

EDITORIAL

with Hartley Coles

Is the old arena doomed by cost?

The more than disappointing report from a structural engineer about the state of Acton's old arena in Prospect Park is certainly a blow to those of us who hoped it could be saved for uses such as the Fall Fair.

The engineer identified \$665,000 worth of repairs that need to be done to the building, some of which must be done before it can be used by the public. The biggest repair the engineer lists is \$390,000 for roof repairs, which is about 60 per cent of the total cost.



Not being an engineer, this writer would not attempt to dispute professional opinions about repair cost. But to this pedestrian the roof costs seem exorbitant. It appears almost like an attempt to make sure the building must come down.

The fact that the water had already been turned off (because of a leak in the water main) and the electrical transformer, which we were told had failed, had been removed and never replaced seems to indicate there was never much will on the part of the powers that be to save the building.

The Town's manager of facilities, Ted Stover, said he wasn't surprised by the report because they had "band-aided" repairs for many years, "knowing that the facility would be closed." Wow! The Town *knew* the facility would be closed.

"The building is dead," Mr. Stover said, adding the engineer is also worried high winds could cause more damage to the roof, already leaking in a number of areas.

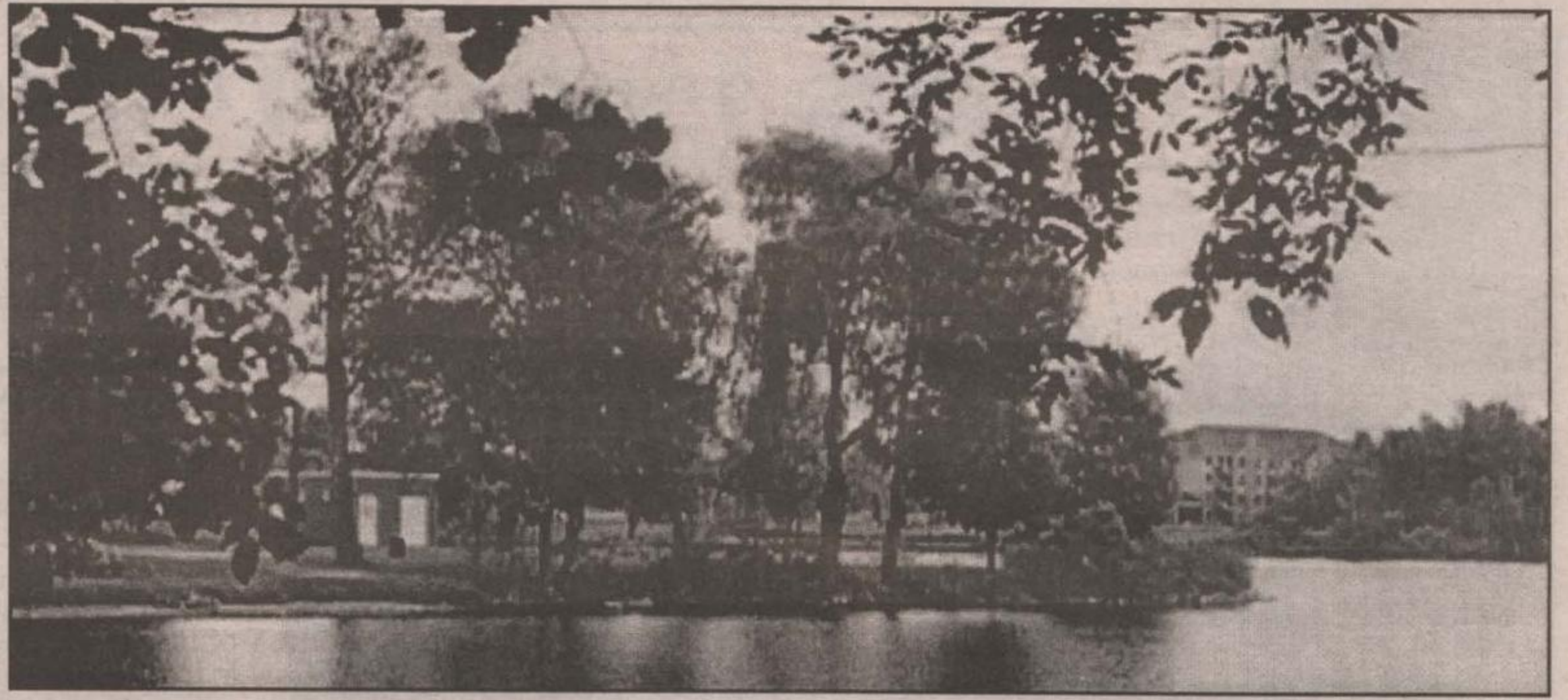
If the building was in such a bad state for years and is now unusable, why was there so much delay in getting a new structure started? Was the public using the old arena in such a state of disrepair for years unaware they were jeopardizing their safety? Why has this just come to light.

Indeed, as Mr. Stover says, the Town is in an awkward position.

Of course, if the \$665,000 figure for repairing the building is not inflated, then it is obvious the building must go. But there are some costs from the engineer such as \$30,000 to replace the handicapped ramp and \$50,000 for masonry repairs that look very high.

The attempt to save the building is not to renovate a Taj Mahal, only to repair it so it could be used for community functions. If memory serves right there were similar high costs trumpeted to save the old Georgetown Memorial Arena which the Town had targeted for demolition. A campaign spearheaded by then Councillor Ernie Hyde saved the building in the '70s which has been in constant use since at a cost far below the original estimates given by engineers.

We're not suggesting the engineer's estimates are suspect, only that a closer look using local labour and expertise could bring those costs down to a more manageable level than they appear to be now.



THE POINT at Prospect Park is silhouetted in the waters of Fairy Lake as the sun rises in the east. Just visible beyond the point are the new Legion Terrace apartments.

Falcon tugged our heart strings

By ANGELA TYLER
The New Tanner

It was warm summer approximately 18 years ago when a female dog hung around at the business next door (Wyman Little's garage). Soon after, we found the dog had a huge litter of nine pups underneath an old car parked in the field. The dog appeared to be wild, not wanting any contact with humans. The pups were different. They loved attention. Almost every lunchtime or break, there were people lying on the grass looking under the car at the pups or in the field playing with them.

We named the dog "Girl" and kept one of the pups, which we called Whiskers. Whiskers, was a great pup but unfortunately was hit by a car on Christmas Eve. His mother decided to stay around.

The next spring, a big black dog appeared one day and started following Girl around. About a week later, a red pickup truck pulled up in front of the driveway and a person inside hollered out "NELSON." The dog ran over to the truck, the door opened, Nelson hopped inside and was never to be seen again. Easter Sunday morning, Girl had 10 more pups.

Once again, lunch hours and coffee breaks were spent with the pups. As much as we all loved the dogs, we could not keep all of them. I remember my father trying to give them away as a bonus prize at the "Actario" draws that were held to raise money to save the Town Hall. When people came to pick out a pup to take home, I would hide one in particular that was my favourite. We, once again, kept the pup, which I named Falcon, and tried to coax his mom to become more 'human-friendly'.

It took us awhile, but in time we finally had Falcon's mom coming inside and starting to act like more of a pet than a wild dog.

Every weekday morning, Falcon, Girl and myself, or my mom, would head off to work. It became a part of their routine and they loved seeing everybody. About 4:30 the dogs would get anxious. As if they knew it was soon time to quit work for the day. Then, at the end of the day the parade would head home.

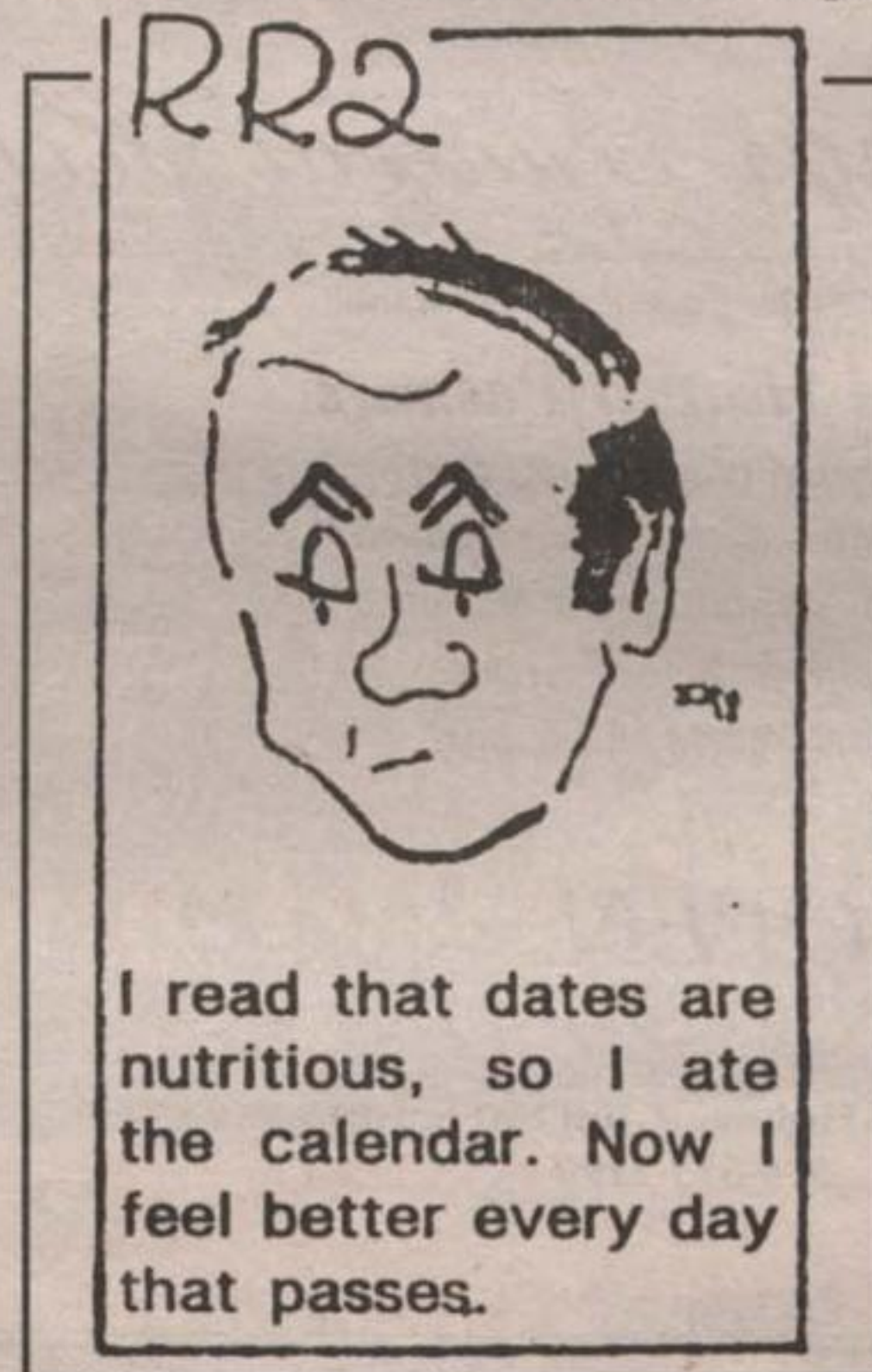
The dogs were a fixture at work.



FALCON

The customers knew them; employees would pet the dogs and almost every day their friend Jens would bring them a milk bone. The dogs also had a keen sense of being able to pick out salespeople. They didn't like very many of them. The two dogs would take turns lying at the top of the stairs. Some people would try to get the dogs to move, but they wouldn't. That was their job, to greet and protect.

With hard work, comes reward. Each and every morning they rode 'shot-gun' with my mom when she went to get the mail at the post office. I often wondered if it was going to the mail that made them happy or the Tim Hortons drive through.



Another important part of their job was to participate in meetings. Almost every meeting, sales 'pitch' and major decision that was made in the last 17 years, the dogs were in attendance. One would lie under my father's desk, the other on the couch. They may have had to appearance of being asleep, but I'm positive they were listening. If the door closed before they could get in, they would nudge or scratch the door until it opened.

A few years ago, Girl was very ill and had to be put out of her pain. Our family and our work family were very upset and Falcon wandered about for weeks looking for his mother. However, we carried on and Falcon took over all the duties at work. Meetings, greeting, and chief of dog biscuit tasting. As he was getting older, we all seemed to baby him more and go that extra mile to make his life more pleasant.

I never thought I would see the day that my dad would be at floor level with a dog chewy stick at his mouth barking at Falcon to get him to bark or speak for the treat. I'm not sure if Falcon was speaking to ask for the treat or laughing at my dad with the stick in his mouth. We all did that little bit extra, as he was a part of our family. And he was getting older and weaker.

Falcon had a rough spring. Faced with arthritis, which slowed his movement and Alzheimer's, that slowed his thoughts, deep down we knew his days weren't many. This past weekend, he took a turn for the worse. He had difficulty eating and drinking and he couldn't stand on his own.

Sunday night, while lying in his favourite spot, in the dining room with the sliding door open and a nice breeze coming in, Falcon took his last breath. It broke all of our hearts. One of our family had passed away. We were truly saddened and deeply hurt. We couldn't have asked for a better dog.

It's really quiet at work and at home without him. But I'm sure wherever Falcon is his arthritis and his Alzheimer's aren't bothering him anymore and he's running in a cornfield with his mother, Girl, chasing critters. And when they return, their friend Jens is waiting for them with a milk bone for each.

THE
NEW
Tanner

59 Willow Street North
Acton, Ontario
L7J 1Z8

(519) 853-0051 Fax: 853-0052

Publisher Ted Tyler

Editorial Hartley Coles

Frances Niblock Ellen Piehl
Mike O'Leary Angela Tyler

Advertising Sales Maggie Petrushevsky
Bob Rutter

Circulation Marie Shadbolt

Composing Christine O'Leary
Karen Wetmore

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