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**What's
Inside**



Heather Ellis, dressed in typical Dutch costume of the past, enjoyed her trip to Holland, Belgium and France with the Georgetown Children's Chorus. See more photos on Page 10.



Glen McKenzie, right, was among those presented with donor awards by the Red Cross at the general meeting. Story and photo on Page 14.



Entertainment at Trinity United's Ham Dinner Mother's Day was the mother and daughter duet of Lois Matton and Jane, 5. More on Page 11.



Super skipper Sebastian Mena Diaz was among Robert Little skippers taking part in Jump Rope for Heart. More on Page 14.

Beardmore plant ravaged by fire

Clouds of black smoke billow into heavens

By **FRANCES NIBLOCK**
The New Tanner

Part of Acton's proud leather heritage - a number of the buildings at the old Beardmore Tannery - burned to the ground on Tuesday in a fire of unknown origins. The raging blaze, fuelled by the century-old wooden building, created thick, black, acrid smoke that could be seen from the 401.

About 11:15 Tuesday morning a plume of smoke was seen at the western end of the 23-acre abandoned property, now owned by Maple Leaf Foods. By the time Acton volunteer fire fighters arrived on the scene, at least three inter-connected buildings, formerly offices, a boiler room and leather processing departments, were fully engulfed.

Although a caretaker was on the boarded up, abandoned site when the fire began, no one was injured in the blaze that burned out of control for several hours before being tamed about 2 o'clock Tuesday afternoon. Several firefighters were treated at the scene for heat exhaustion, which Fire Chief Bill Cunningham said was their biggest concern.

The size of the facility caused a few problems for firefighters who were worried that the fire would spread through underground tunnels, many of them carrying pipes lined with asbestos, to adjacent buildings. There was also concern that the fire would spread to some hydro transformers filled with cancer-causing PCBs on the property, but the storage site was never in any danger.

Halton Hills Fire Chief Bill Cunningham described the fire as a "blazing inferno" when they arrived at the scene and said that it would have been a risk to life to do anything other than an outside attack.

"Normally, we would take an interior attack and try to stop the fire but it wasn't safe

to do that," Cunningham explained in an interview at the scene late Tuesday afternoon.

"We had to re-position our (water) streams and do a cut-off at the eastern end of the building. That was a bit of an educated gamble because in these old buildings we don't know if the fire doors are closed and it's such a maze. But with a lot of hard work and water, we did it."

At the height of the blaze 32 fire fighters from both the Acton and Georgetown stations were on the scene and for the first time in a dozen years the Mutual Aid program kicked in with Milton fire fighters manning the Halton Hill stations.

Cunningham said they called the Ministry of Environment to deal with air quality issues and the potential contamination of Black Creek.

"Maple Leaf Foods sent an engineer to the site to deal with environmental concerns and they are working with Town staff to mitigate the flow (of water) from the property into Black Creek. They've closed some valves that drain into the creek and are building a weir or dam to contain the water,"

See **FIRE**, Page 2



BUILDING STRUCTURES are bent and twisted at the mercy of the fire as firefighters continue to douse the flame with showers of water. - Angela Tyler photo.

More photos on Page 7

Old arena's fate hangs on report

The final word on the structural condition of the Town-owned Prospect Park arena, information crucial to the Acton Agricultural Society's attempts to save the building, should be known by the end of the month.

A structural engineer, the same one that has inspected the building for the past decade, carried out another in-

spection for the Society last Tuesday and his report will seal the fate of the former ice rink and community centre.

The Society convinced Town council to delay demolition of the building until after this September's fall fair, to give it time to come up with a viable business plan to use it for community services and sports, other

than skating. If the building is salvageable, the Society wants Town council to reallocate money budgetted to demolish the arena and instead use it for repairs, along with the Society's \$80,000 nest egg.

Paul Stover, the Town's Manager of Facilities, said the reports from the past 10 years have showed continued deterioration of the building. "Knowing that we were building a new arena we tried to get by with the absolute minimum in repairs over the years, so any repairs that were done were stop gap," Stover explained in an interview on Thursday.

Stover said he's waiting for a written report from the fire department concerning the failure last month of the main sprinkler valve and how it might affect the Society use of the building this fall.

Acton councillor Norm Elliott, who hopes the structural engineer's report is favourable, said that the Town is in an awkward position.

How much money should the Town spend to keep a

See **OLD**, Page 3



JOINING THE CELEBRATION: Mayor Marilyn Serjeantson (centre) joins Acton Rotary Club Citizens of the Year, the Legion Terrace Committee, in celebration on Friday. Left to right, Ed Footitt, Gord McCutcheon, John Hoare and Mike Mattocks. - Angela Tyler photo

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