

## EDITORIAL

With Hartley Coles



# Once upon a fair...

Over 83 years ago, annoyed at a decision by the Esquesing Agricultural Society to hold all future fall fairs in Georgetown, enterprising farmers and Acton residents decided they would start their own fall fair. Previously the Society held the fair in Acton one year and in Georgetown the next, alternating over its first 66 years.

It was never established why the Esquesing Society made the Georgetown-only move, possibly because it was dominated by residents of that area. Or perhaps our neighbouring village assumed the benefits conferred by the fair would be much better in their ball park instead of ours. In view of the intense competition and sports rivalry of the time, the latter explanation seems sensible.

It matters not now because those enterprising agriculturalists from Acton, instead of crying over the loss, looked on the negative decision as an opportunity. They instituted their own fall fair in 1913 and have never looked back. Indeed, of the two annual shows, even the most prejudiced would have to admit the Acton fall fair is one of the "best little fairs in Ontario."

Time has proven how right those first ladies and gentlemen were to form their own association. Recently, the Esquesing Agricultural Society, now known as the Georgetown Fair, celebrated 150 years of existence with a real plum, booking the RCMP musical ride as part of the fall fair. Unfortunately it coincided with the arrival of Hurricane Fran. Many fairgoers from here were disappointed that some of the RCMP program had to be cancelled. It wasn't unexpected. The Georgetown Fair, over the years, has a reputation for being wholly or partially disabled by the vagaries of the weather, principally drenching rain. Acton Fair, too, has had its share of inclement weather, saved in part by the old arena, used for exhibits, shows and contests while the heavens raged outside. It would be a tragedy if either that building or its possible successor was not available for the fall fair, one of our last real civic institutions.

As one who has attended the Acton Fall Fair over the last 60 years, I've marvelled at the changes wrought by the various executives in transforming what was once almost strictly a rural fair into a modern reflection of the community, both rural and urban. They have never just relied on the trusted and true methods of keeping the fair going, keeping abreast of the times with innovations, experimenting with new programs and exhibits.

Acton Fair has also benefitted enormously by the beauty of its site in Prospect Park. When autumn turns the shoreline into a kaleidoscope of color, it reflects on the millpond surface of Fairy Lake, creating a panorama other fairs would love to have. It does have a detrimental effect, however, confining activities within the borders when it seems the fair is bursting at the seams.

Those of us long in the tooth can remember Friday night performances in the metal-clad arena, when jumping horses on the dirt floor was the main attraction, along with such rustic pursuits as chasing the greasy pig or musical chairs on horseback. The crowds cheered on local favourites as the Acton Citizens' Band, then under the baton of Alf Perrott, thundered out Sousa marches or rendered that old favorite, *There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight*.

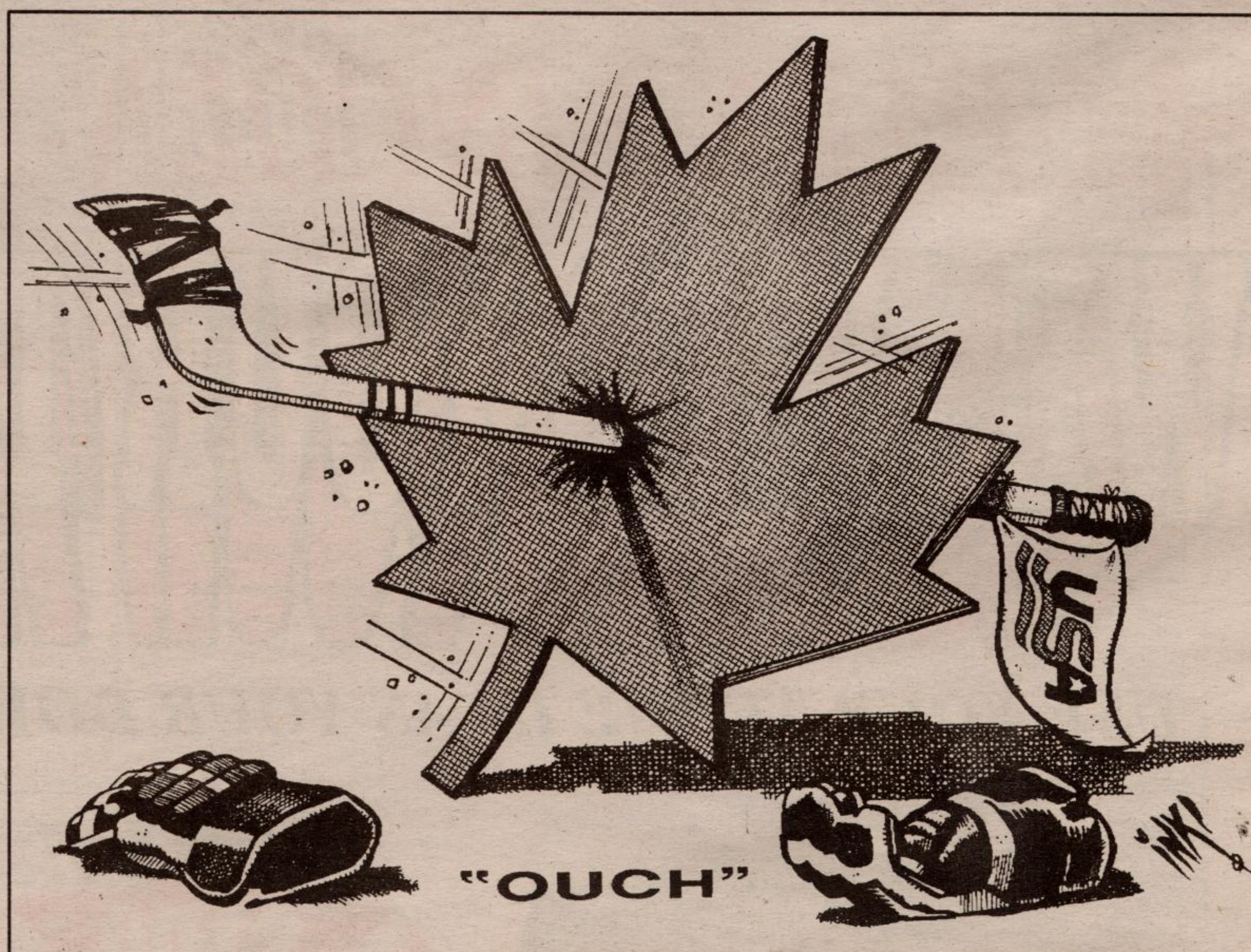
What a difference now with the introduction of a hard floor to encompass artificial ice - sophisticated displays of school work, crafts, preserves, homecrafts and an area set up for entertainment and, of course, the Miss Acton Fair contest.

The Fair once had few midway rides, much to the disgust of kids who waited for them all year. There have been side shows where shady ladies paraded in front of wide-eyed young men, enticing them inside the tent. Remember the strong men who challenged local muscle-bound youths to wrestle or box them in the ring?

If those ladies and gentlemen who founded the Acton Fair were able to come back and see the result of their handiwork they'd not only be proud but surprised as well. They took a flyer and it has turned into one of the best things Acton ever started.

## Same time last year ...

Knox Presbyterian Church's 150th anniversary float is judged best at the Acton Fall Fair ... Jamie Davies is crowned Acton Ambassador, following in the footsteps of her mother Ann (Luty) Davies ... The 15th annual Terry Fox Run brings in \$25,027 with 150 participants walking, running and cycling for cancer research.



## Your LETTERS

### Time to 'let go'

To the Editor,

After reading the various arguments addressing the name of the Miss Acton Fall Fair pageant, I felt I had to contribute my voice in favour of change. While I am sympathetic to the sense of pride in a small community like Acton, I also believe in the importance of being open-minded and receptive to change. Specifically, I view renaming the pageant as a step backwards.

In her letter, Ms. Robson indicated the pageant has undergone significant changes to update the format. Unfortunately the bottom line is that it still objectifies women. If, as she says, the pageant should be considered a forum for the development of public speaking skills, then perhaps it should simply be a public speaking contest which could be gender-neutral.

Language and symbols can go a long way toward shaping attitudes and values in our society. It is difficult to conquer the serious women's issues as suggested if we refuse to change at this seemingly superficial

level of names. This resistance sabotages efforts to address the more serious issues. It is grossly naive to think that they are not *all* part of the same problem - how women are viewed in our society.

No matter how harmless or insignificant an all-female pageant in a small town may seem, it still reinforces negative female stereotypes. If strides have been made to change and update this event then you have already broken with tradition. Therefore the title "Miss Acton" only serves to undermine these efforts because of its sexist connotation.

In his column, Mike O'Leary suggests that "any guy who entered [the pageant] would go through hell from his buddies." This clearly indicates that the "Miss Acton" pageant is viewed exactly as its name suggest - a beauty contest for young women.

Again, this illustrates how attitudes are entrenched and unless some traditions are modified and changed the attitudes associated with them will never change.

There is no doubt that some traditions are worth keeping while others must be changed to reflect new societal values. While Ms. Robson encourages us to "lighten up" over this issue, I would argue that it would be just as easy and more beneficial to let go of this particular tradition.

Karen Schuch  
Acton

### Halton could lose control over

To the Editor,

For the past several weeks, Town Council has been considering the question of whether to oppose, support, or issue no comments on the proposed elimination of development permits for pits and quarries on the Niagara Escarpment. These permits are similar to, but with more strength than zoning bylaws.

The Province is considering turning administration of the escarpment lands to the local towns. Should this happen and the permit system not exist, any local influence with

pits and quarries would be lost.

Provincial ministries, which have historically shown little interest in enforcing their acts and regulations for even the most blatant violation would have local control over a large segment of Halton.

Kit Woode  
R.R. 4

Letters to the Editor  
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Send us your  
thoughts!

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