

GRAPE VINE

themselves this Hallowe'en with a street right out of Friday The 13th. The spooky mood was set by the Ockenden family, as son Jason transformed their house into a palace of goulish delight.

Thanks to a high police presence, the downtown streets were safe and quiet.

Mill Mews makeover

The landscaping at Acton Mews looks much nicer thanks to the Acton FoodShare's Joan Waldie and the Dills family, which owns the property.

Overseeing the removal of some dead bushes and shrubs at the property Thursday afternoon, Waldie said, "I couldn't stand the sight of the bushes here. They're all dead and motorists couldn't see over or around them when they came in and out of the parking lot. I persuaded the Dills family to let me clean it up with the help of some FoodShare clients." Don't stop now Joan, Mill Street is looking pretty spiffy these days.

Morale low at Acton X-Ray

Yet another deadline has come and gone for a change of ownership at the X-Ray on Mill Street in Acton. Staff at the clinic, owned by Diagnostic Imaging Associates, are very unhappy that a rumoured sale to an area radiologist has not made it past the "verbal negotiating" stage. DIA announced it would close at the end of September and extended that date until October. Now staff say they are "dangling on a string" and unsure what will happen next. Staff report the clinic will remain open despite the uncertainty.

Goulin' around

Meadvale Road residents outdid

Glenlea plans on hold

Glenlea Drug Mart owner-pharmacist Gary Barton will not get his birthday wish of seeing work start on his new Acton east store by the end of the month. Seems the bank is dragging its feet on loaning the necessary cash to build a new drug store on the old Little Motors site. The land is contaminated with lead from spilled gasoline and there's some dispute over who is responsible for the cost of the cleanup. Gary says it will be spring before there's any action.

What do you call a sheep king? A ba czar!

Speaking of bazaars, you'll be able to do all of your Christmas shopping in Acton this weekend. Acton's Parent-Child Resource Centre stages its annual Christmas Show and Craft sale from 9 am until 2 pm in the band hall on Saturday. Knox Presbyterian Church is the place to go if you're looking for home-made baking and lunch. Their bazaar runs from 10 until 2 pm and St. Alban's opens its doors for a bazaar and tea on Saturday from 10 until 4 pm. If you're busy this weekend don't despair. The Lakeside Chapter I.O.D.E. is holding its bazaar and tea Saturday, Nov. 21 at the Legion on Wright Avenue. That sale will feature knitting, baking, plants and attic treasures.



Al & Al's Red Brand Meats celebrated seven years in business by winning the Chamber of Commerce Business of the Month Award for November. The business received the most nominations to date for the award. Shown here, outside the Mill Street store, are owners Janet and Al Cunneyworth, flanked by chamber members, from left to right, Dave Pyke, Wes Whitford, Len Tuitman and Carol Stechyshyn. (Frances Niblock photo)

When the Lamp Lady came calling

We called her the Lamp Lady because she carried a lantern on her annual visits to the old Acton Public School back in the '20s. I must confess my memory is foggy about the lantern, but the fact that we named her the Lamp Lady must be proof enough.

Anyway, lantern or not, the Lamp Lady, who looked like three dumplings glued together, provided a welcome diversion to the monotony of the school curriculum. Because breaks were few we greeted every visitor with flattering warmth and attention.

The Lamp Lady talked with a lisp, with interruptions to wipe moisture from her mouth and eyes. Tears dropped on her dumpling cheeks as she recounted the plight of the dear sailor boys on the Great Lakes. The purpose of her visit was to collect donations for her sailor boys. After listening, puzzled but more or less enthralled by her stories, we were instructed to bring all spare coppers to fill up the collection box carried by the Lamp Lady. Some of us brought nothing, because we had nought to spare even for the comfort of the Great Lakes boys. To ease my guilt, I used to add an extra supplication when saying my nightly prayers on a cold mat in a frigid bedroom. "Please God, help the sailors." I hoped the Almighty was listening.

Another school visitation caused more excitement as the annual callers, unlike the Lamp Lady, were militant and gloriously aggressive representatives of the WCTU, the Women's Christian Temperance Union. These ladies, usually in pairs, captivated us as they declaimed about the evils of drink. Vivid phrases like "Demon Rum" remained with us for years, never to be forgotten. Young as we were, we sensed that the WCTU had a firm mission in a thirsty world.

The speakers, after holding forth, invited their young innocents to give personal observations of the horrors of intemperance. A few kids took the lure, and regaled us with tales of intemper-

ate kin, including "the old man," who got plastered every Saturday night. I kept mum, although strongly tempted to tell of our colourful neighbour, nicknamed the Honey Diver, who made his own home brew from a lethal formula. Although mild when sober he went berserk after guzzling that home brew. He used to beat his dog, his horse and his wife in that order. I hated him for the treatment of two faithful animals. I did not worry about his spouse because I had witnessed her defensive tactics that included lobbing well-aimed slabs of firewood. We always knew that the Honey Diver's bender was easing off when we heard the strains of a ferocious fiddle. We did not have to peek through the curtains to confirm that our neighbour was seated in his old cane chair on a stone entrance to the open front door, fiddling away his frustrations.

Our visitors did not learn of the Honey Diver — at least, not from me, although I suspect they knew of his eccentricities being sleuth-like and alert to Acton's sins.

After hearing our Temperance speakers, we were expected to draw posters on the evils of drink for small money prizes. The inducement of monetary rewards inspired every kid to do his best. We compared drink to ravening wolves, fiery dragons and the Grim Reaper. In our authorship, we outdid Ten Nights in a Barroom, which I had sneaked home from the library to read on the sly.

Our posters were even more lurid, although I did not expect to win an art prize because my drawing was at a kindergarten level, where it remained forever. I was doomed to disappointment also in the essay competitions, not win-

ning once — a large lapse I blamed on the judges. Those WCTU judges, I reasoned bitterly, did not recognize a good thing when they saw it.

A third competition was even more challenging. An elocution contest in the old Methodist Sunday school, and the winner netted a silver medal. My best friend Isabel, whose parents belonged to the Temperance organizations, entered, along with my younger sister and nine other hopefuls, including myself. We had to recite a dramatic poem entitled "The Old Town Pump."

Mum "put up" her daughters' hair the night before. "Putting up" meant washing our thick locks and rolling same in rags. We resembled golliwogs, my sister and I, when we presented ourselves at the Methodist Church. I sensed that the overflow audience looked fascinated when I took the platform to give my all for The Old Town Pump.

I waved my hands, beat my non-existent breast and contorted my face after the fashion (I hoped) of elocutionists. If any contestant worked hard for the coveted medal, I did. In fiction, these efforts would have paid off in a stunning win, but real life is often less gratifying than fiction.

Who waltzed home with a silver medal? My best friend. Who earned an honourable mention? My younger sister. A triumph I did not easily forgive.

These days, one rarely hears of the WCTU. Its years of fight and fervor are barely remembered. As for the Lamp Lady, I picture her in heaven still keeping a moist angelic eye on her dear boys of the Great Lakes.

(This column originally appeared in the Acton Voice in 1985.)

PETUNIA PATCH

With Esther Taylor



HEY!

Which do you think was a more newsworthy story last week — the Blue Jays' World Series win or the No vote in the Constitutional referendum?

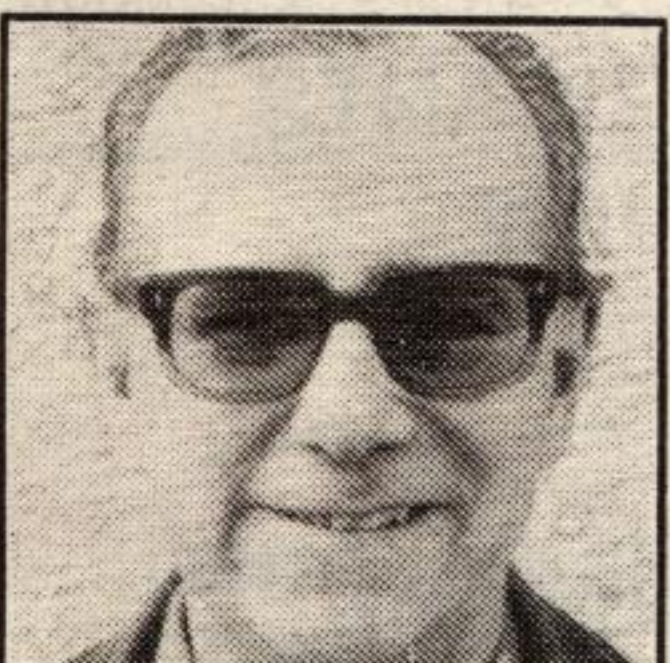


"I think the referendum was the bigger story because it will have longer lasting impacts on Canada. I'm a patriot, not a sports fan and I voted No."

Julia Roberts, Mill Street East

"The Blue Jays' win was a much bigger story. Because of the economy people needed something like the Jays' win to boost their spirits and give us something positive to talk about."

Bernice McLeod, Poplar Avenue



"Winning the World Series is certainly more important than the referendum. That win did more for Canadians' spirits than any vote could."

Wayne Hogben, Young Street

"The Blue Jays' win overshadowed the vote. The World Series win made history but the No vote won't end the Constitutional debate. The win gave us all something to celebrate."

Frank Fronteddu, Mill Street East

