

Air cleared on future of arena

BY FRANCES NIBLOCK
The Acton Tanner

There are unanswered questions and no firm commitments following last Wednesday's somewhat tense meeting between members of the Acton Agricultural Society and the Town's top recreation staff, but the air has been cleared.

The meeting was called by Tom Shepard, the Town's Director of Parks and Recreation, after he and Society president Janis Fread, sniped at each other in *The Tanner* over future uses for the Prospect Park arena and community centre.

The Society is conducting a community and user-group survey to find out what, if anything, people would like to see happen with the old arena, which the Society uses during the fall fair.

Shepard said he stands behind his comments that the survey is "pie-in-the-sky" as he recounted the history of the Town's preparations to build a new arena and community centre in Acton east.

Shepard stressed what bad shape

the old arena is in and how costly the necessary repairs would be.

"If we're sitting here and can't afford to run this place, then what would we be being doing (if we turned over control of the arena to the Society) who just wants to run a fair for five days a year? I can't fathom why you'd want to run yourself into the ground, just trying to fund-raise to keep this thing, that's on its last legs, open," Shepard said.

"It would be far, far cheaper to knock down these buildings (the arena and Society's adjacent poultry barn) and replace them with something that makes sense, that you could make use of and that we could make use of with you," Shepard said.

Shepard repeatedly questioned why the Society's survey included questions indicating that ice could be kept in the old arena and seemed reluctant to accept that it was just one of many initial suggestions by people who were surveyed.

In recounting her version of past

talks and events surrounding the Society's study of arena uses, Fread defended the survey as just the first step to determine if the Society could take over running the building. She said the Society had never seriously considered maintaining ice in the arena.

The meeting, which became bogged down in the re-hashing of old events, was brought on track by Councillor Norm Elliott.

"Let's go on from here and see what the feasibility study shows."

"My gut instinct, my hope, is that this is a do-able project for the fair board. I think you are the logical people to run the facility here," Elliott said.

During the discussion, two Society executives said they did not want the Society to take over control of the old building, and Shepard was asked if the Town would "go halves" on the cost if a new building was constructed.

Shepard said that "potentially there are opportunities" to replace both buildings with something more economical, beneficial and pleasing, and that could include compatible uses for both the Town and the Society.

"I hope we can count on your support when we have the results of the survey," Fread said.

The Society's survey results concerning possible future uses of the old arena and Park location will be ready in October.

Juno winner visits library

Juno Award winner Jack Grunsky will sing hits from his four children's albums next Wednesday at the Acton Public Library. Show time is 2:30 pm; phone 853-0301 for details.

Robert Little Public School P.A.C.T

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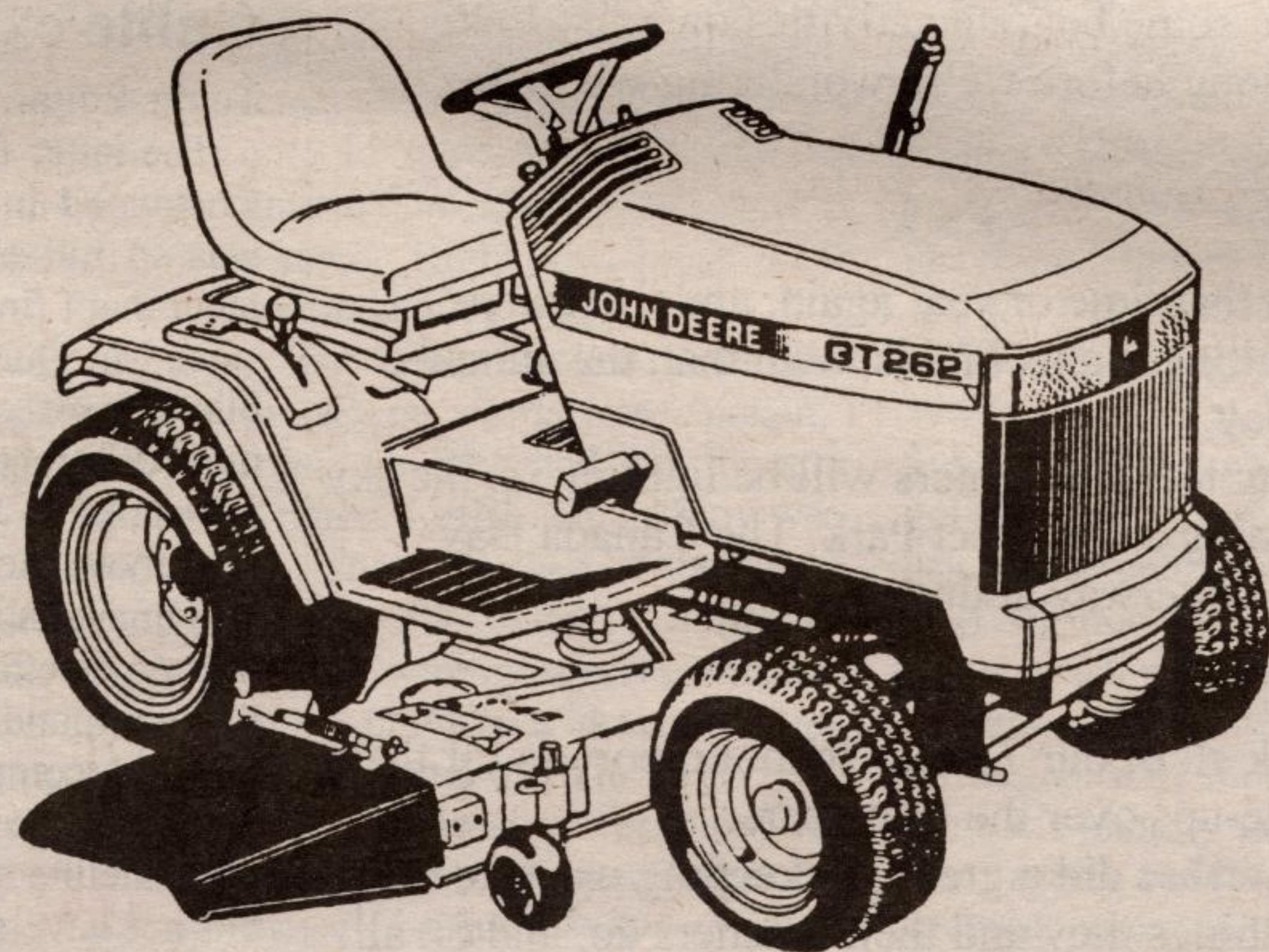
ANY BITES? We caught these Grade 6 McKenzie-Smith students doing a little fishing last week during the school's annual three-day stay at Rockwood Conservation Area. From left: Becky Chapman, Shannon Peart and Laurel Adams. (Doug Harrison photo)



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