

SKATE AT OWN RISK: Michael Kuiper, 9, and his 10-year-old sister Nicole have improved their hockey and skating skills this winter, thanks to the ice rink their father, Nick, has built across the road from their MacLennan Street home. The land is owned by Lou Hilts. (Doug Harrison photo)

Resident builds ice rink for community

BY DOUG HARRISON
The Rockwood Miller

While loads of youngsters locked their eyes on the tube Christmas Day playing the latest Sega or Nintendo game, Nick Kuiper preferred his kids getting a good workout on the ice.

For the fourth year, the R & M Construction employee has built an ice rink, first beside and now across the street from his MacLennan Street home.

Not only is it a self-improvement tool for his daughter Nicole's love of skating and son Michael's practice as a hockey player, but also hours of pleasure for area children and a sense of community.

"I have a passionate hatred for Nintendo games," he stated recently. "It's a mind-destroying game. The notion that it improves your hand-eye co-ordination is a crock."

"With the rink, you're outside and it's good, physical activity."

There's so much crap on TV with disgusting shows."

On most nights, the 60 by 80-foot rink attracts 10 to 15 people. On a busy night, you'll see 40 skating, including 9-year-old Michael and Nicole, 10.

The young Kuipers, decked out in their Tie Domi and Doug Gilmour Maple Leaf jerseys, often lace up the skates after school and aside from a break for dinner, will close the rink long after dark at 9 or 9:30 pm.

"There's no better practice than logging in the hours," smiles Nick.

It also doesn't hurt having the tools at your fingertips. Nick has the luxury of using an abundance of work materials to create and maintain the rink such as a hydraulic excavator, high pressure sodium lights and mercury vapour (parking) lights that pump out 800 watts of electricity, and portable generators that run every night from the back of his pickup truck.

The rink, sitting on land owned by Rockwood's Lou Hilts, is already in the works during the fall when rain water usually freezes two of the five or six inches of ice needed for frequent, safe skating.

Then it's time for Nick to bring out the hydraulic excavator along with a laser beam used to gauge when the ground is level. Then it's time to flood the surface. Since the rink has been skateable since Nov. 15, Nick floods the rink every two weeks when the temperature is well below zero.

As well, repairing holes and eliminating bubbles is part of the maintenance. Nick purchased the two-inch tubing for the nets and welded the pieces together, along with wiring in the accompanying mesh that is showing the wears of numerous slapshots.

Everyone is welcome to use the rink. Nick said Michael's hockey team has held a practice there.

"I love seeing the kids using it. It's very rewarding," offered Nick.

Students at books again

WELLINGTON HALL ACADEMY

BY LARISSA VIEL, GRADE 4

The fall term of school ended on Dec. 21 with the presentation of our Christmas Concert. It was a great success.

Our play went well and we were all in tune for our choral work. After the presentation, we enjoyed lots of goodies and warm apple cider while we watched the Parade of Lights.

Now, after a wonderful two week holiday, we're back to school. I think that most of us looked forward to returning to school, but maybe not everyone.

Monday morning was spent in a sharing time. We had an opportunity to tell each other what we did on the holiday, and it was interesting to hear how the other students celebrated Christmas and New Years.

Happy New Year from the students at Wellington Hall.

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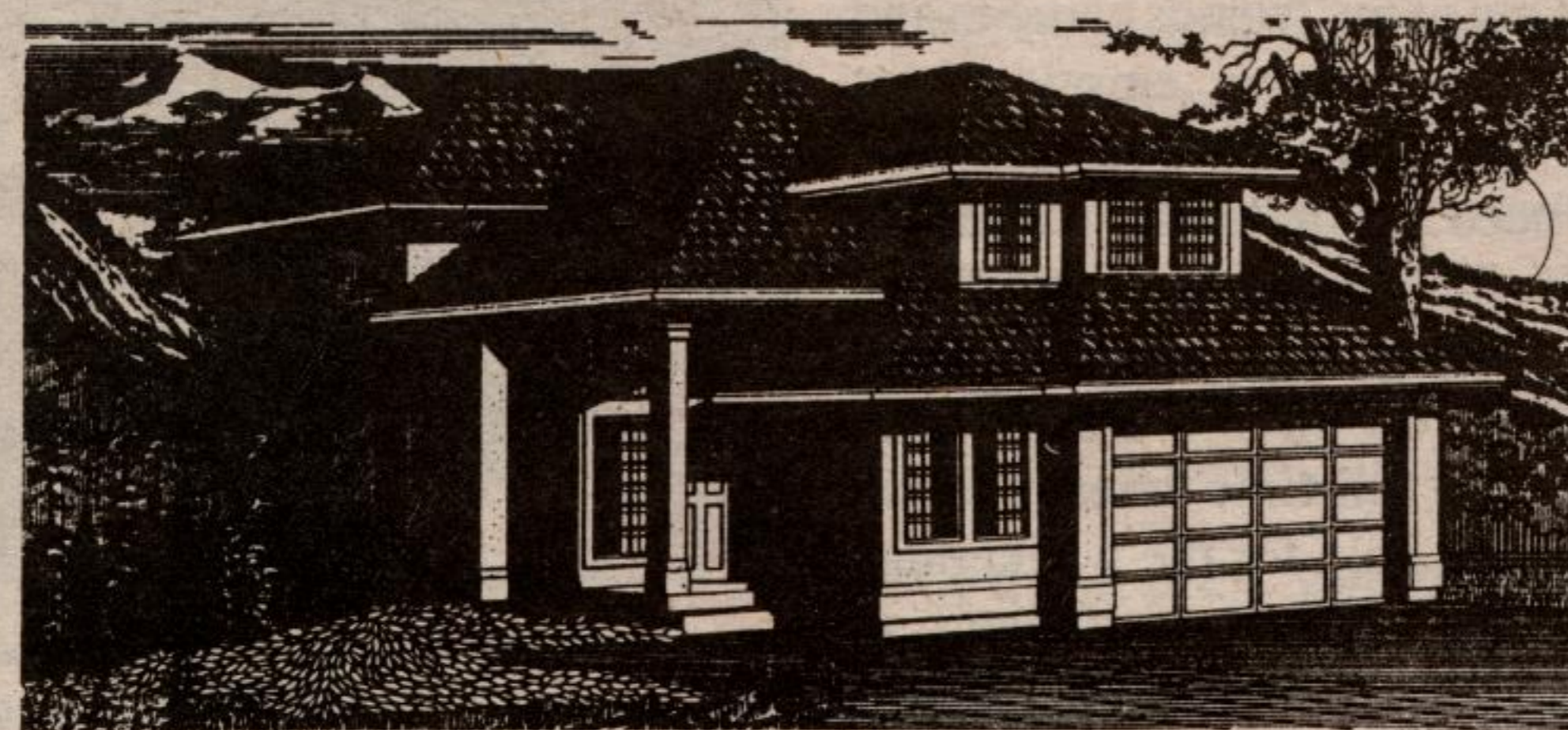
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HOMEPLAN OF THE WEEK!



A deluxe starter home

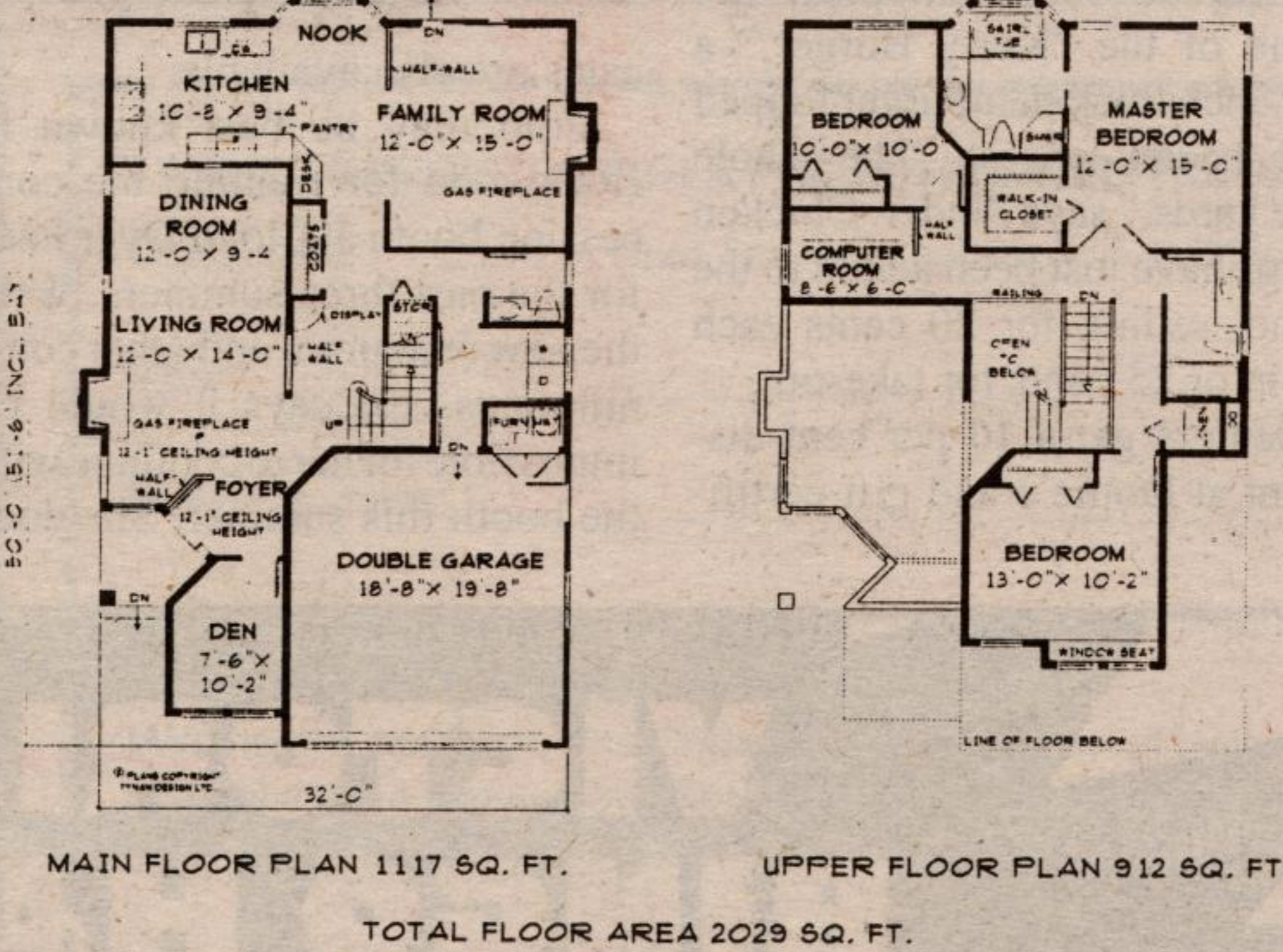
This compact two-storey boasts all the bells and whistles.

A stylish stucco exterior with a multi-level roof, raised entrance and feature windows is sure to be a welcome addition to the streetscape in any modern subdivision.

Twelve-foot-plus ceiling heights in the foyer and living room create a spacious atmosphere which is further enhanced by floor to ceiling feature windows in the living room. The kitchen has an efficient working area with a pantry and a bayed out breakfast nook. A half-wall creates a subtle division between the nook and the family room. The family room provides a comfortable space for informal gatherings and features a cosy gas fireplace.

Upstairs, the front bedroom boasts a boxed out window seat. A computer room provides a quiet area for study. French doors lead into the master bedroom which features a walk-in closet and a four-piece ensuite with a whirl tub set into a bay.

Plans for U-932 may be obtained for \$440 for a package of five complete sets of working prints and \$39 for each additional set of the same plan. Allow \$15 extra to cover the cost of postage and handling (add 7% GST to plan total plus postage and handling.) Make cheques, money orders, Visa or MasterCard authorizations payable to Acton Tanner Home Plan of Week, P.O. Box 150, Acton, ON, L7J 2M3.



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