgetown to buy the tree. Even 30 years ago, the Georgetown Kinsmen Club sold Christmas trees in a lot, for the whopping price of about two or three dollars a tree.

But now the Brown household has an artificial tree, a plastic effigy of some perfect blue spruce, with no imperfections, no "flat side," no scent and no needles to drop.

And no character. And our kids love it.

But as I look out our den window, into the swamp where we once ventured to cut our trees, I sometimes feel a little nostalgic, when I think of dragging it back to the warmth of the farmhouse, and, if I were lucky, to a waiting cup of cocoa to drive the chill out of my wet socks while my snow-balled mitts hung on the space heater to dry.

And then I think how our kids have a point; it is wasteful to cut trees for Christmas.

But look what they're missing.

They'll never know the warm scent of pine needles throughout the house, the adventure of searching for that special tree and the satisfaction of seeing it displayed in the living room.

Instead, they'll enjoy their plastic tree, and after Christmas, pack it away in a cardboard box for another year.