

Brass Tacks - Editorial

Please excuse the amount of space dedicated in this issue to the Eden Mills Bowstring Bridge. The trouble in Eden dominates this editor's thoughts these days, and I can't resist the opportunity to put on paper my admittedly personal perspective.

In 1990, when my soon-to-be wife and I decided to settle in the village, the acknowledged consensus was that the Bowstring Bridge be rehabilitated. If that was what the village wanted, that was more than fine by us.

At that time, the Village Trustees, elected representatives of the residents of Eden Mills, had long recognized that the bridge needed attention and pursued both the County of Wellington and the Township of Eramosa to address the issue. The County responded by dumping the problem on Township.

The Trustees then worked with the Council of the day to designate the Bowstring Bridge as historic for funding purposes. God forbid Eden Mills ever receive more than a chip and tar of its streets every ten years or so from Eramosa Township. Due process was followed and in 1991 the bridge was listed as a Heritage Bridge.

In 1993, with rehabilitation still on-track, we still considered the village our home for life. Margaret waddled about that summer contently tending flower beds at our new home at 419 Wilson Street, secure in the knowledge that we were living in a beautiful village full of friendly people. The village remained to us a perfect location to raise our new son, born in October of that year.

And then the cracks began to appear in more than just the old bridge. Although the Trustees still favoured rehabilitation, Council began to back away from the plan, never did apply for attainable funding and refused to pay for a condition survey to determine if it was even fixable.

When the Police Village of Eden Mills was disbanded in 1994, Eden Mills was forced to hand over the ownership of the village's Ball Park and enter a joint ownership agreement with Township involving the Community Hall. Representation moved further away and the village's new political masters were



increasingly reluctant to follow through on the plan to fix the bridge.

What a sweetheart deal for the rest of Eramosa. Not only does the Township receive our taxes, it also gets joint title to our Community Hall and sole ownership of the Ball Park. Meanwhile, residents can now only walk through their village because Council has steadfastly refused to fix the Bowstring for the last 8 years.

During the Municipal election of 1994, the issue to fix or replace the bridge dominated candidate meetings throughout the Township. After the election, the incumbent Reeve mysteriously quit. Hope rose again for the Bowstring as the appointed Reeve, an Eden Mills resident, had received many votes from the village based on his apparent support of rehabilitation. How naive we were.

In 1995, a new ratepayers group, The Friends of Eden Mills, took on the challenge of saving the Bowstring. Alas, all the Friends received from this lame-duck Council, hopelessly split over most issues, was more foot dragging and still no condition survey.

In the last election, the Office of Reeve went unchallenged to David Adsett, the previous Council's Deputy Reeve and Editor of The Wellington Advertiser. Reeve Adsett is adamant about replacing the Bowstring, both through his public office and his newspaper.

On May 4th, I hand-deliv-

ered a letter to Township Office addressed to Clerk Virginia Sinnott requesting guidance on accessing Township of Eramosa Agenda and Minutes. As of press time on May 26th, I still haven't received acknowledgement of my correspondence. It's frustrating trying to report on local affairs without access to Township records. Is The Wellington Advertiser to remain the only local paper allowed to cover Eramosa Council?

Although the Compass remains on the outside looking in, I do know for certain that Council, led by Adsett, surprisingly gave the green light in the fall of 1997 for a partial condition survey on the Bowstring. Long neglected before and since its designation in 1991, the results were predictable and it was reported that the bridge, in certain areas, had a safe load limitation of only 3 tonnes. Council immediately deemed it unsafe and closed the bridge to vehicle traffic last fall.

Overnight, Eden Mills became a village divided in more ways than one. If it is Council's intent to divide and conquer, it certainly is succeeding. With the inconvenience caused by the bridge's closure, many people have, understandably, turned their backs on the Trustee's original initiative.

In retrospect, what an amazing snow job perpetuated by Eramosa Council. It denies easy access of the village to friends, church and

community hall, and in many quarters, the Friends of Eden Mills are suddenly viewed as the problem.

The Friends soldier on and are now seeking a court order in June requiring Township to immediately fix and re-open the bridge. No matter what side of the bridge issue residents are on, we can all only hope that the issue of the Bowstring is settled once and for all in the Milton Court House in early June.

Meanwhile, friendly is not a word I would use to describe Eden Mills any longer. Petitions from both sides of the bridge issue are making the rounds as people are being forced to take sides and personal animosity remains the order of the day. Who could have predicted it would come to this when the Trustees of Eden Mills acted responsibly on the village's behalf to have the Bowstring fixed in 1990? Were the Trustees not acting to avoid this very situation of a divided community in the first place?

On Sunday, May 31st, there will be a healing service at the Eden Mills Community Hall open to the whole community at 3:00 p.m.. This might be a good opportunity for the residents of Eden Mills to stand back from the situation, whether they attend or not, and ask themselves who should they really be mad at.

We owe that much to our Trustees from the past, whose only agenda was the welfare of Eden Mills and its residents.

The North Halton Compass

Reach then a soaring quill, that I may write
As with a Jacob's staff to take a height
CLEVELAND

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