

John deJong poses in the middle of his syrup production equipment. He borrowed equipment, traded syrup for other pieces, and even built some portions of the operation himself. *Maggie Petrushevsky photo*

## It's been a good year for making maple syrup

By **MAGGIE PETRUSHEVSKY**  
The New Tanner

Regardless of whether the maple syrup season is over, producers have had a bumper year.

Halton Hills resident John deJong tapped his first trees the beginning of March.

"And we should have been at it before that," he says.

Rick Collins of the Halton Region Conservation Authority (HRCA) says staff there began tapping in late February but there were days in January when the sap was running.

The normal season can go three to seven weeks, he says, so this has been a long, but not extraordinary, year for syrup producers.

deJong, who only made 58 litres of sap in 1997, already has 70 to 75 litres done and another batch nearing completion. The HRCA likewise, has far exceeded last year's production.

"We were hearing how the ice storm did all this damage and the maple syrup crop would be down as a result," Collins says, "but that was just hype. Most of the heavy tree damage was along the Ottawa Valley and that's not big maple syrup country. Depending on who you talk to, up to 80 per cent of the world's syrup production is in Quebec, notably north to Quebec City. That area wasn't hit all that hard. But watch out. What do you bet there'll be a big price hike as

they try to capitalize on the storm?"

deJong is strictly producing as a hobby. He does not have syrup for sale although the occasional friend gets a bit as a gift. Nor does he belong to the syrup producers' association.

"We just do it for the fun," he says. With only 80 to 100 trees tapped, he couldn't begin to collect enough sap for commercial production. Nor does he need or want to get sophisticated.

"The terrain here is just too hilly to use pipelines," he says. "Besides, if I did that, I'd need to get into other equipment too, like a pump to transfer sap from the collection tank to the holding tank."

As an amateur, deJong says he "begged, borrowed or built" all the equipment he uses. Sap pails came from a friend who quit production. The holding tank is a milk cooler from a retiring dairy farmer. He built his own evaporator. While most of the early boiling down is done over wood culled from their

own bush, deJong uses propane for the final phase.

"You want to have a fire you can shut off immediately the syrup comes to the right consistency," he says. "Wood won't do that for you so we use propane for that last part of the process."

### Pelitis on scholar list

Achilles Pelitis Jr. has been appointed to the President's list of Scholars by Dr. David D. Fry of Northwood University of Midland, Michigan.

Achilles achieved a Grade Point Average of 4.0 for the winter term to become a member of the select group.

"I am extraordinarily pleased to recognize your worthy accomplishment. Northwood University is proud of you," the president wrote.

Mazda Canada also recognized the achievement of the prestigious award with a congratulatory letter.

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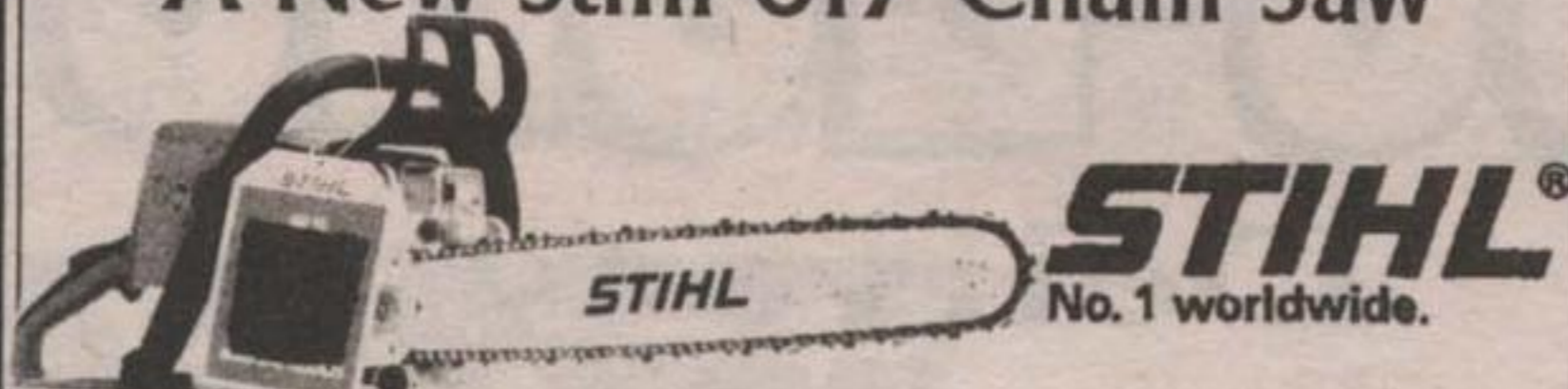
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