

ACROSS THE FENCE

With Joanne Stevenson



What's in a name?

Your name says a lot about you, even before anyone knows *anything* about you. People expect a James or George to be regal; a Gus or Sam to be down-to-earth; a girl named Raven should have jet-black hair; someone named Angel should be sweet and good.

Parents spend a great deal of time, almost nine months in fact, deciding on just the right name for their child. And there's a whole lot to consider.

Nick-names can be devastating, initials can spell out words, famous personalities can make names popular – or out of the question. And there's always the syntax to consider – how well first, middle and last names *flow* together.

I don't know a parent who didn't agonize over naming their child.

That's not quite true. My vice principal in middle school, Mr. Bush, had a sister named Rose. I know an Olive Green, and a Crystal Fountain.

You'd never name your child Ron McDonald, Justin Case or Mary-Chris Smith.

And poor Dick Assman. What were his parents thinking? (Personally, I'm glad he's riding this wave of fame; there should be some profit for living with a name like that.)

Which brings us to the question of what to name the linked M.Z. Bennett and McKenzie-Smith schools.

I think we'd all agree that the name for a school isn't nearly as important as the learning that goes on inside. But students, teachers, parents and citizens should be able to say the name of this school with pride and without blushing. We will only get this one chance to name the new school; we'd better let our opinions be known.

One name that's receiving a lot of attention – most of it negative – is Sir Donald Mann, who was co-founder of the Canadian Northern Railway.

My sense is that the community does not support Sir Donald Mann as a name for the school, and yet, according to a June 21 *Tanner* report, "if no other suggestions are offered through the summer, Tim Kingsbury (Milton trustee) says Sir Donald Mann will be the new school name."

Since then, Kingsbury apparently has received calls putting Acton Public School at the top of the list. I wonder if parents and students at Robert Little School would feel slighted by this choice – there would be the Acton Public School and "the other" school in Acton.

Other suggestions worth consideration include some popular Acton educators: Thomas Moore was the first principal here; Gary Dawkins was a former principal at McKenzie-Smith, and Ted Hanson was principal at Acton High when it was in the current M-S building.

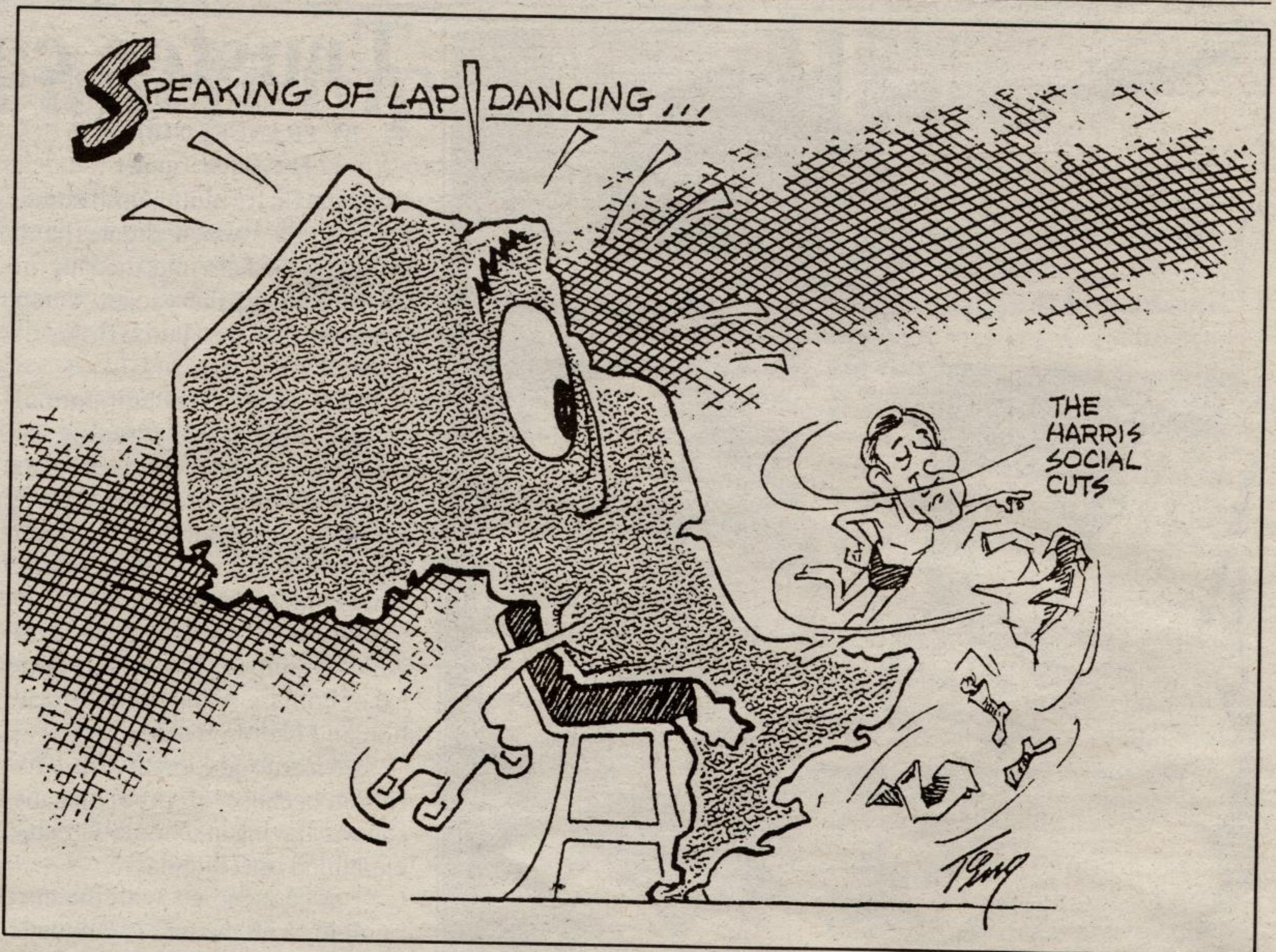
I favour combining the existing names. Minnie Bennett, Pat McKenzie and Elmer Smith were all popular Acton educators and, at one time at least, were worthy of lending their names to schools. As far as I know, none of them has done anything to take that honour away.

And though someone has suggested giving the school an umbrella name, retaining M.Z. Bennett and McKenzie-Smith as names for each wing, it wouldn't be long before the wings were referred to as "that end" and "this end" or the "Primary," and "Intermediate" wings.

So Bennett-McKenzie-Smith or McKenzie-Smith-Bennett would be my choices. It may be long and awkward to say, but in a way appropriate for the long linked school that covers two blocks.

So, what do you think? I suggest you call Tim Kingsbury yourself and let him know how you feel. His work number is 416-747-6720; home number is 856-4576; fax is 519-763-6587.

It's no good complaining about it after-the-fact.



LETTERS

The rights of fiends

To the Editor,

MP Julian Reed has made public his position on capital punishment; he opposes it. We thank Mr. Reed for being up front with us. We should also remind Mr. Reed that he was elected to represent the people, not to be God.

That the innocent could be executed is not a valid argument against the death penalty. Those who fear that possibility should concern themselves with fixing the errors in the justice system, which allows this to happen.

If an accused must be proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt, why are so many innocent being convicted? Apparently our administrators of justice are doing a pretty sloppy job.

One might also question whether the evidence presented at a new trial or an appeal is any more believable than that presented in the first place.

In any event, not all convicted murderers would be sentenced to death. Execution would be reserved only for those found guilty beyond doubt of premeditated acts vile beyond comprehension.

The predator who commits such acts remains a threat as long as he remains alive, perhaps to a correctional officer, a fellow inmate, or to the public, again, if he ever achieves parole or escapes.

Consider the case of Keith Legere, released from prison after serving three years for killing a 6-year-old child. The public was not informed of his whereabouts; his

rights had to be protected, you see! He was recently arrested again for violating a court order by approaching two small children in Hamilton.

We live in a society that claims to care about children. We decry child poverty. We protect children from tobacco smoke and prohibit spanking. Still, we allow convicted child rapists and killers to be turned loose from prison time and again. Is there any logic in that?

Where does the compassion for killers come from? Why are the rights of fiends placed above the well-being of children? Are we really interested in protecting the innocent, or are we simply trying to grind an ideological axe?

It is unclear how the majority of Canadians would vote in a referendum on capital punishment, but it seems to be high time for the public to have their say on the issue. As long as we allow so-called representatives to speak for us, we will not see any improvement in the administration of justice or the protection of society.

While government officials tiptoe around the problem, enacting useless gun laws, publishing questionable statistics, making deals with confessed criminals and talking, talking, talking, murderers are going free to kill over and again.

After the 1977 execution of Gary Gilmore in Utah, that state's attorney general, Robert Hansen, made the following statement: "No death can be elevating and there is always much sadness when anyone dies, but I am infinitely more sorrowful about the victims' families than the fact that Mr. Gilmore is no longer alive."

That statement would seem to express the sentiments of a truly just person.

*Eileen Hutcheson.
Knox Street*

Cash reward!

To the Editor,

Sometime between 11:30 pm Friday and dawn Saturday, a large rock was thrown through the front door of the olde Hide House.

Given that this weekend marks our launch of the new fall season, and that dozens of our staff members have worked so hard to ensure that the store looked great for those customers responding to our

new TV campaign, the timing of this stunt could not have been more damaging nor demoralizing.

A \$1,000 cash reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the "hero" responsible will be paid to the first witness with the decency and courage to come forward and contact Halton Regional Police.

*Steve Dawkins, president
The olde Hide House*

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THE ACTON TANNER is published weekly on Wednesdays by Wicklow Hills Publishing Co. Inc. at 12 Church St., E., Acton, Ontario, L7J 1K4. Mailing address: P.O. Box 150, Acton, Ont., L7J 2M3. Telephone: 519-853-5100. Fax: 853-5040. Reproduction without permission is prohibited. Ideas expressed herein are those of the author only.

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