

Opinion

Halton Hills THIS WEEK

Halton Hills This Week, Wednesday edition is published every Wednesday at 232 Guelph St., Georgetown, Ont. L7G 4B1, and is printed in Oakville at Q.E. Web Printing. Halton Hills This Week claims copyright on all original editorial and advertising material created by its employees and reproduced by this newspaper. Such material may only be reproduced on written consent of the publisher. In the event of typographical error advertising goods or services at wrong price, goods or services may not be sold. Advertising is merely an offer to sell which may be withdrawn at any time.

PUBLISHER: Ken Bellamy **EDITOR: Colin Gibson**
OFFICE MANAGER: Jean Shewell **CIRCULATION MANAGER: Marie Shadbolt**

HALTON HILLS THIS WEEK IS INDEPENDENTLY OWNED & OPERATED.

PHONE: 873-2254

FAX: 873-3918

Take time to reflect

In a perverse sort of way, it really does take the true tragedies that befall others, for those of us who seem to moan and whine - ad nauseam - to see that really, our lot in life is not all that bad.

The northern Ontario community of Kirkland Lake is in mourning for two trapped miners, Robert Sheldon, 37 and Leonce Verrier, 42, who were cut off from escape routes when two rock bursts deep in the bowels of the Macassa mine caused cave-ins resulting in a blockage of rocks and timbers 13 days ago.

While there was no real guarantee the two miners were still alive immediately following the rock bursts, rescuers had been working 24 hours a day in what proved to be a vain attempt to reach their doomed work mates.

On Monday, following further cave-ins, mine officials admitted it would be at least 30 days - and possibly longer - before the area the miners were last working in could be reached.

That same day, before the sombre pronouncement was made by mine officials, 2,000 people, some from surrounding communities, held a candle-lit vigil around the town's Christmas tree and said prayers for the entombed men.

Premier Bob Rae flew into Kirkland Lake to be with the miners' families.

More bad news of another sort was also forthcoming from mine officials when it was announced that layoffs would be taking place early in the new year.

My family lived in Kirkland Lake for two years just after we arrived in Canada, and my mother and father kept in touch with their friends for years after we had moved further north to Cochrane. I know the close-knit sense of community which pervades the north and also know some of the sense of lurking terror that a miner must always contend with while working underground, having toiled for INCO one summer in their Levack mine.

The sense of hopelessness, frustration, anguish and anger that must be flash-firing through Kirkland Lake right now is almost frightening to comprehend.

Kirkland Lake's economy - which once thrived because of a healthy mining and forestry industry - has been floundering for years. The community has virtually been ignored by the mandarins in Ottawa and Queen's Park - more concerned with vote-heavy southern Ontario - and social problems have surfaced (drug and alcohol abuse and rising incidents of domestic violence) caused mainly because of the rise in the ranks of the unemployed.

And now this tragedy, especially at this time of the year, with the purported Christmas message of hope.

Two men trapped underground, with little - if any hope for survival. Family men, neighbors, quite possibly volunteers within the community, who were just trying to eke out a living in what has to be considered one of the most stressful and dangerous occupations in the work force.

And there's not a damn thing anyone can do to rescue them. Not with all the modern technology or machinery, not with pick and shovel, not even with bare hands - as some of the more frustrated rescuers even attempted.

However, Kirkland Lake will survive! The community will come together as northern towns always have in the past.

The next time you hear someone bitch about how tough they are having it, maybe suggest they take time and reflect on the Kirkland Lake situation.

Colin Gibson

The People's Corner

Canadian justice is not being served

To the Editor:

Having just read some of the banned details of the Karla Homolka trial, I can partly understand Judge Kovacs media ban. Not for the reason of ensuring a fair trial for Paul Bernardo, but for protecting the judge's own skin. There is absolutely no question that justice was blind when it came to sentencing Karla Homolka, however, it was also deaf, dumb and stupid.

Had even a fraction of the details of the trial been released to the public, juxtaposed to the light sentence handed down, judge Kovacs

would have needed an army to protect himself from the rightful public anger. The judge knew he had not served up justice in the fact that he called for a contingent of six police officers to escort him from the courthouse to his car on trial day. By his actions, judge Kovacs has become an accomplice after the fact.

While Paul Teal may eventually languish in jail for a long time, his wife, this black widow spider, will be back on the streets in less than four years and will no doubt require a new identity and police protection for the

rest of her life.

The public will continue to be punished and quite likely in peril due to this judge's gutless action. There may have been a plea bargain for the sake of judicial expediency, however, judge Kovacs, having heard the details of the case first hand could certainly have rejected it calling for a stiffer sentence. If not, why have him there?

What purpose did he serve, except to lend legitimacy to this charade, parading as justice. And certainly there is no logical reason the details of the plea-bargain arrangement itself should not be released. Public embarrassment to the crown for their inept handling of the case is not sufficient grounds to spare the deal examination under the light of public scrutiny. These people work for us!

Judges are not super beings, they are like you and me. We all make mistakes. However, judges are not allowed to be examined or censured, no matter how bad their decision-making becomes. This is wrong!

This case is not isolated, just sensational and it brings

to the surface again the fact that the criminal justice system is not working. Contrary to what some social engineers are saying, our jails are not overcrowded. In fact, there are 20 per cent fewer inmates in federal institutions than there were 10 years ago, and that's in spite of the Tory prison building binge.

Violent offenders and sexual predators are being set free or given light sentencing at an alarming rate. Karla Homolka is no less of a threat to society than Joseph Fredericks was. In fact her crimes were even more hideous and yet, judge Kovacs says she'll have paid her debt and be free in as little as four years.

Balance and common sense must be restored, with an emphasis on victims' rights and protection of society in order to win back the respect of the citizen. For today, the criminal justice system in Canada is an ass and judge Kovacs actions in this trial only served to prove it.

Don R. Dagenais
Acton

Arthritis Society appreciates help

To the Editor:

As Regional Manager of the Halton/Peel Region of The Arthritis Society, I would like to take a moment to thank everyone, our dedicated volunteers, for the time and commitment they have put forth in the various activities that were undertaken these past few months. Residential campaign '93 has been a grueling and demanding one and I know everyone is delighted it is over.

We were very fortunate this year to have over 1,300 hard-working volunteers assisting us in the Halton/Peel area and I am confident that we will be able to obtain our goal. There are over four million Canadians currently afflicted with this debilitating disease and over 65,000 live in the Halton/Peel area. Our need

to find a cure for Canada's #1 chronic disease is essential and all donations are very much appreciated. On behalf of The Arthritis Society, have a safe and wonderful Holiday Season.

Harriet McLoughlin
Regional Manager
Halton-Peel

A special Christmas tree hunt

By Rosaleen Garneau
Special to HHTW

Everyone had an opinion: It's too short, it's too thin, it doesn't have enough branches. The search for the "just right" tree to grace the living room began, made more difficult by visions of perfectly formed artificial ones that danced in our heads. As we made careful examination of each specimen it became apparent it was the character inherent in a naturally grown tree that held its appeal.

Our arrival in the bush was made on a sleigh pulled by huge horses whose bells rang and nostrils smoked as they worked hard to transport the eager would-be lumberjacks through a path under snow-covered branches. The trail opened up to a field of evergreens and a bonfire, where successful tree shoppers waited huddled together for the ride back to their cars.

My husband and I were joined in our quest by our three children, two friends and their three children. A

Guest column

number of other family groups of various sizes were out in the country air together, perhaps to retrieve a little of that old-fashioned Christmas feeling.

There were many calls across the bush of "look at this one", "come over here", "I have snow in my boots" as the adults dodged snowballs and walked gingerly on the slippery paths between rows of trees.

Although the children were diverted by the fun in the snow, their attention was quickly gained when time for the final judging was at hand.

Each family took genuine interest in finding the tree most suitable for the other's home and our friends were quicker than we at finding their tree. I, being of somewhat fussy nature, spent some time looking for a Balsam fir in a field of predominantly spruce and pine. When an inquiry into the availability of Balsam lead

us to an untouched field, I was awed by the beauty of the place as the mission was somewhat delayed.

The field we were now in was covered in two feet of snow, with no paths, making walking extremely challenging, yet we persevered. We made our way slowly through what must be a pond in spring and up hill towards the trees, planted for the purpose of Christmas harvesting.

Exhausted by our efforts, we were grateful that we needed to shake only three or four free of their frosty blankets before collectively deciding which one to choose.

Although I was cold and wet I was content to have found a tree made perfect by the experience. I was happy to have spent time with family and friends in such an outstanding setting and, as we turned to go, I looked back on a scene of pristine field bordered by white-tipped forest and was overwhelmed by a sense of peace.

Got a beef or a comment?

Halton Hills This Week welcomes your letters. Letters must be signed and include your full name and address. Names will be withheld on request. Halton Hills This Week reserves the right to edit, revise, or reject any letters on the basis of factual errors, punctuation, spelling errors or as a result of space limitations. Opinions expressed in letters to the editor are not necessarily those of Halton Hills This Week or its employees.

Send your letters to:

The Editor,
Halton Hills This Week,
232 Guelph St., Unit 9,
Georgetown, ON, L7G 4B1
or fax to: 905-873-3918

FDU ©1993 DON KEHR

Santa's Workshop
an employment equity company



THANK GOODNESS, WE ONLY HAVE TO VISIT 4 OUT OF 5 HOUSES THIS YEAR!

SOCIAL CONTRACT FOR FUN AND PROFIT

ORIGINAL FREE JOURNALS NOV 2007