

EDITORIAL

Winners and Winners

Whenever I've heard a celebrity gush about being blessed and wanting to give back to the community I've normally reached for the nearest bucket before I too gave back (in most cases, my lunch). That my attitude was cynical and might be unworthy had honestly never occurred to me. To me the giving and the gushing always seemed artificial and smacked of beauty queens wanting to bring about world peace and work with underprivileged children.

The Milton Chamber of Commerce's Sports Celebrity Dinner and Auction held last week gave me a different viewpoint. I saw Darryl Sittler suffer minor indignities with grace and charm, as total strangers clamoured for his attention and the chance to include him in their photo album. I thought that he'd crack when a fan (male) planted a big smacker on Darryl's cheek (left upper as Dudley Moore would waggishly say). But no, long gone are the days of full body checks and penalty minutes. Darryl just smiled indulgently and posed for the camera. The other celebrities were just as amiable. The evening was relaxed, the food was good, the service was excellent, and the conversation sparkled. In short it was well worth the cost of being the platinum sponsor.

The winner of our essay contest, Ryan Bauer, had a great time and spent a good part of the evening deep in conversation with Darryl. I was only sorry that we could only have one winner of the essay contest, but tickets at \$250 a pair don't grow on trees. We had a lot of entries and some really did tug on the heartstrings. So at the risk of appearing to gush, we've decided to award dinner for two at The Mohawk Inn to each of these four runners-up.

They are:- Catherine Manning
Luis Santos
Sean Shikatami
Johnny Yacoubi

Sort of feels nice to give, and , oh yeah about that world peace...

Tax controversy nags at equine industry

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As well, Jim argues, the re-assessed rate is creating an uneven playing field in the equine industry. Established equestrian industries, with no reason to seek out a building permit, aren't being re-assessed, and so are still paying taxes at the lower agricultural rate. "Within ten kilometres of my property are fourteen other establishments and only two or three of us have been assessed as commercial," Jim argues. "Any new property is at a severe disadvantage to existing properties that haven't been assessed as commercial." He ponders the feasibility of his business's ability to compete in such a market.

Rose McLean, spokesperson for MPAC, addressed the issue on CBC Radio's "Ontario Today", admitting that quite often "we get information that a property needs to be reviewed because somebody brings it to our attention." There are approximately 53,000 horse barns in Ontario and Jim is quick to point out that only a few dozen have been assessed as commercial at this

point in time.

It was a complaint to MPAC from a Durham resident that started the ball rolling, according to Rose McLean. "What we have to do is assess all property according to the provincial regulations," she told CBC Radio. "We undertook a review to insure that we have done them consistently...MPAC is not targeting particular property types, not farmers, not commercial. That is not our intention."

"WHEN YOU APPLY FOR A NEW BUILDING PERMIT ON YOUR PROPERTY, IT ABSOLUTELY GUARANTEES THAT YOU WILL BE RE-ASSESSED"

In response to what they call a "property tax crisis", Leslie and Jim

have initiated a letter writing campaign, seeking to change the legislation to recognize that equestrian facilities have the same agricultural uses and services as the horse racing industry. Samples of letters, along with addresses for provincial ministers involved are available at www.horse.on.ca.

"The implication has been that we have a huge business that makes millions of dollars and we are simply whining," says Jim Waechter. "That's just not true. All we are interested in is fairness. They are assessing this industry out of business."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor:

I feel strongly as a resident of McMaster Street, backing onto Mr. Stull's property that I need to respond to your write up in the Compass, Jan 14th 2005.

I first met Mr. Stull in August of 2002, when I found him at our garden gate stood on his ATV looking into our property on a beautiful sunny afternoon. I went to see who he was and before I could speak, I was thrown so much foul, abusive language that I did not anticipate from anyone. I asked my father who was with me at the time to call the police. Mr Stull told me not to do that he would deal with me. I asked him who he was and he said "the F—— Farmer that's who." I was shocked by the outburst.

I asked him to calm down, stop swearing at me, and tell me what his problem was and maybe I could help. He told me that he had been checking his land on all the properties on the street and I was the first lady home for him to speak to. (Therefore I received the whole of the abuse). He said that there was so much S—— and garbage all over that he was sick of us and he was going to put a bulldozer through the land. I asked him not to do that as it would destroy so much to us all. I was willing to pass the message along the street and get the neighbours to clean up their own property if needed.

We had dumped grass clippings out the back, and some of his trees that we had to cut back from our property. They were old hawthorns that hung over our garden; they have 2 to 3 inch thorns on them and can give you a nasty infective cut on the arms when cutting the grass. They also produce a black berry which the birds took pleasure in eating and spreading everywhere.

He told me he did not mind the organic waste, it was garbage he objected to, which I do understand. However, we all respect our properties and I cannot imagine any of us disrespecting his land. He did shake my hand and went on his merry way to see what else he could find.

The comment I also wish to address is about us emptying our pools onto his land. Ours was only once pumped out the back accidentally by our pool company, as they had not seen my note on the pump. (DO NOT EMPTY OUT THE BACK.) This water then came straight back into our garden, flooded underneath our pool and lifted the liner right out. It was messy and took several hours to rectify. All of us drain the pools out the front where there are street drains.

We all have swales on our property and the spring thaws have never given us a problem of drainage. We are all interested to see what happens this year, as there are NO trees left to "drink" the water up.

Last winter, as I sat in my kitchen, the nature out the back was beautiful. We always have a varied selection of birds through out the day, whether they were just sat in the trees or feeding from my many feeders. The squirrels and chipmunks kept my dog entertained, as she never could catch them. As I mentioned earlier, we had put some cut trees over the back and a pack of Coyotes had made a den. One day we counted 5 pups and three or four large dogs. Our neighbours at each side of us often had deer eating from the old orchard trees. This is not forgetting the racoons, possums or skunks that occasionally stopped by.

We had bought this property in 2000, built our home to enjoy the piece and quiet that nature gave to us.

Today I sit here wondering should I place a reply and thinking if I don't it will be too late. I look out of my window again and see nothing!!! The birds don't come, we get an occasional squirrel, there are no trees for the deer to hide in or eat from, nowhere for the coyotes to build there den and raise their pups.

December the 15th was a sad day for us all, when the machines came through, it reminded me of when my girls were small and used to watch a movie called "Fern Gully", and all the trees cried because they were being destroyed.

All I see now is Mr Stull's white plastic barn, some machinery and his farmhouse.

It is so sad and destructive what he did. I really hope that he feels totally satisfied with himself for the utterly destructive nonsense that he created.

Catherine Wressell.

THE HALTON COMPASS

welcomes letters to the Editor

However, we do not necessarily support or endorse the comments or opinions expressed by the writer(s). We reserve the right to edit, revise and reject letters. Letters must be signed and the address and telephone number of the writer should be included. Letters may be sent into 35 Crawford Crescent Box 129, Campbellville, ON L0P 1B0, emailed to editor@haltoncompass.com or faxed to 905-854-4761.

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