

Parent's concern prompts change

BY DOUG HARRISON
The Acton Tanner

One good thing has come from Lindsay Lima's food allergies.

It was because of those allergies that her mother saw her accommodations during a recent overnight school trip to Rocky Ridge Ranch, south of Acton.

While delivering food to the Grade 5 M.Z. Bennett student, Laurie Lima was appalled at the conditions of a "lean-to" shed that Lindsay and five others were in.

"I was in shock. I don't know how the ranch would see putting kids or adults in those conditions. Children depend on their parents

and others for safety," said Lima on Thursday.

Five students, a co-op student and a teacher were crammed into the 7'x15' shed with a door leading to a narrow alley, the lone access. The other exit was blocked by a bed that sat against a wall above a baseboard heater, Lima said.

She added that nails were sticking one-and-a-half to two inches out of the wall, the cover of a smoke detector on the ceiling was off and there was no battery.

"I can't understand why nobody did anything before," Lima wondered.

The girls were eventually moved to an interior room of the chapel (an auditorium-like room).

M.Z. Bennett principal Lynn Snider said if a similar issue occurred a second time he wouldn't do much differently (in terms of a pre-trip safety check).

"It was an oversight on (Rocky Ridge's) part," said Snider. "Health and safety of the kids is our No. 1 priority. We haven't knowingly put kids in an unsafe position. The cabin is rustic, but that doesn't mean it's unsafe."

Rocky Ridge Ranch owner Bruce Chapman said a full inspection has been completed and that the out-of-service smoke detector was replaced immediately.

"We're up-to-date on what we need to do. We're always on top of things," said Chapman, who added the 25-year-old ranch prides itself on making people feel comfortable. "It was a rare incident, we listened well and the concerns were well-addressed."

A re-inspection of the ranch will take place this week, said Milton Fire Marshall Harold Penson.

And the Halton Board of Education is changing its procedure regarding overnight trips. Chair Dave Whiting said health and fire safety data will be checked for any school trip starting in September.

Added Lima, "We all assume that if students are going on an overnight trip with the school, the place has been inspected by fire and health officials.

"The Board of Education assumes that if a camp is running, it too has been inspected.

"In this case, no one checked anything. I'm glad to see a change in procedure at the Board level and hope other Boards will pay attention to this as well."



CARING LEADER: Spirit Valley district commissioner Linda Purton, left, presented Acton resident and First Ospringle Guide leader Helen Dubeau with a medal of merit last Tuesday in recognition of the exceptional service that Dubeau has given to Guiding in South-Wellington Division. (Doug Harrison photo)



FLYING HIGH: These Acton Brownies officially flew up to guides at a recent ceremony at Robert Little. Back row, from left: April Fendley, Stephanie Christie, Hayley Green and Elise van Vlite. Front row: Amanda Nelissen, Rachel McKnight, Meaghan Finnie and Danielle Young. (Doug Harrison photo)

Taxes could soon be payable monthly

MUNICIPAL DIGEST

Town staff are studying a suggestion to allow residents to pay their property tax bills in equal monthly installments, instead of quarterly.

Acton Councillor Rick Bonnette raised the issue and was told staff will report back before the end of the year.

"The idea came up during the debate over market value assessment two years ago," Bonnette said after the Council meeting on Monday night.

"I think people should have the option of having their taxes automatically deducted from the back account every month instead of getting hit with a big bill four times a year.

"Many utilities have gone to equal billing and I think that it is time for the Town to get into the 1990s and offer the option," Bonnette said.

"I think a lot of new homeowners and seniors would like the choice of paying a little bit of their tax bill each month instead of having to shell out a lot quarterly."

Acton arena announcement coming?

There may be an announcement concerning the proposed new Acton arena at next Monday's general Committee meeting.

While Town officials remain mum, those in the know expect there will be word on Town plans to purchase land in Acton East for the much-needed multi-million dollar facility.

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To Be Held At
McKenzie-Smith Middle School

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Thursday June 23rd, 1994

Past and present students, parents, friends and family are invited to visit and share best wishes for Mrs. Vickery in her retirement.

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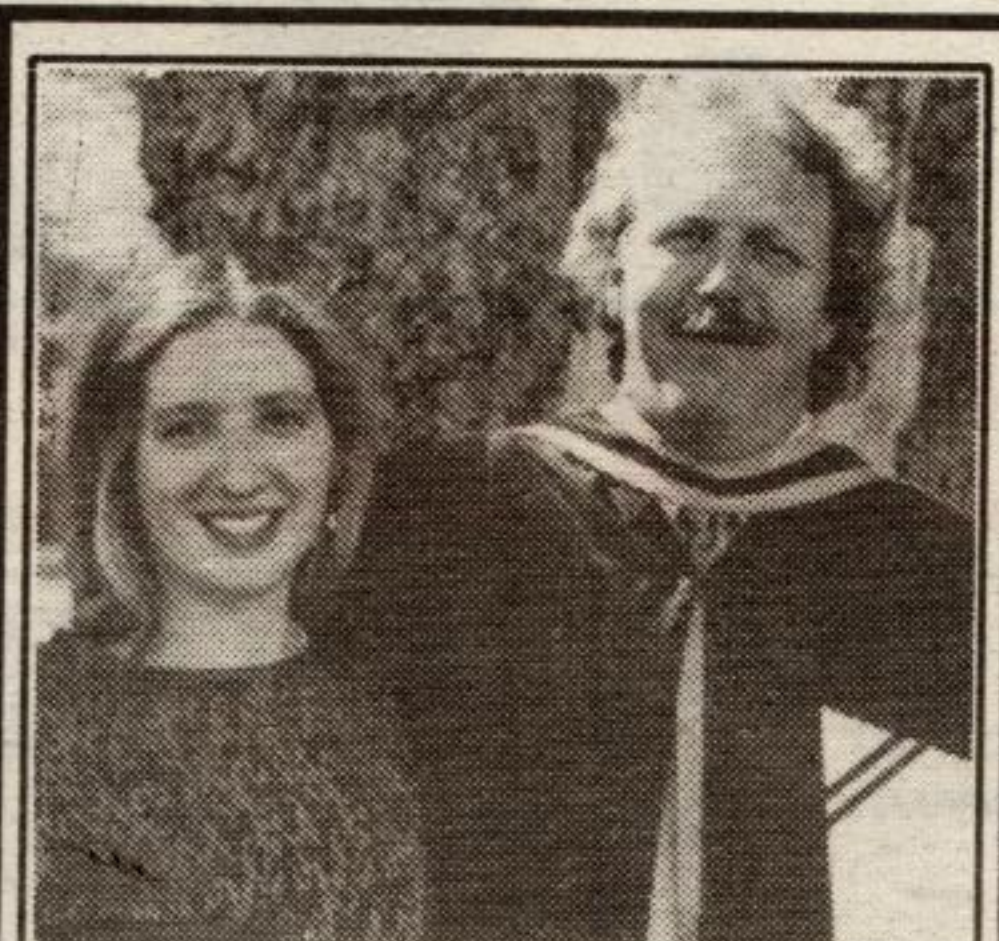
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Jim, Ena & Dahlia are pleased to announce that **Richard Gibson** has been presented with a **Master of Science Degree** from the University of Guelph