

# GRAPE VINE

## Interesting comments from Parliament Hill

Parliament is heading into its final four weeks before summer break (the House is expected to sit until June 23) and MP Julian Reed last week made some interesting comments on a couple of contentious issues: the Young Offenders Act and benefits for same sex couples.

Regarding the unpopular Young Offenders Act, Reed said last week: "Minister of Justice the Honourable Alan Rock will be introducing amendments to the Act this month. We will all have time during the summer to express an opinion on the proposed legislative changes."

"I would strongly invite everyone who has a concern, and everyone should, to please contact our office (877-2900)."

Last week, in the standing committee on human rights, Reed stated that "the natural family must be held up as the backbone of our society," in response to the question of extending legal identification to same sex couples.

Reed even told the committee chair that "if we were all same sex couples for one generation there wouldn't be any of us left."

## Way to go, Pat!

It's now official: Our own Pat Giguere has been named Halton Hills' Citizen of the Year for '94.

"I'm really flattered and I think

it's great," commented Pat, 77, last week.

Pat, who has lived in Acton for 12 years, will be honoured at a reception on Monday, June 27 at the Civic Centre.

In addition to writing the popular Seniors Scene column in The Tanner, Pat is president of Acton's Golden Age Club, treasurer of the Acton Seniors Centre Committee and secretary for the Ontario Seniors' Games.

Known for her sharp wit and community spirit, Pat said last week, "I think Acton is just a great town; the people are fantastic."

Pat was born in Port Arthur, Ont. (now Thunder Bay).

## A welcome improvement

The scariest part of downtown finally is getting some attention.

Monday morning we found a worker busy making improvements to the crosswalk at Mill and Willow streets, site of a number of near-accidents each and every day.

The worker told us there would now be flashing lights at the crosswalk, activated by push-buttons on both sides of Mill Street.

"I can't believe how many cars have gone right through the crosswalk already today," he remarked.

## She'll be missed!

Staff and students at Robert Little are inviting the community to a retirement ceremony in honour of music teacher Lenora Vickery.

Lenora, who was born and raised in Ebenezer (just west of Acton on the Guelph Line) but has lived here in town for many years, will be honoured on Thursday, June 23, from 4 to 7 pm — so mark your calendar!



**REAL TALENT!** These puppeteers dazzled audiences at Acton Baptist Church on the weekend. From left: Shannon Inglis, Kristy Allen, Shannon Birrell, Dolf DeJong, Brooke Inglis, Pastor Tom Cullen, Rebecca Austin, Nick Fread, Chad Ballantyne, Derek Lambert and Damian Banyard. Front row: Matthew Henderson, Ryan Bell and Rachel Andrews. (Irene Birrell photo)

# One day, remembered forever

*"The first 24 hours of the invasion will be decisive. For the Allies, as well as Germany, it will be the longest day."* — Field Marshal Erwin Rommel

Fifty years ago next Monday, 155,000 allied troops stormed fortress Europe. Five years after war had been declared, the invasion began on the rocky beaches of Normandy. Massive amounts of men and material would see the war end in Europe, within 12 months. For most of the young men on these ships, the end of the war was the furthest thing from their minds. They could only pray that they would survive the next 18 hours — the longest day.

Canada had five divisions in Europe. The First and Fifth Divisions had been part of the Italian invasion the year before. Obviously, D-Day could never have been successful had the Germans not had to commit several divisions to the defense of Italy. Canadian troops in Italy good-naturedly referred to themselves as "D-Day Dodgers."

The Second, Third and Fourth Canadian Divisions were committed to the European Theatre. Many Acton residents were involved in the D-Day invasion and others followed in the weeks to come. Notwithstanding John Wayne movies, the Yanks did not affect the D-Day invasion on their own. The Canadian and British troops attacking Gold, Juno and Sword Beaches achieved some of the deepest penetrations inland of the day.

Canada suffered some 915 casualties on D-Day, fine young men who made the supreme sacrifice so that we could have a relative peace for the last fifty years. I wonder, when I see our vets losing their jobs in the courts in the name of employment equity, if we are giving these men the respect they deserve.

It's ironic that the politicians who are denying our vets their dignity have never fought for anything more dangerous than the last sandwich at a free buffet. These are observations, however, which are probably best left for another day.

Four days after D-Day, Acton resident Tom Watson landed in France. By then, an air strip had been set up on the beach to evacuate the wounded. Mr. Watson was kept busy landing evacuation flights and dodging enemy mortar and artillery fire.

## The Way I See It

With Mike O'Leary



He remembers that the nights were the worst with constant shelling and planes landing with men and machinery. The Canadians continued to land and ultimately were part of the allied drive through France and into Germany herself.

The invasion didn't end on D-Day by any means. The allies continued to land troops and supplies for months. Local gentleman Hugh O'Rourke landed 30 or so days after D-Day. He recalls that while the beach landing was uneventful, when they got further inland and engaged the enemy, things got "sticky". Our Vets are masters of understatement.

While the D-Day invasion force pressed through France into Germany, John McHugh and elements of the First and Fifth Divisions left Italy through the Port of Ortona, on the Adriatic side of Italy, and sailed to Marseilles. They drove through France and into Holland where they liberated Rotterdam.

Acton residents were involved in all aspects of the liberation of Europe. They served well, did themselves proud and are deserving of all the respect we can afford them.

There are other Actonites who were involved in the D-Day landings. If they are your fathers, mothers, brothers, uncles, aunts, grandfathers or neighbors, I sincerely hope you will remember them in some special way next Monday. Nothing we can do will ever equal the risk they took for us. For the years they gave, for the years we could have, we owe them our gratitude. In honouring them, we also honour those who paid the supreme sacrifice on the beaches of Normandy.

Acton has a visitor who landed beside the Canadian troops on D-Day. Jim Mason is visiting his daughter, Christine Kerins and family. Fifty years ago he had a different Canadian connection. At 5:30 am Jim landed on Sword beach, on the left of the Canadian Force. Now a sprightly 79, Jim has vivid recollections of June 6, 1944.

He was in the Middlesex Regiment of the British Army and Head-

quarters Company. How he got into H.Q. Company is a story in itself.

During training, the troops were asked if anyone was a shoemaker. Privates were paid the equivalent of 36 cents per week. The trade pay for shoemakers was an additional 5¼ cents per day which effectively doubled his wage. Jim managed to convince his sergeant that he was a cobbler, to get the extra money for his wife and child.

All was well when they were in England. He spent his days sewing hacksaw blades into the soles of officers boots and compasses in the heels. Noone told him, however, that once combat started they didn't need shoemakers. They did need someone to drive an ammunition truck and that's the job he got.

Jim trained near Inverness, in Scotland, since the beaches there were similar to those in Normandy. From Scotland they proceeded to Southampton to board landing craft to cross the channel. There were approximately 5,300 "ships" involved in the invasion and the British government pressed into service almost anyone who had any seagoing experience. Jim was somewhat concerned when, during the rough crossing, he found out that the "Captain" of his craft was in fact a London taxi driver.

He recalls that the big shells passing over sounded like a subway speeding through a station. They didn't mind, though, because the troops knew it was friendly fire. They were let off the boat about ¼-mile offshore. To this day, he has no idea how his truck made it to the beach.

The fire on the beach was murderous. Air cover was minimal since there was a low cloud cover. By the end of the day they had fought their way off the beach and taken cover in an orchard.

Over the next few days Jim would drive back to the beach to get more ammunition. While returning from the beach they were strafed by a German plane. Jim and his men did what anyone would and took cover under the truck. The truck was, of course, full of high explosives. No wonder he is sure some guardian angel was looking after him.

Fifty years ago our best stormed fortress Europe. They fought and died for duty, honour, country. Would we have done so well — I wonder?

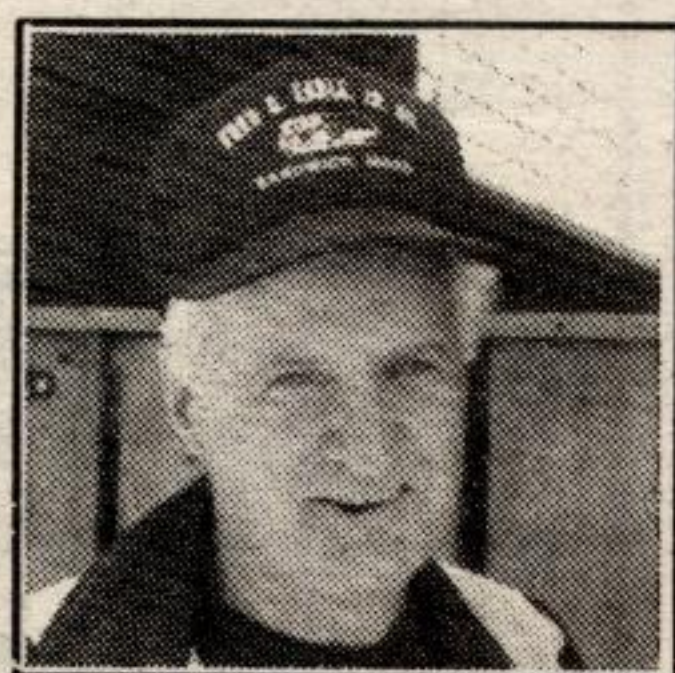
# HEY!

The Tanner is now 2-years-old. Any birthday wishes?



"Happy Birthday! Good luck next year. I like Mike O'Leary's column and the school columns — I have a daughter attending St. Joseph's. I read the paper cover to cover. Keep up the good work."

Pat O'Meara, George Street



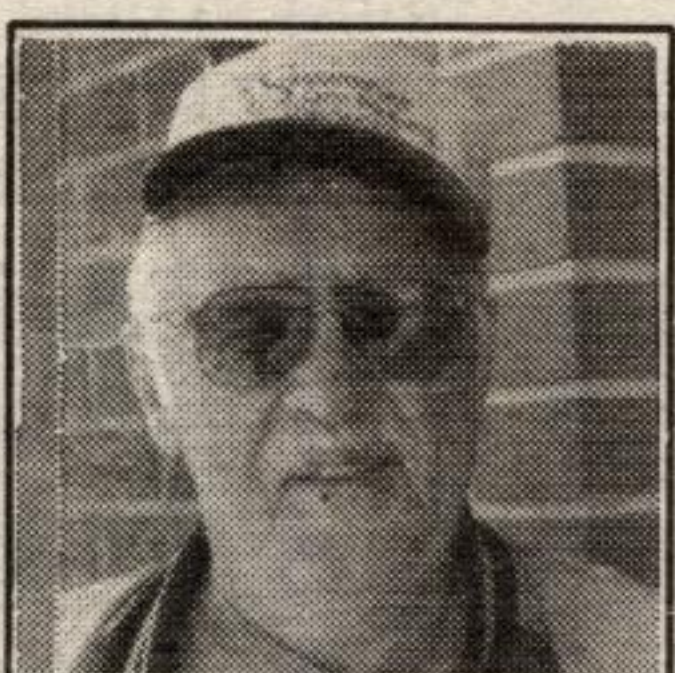
"My wife and I enjoy it. I'm glad there's an Acton paper back in town. It's nice to read what the Acton people are doing."

Gord James, McDonald Boulevard



"Keep up the good work. I enjoy reading it and hope it keeps succeeding. I usually read all newspapers cover to cover."

Nancy Hopcraft, Young Street



"Congratulations! I like the paper, read it cover to cover and will continue to subscribe. It's nice to have a local paper. Continued success."

Wally Kowall, McDonald Boulevard