

GRAPEVINE



Merry Christmas

Thanks to the continued generosity of the Acton community 85 local children will squeal with delight early tomorrow morning when they see what's under the tree for them.

The successful Christmas hamper program, run by the Salvation Army, Acton I.O.D.E., Acton Rotary Club and St Vincent de Paul, will make the holidays very happy for the 68 local families who received hampers and were able to choose presents for their children from the gifts donated by the community.

Skates for Christmas?

Check out Acton arena if you want to skate for free over the holidays. Each year the Rotary Club of Acton picks up the ice-time tab so kids can skate for free during March and Christmas breaks and on professional development days. Because of a hockey tournament this year only the leisure pad will be open for free public skating from 1:30 to 4 p.m. from December 28 to 30.

Christmas tourney

Over 1,500 rep hockey players, their families and fans will arrive in Acton on Monday (Dec. 28) for the annual Acton Tanners rep hockey's three-day Christmas tournament featuring teams from across southern Ontario.

The Major Novice squad plays Monday, the Minor Atoms play Tuesday and the Minor PeeWees take to the ice Wednesday. At noon each day there will be skills competitions with awards for the top scorers.

Santa bowl

The focus is on family and fun at Acton Bowl over the holidays -

there's time for competitive bowling when the Four Steps to Stardom bowling program in January. On Boxing Day and Sunday there's a family twosome

Tournament and a three-day bring-a-buddy tournament gets under on December 29. Acton Bowl will also feature a New Year's bowling party.

Mohawk slots

Acton gamblers may only have go as far as Mohawk Raceway to meet up with an one-armed bandit. Milton's Committee of Adjustment - a citizen committee appointed by Council - recently okayed Ontario Jockey Club plans to install 1,200 slot machines at Mohawk.

An appeal of the decision to the Ontario Municipal Board has already been filed by a Milton ratepayer group and the Milton Bingo Charities Association, worried about the anticipated loss of \$450,000 annually raised by local community groups, including most of the sports organizations in Acton, will also appeal.

In June, Milton gave the Jockey Club approval in principle for a charity casino proposal, a very different plan, opponents claim, to the slot machine scenario.

Super swimmer

Kudos to Acton's Chrissy Seehaver who swam away with 1st place medals in two events at a recent high school swim meet in Georgetown. The experienced Acton High student won the 100-metre individual medley and the 50-metre butterfly. Chrissy also anchored the 200-metre freestyle relay team.



When Kay Alger took over Grades 4 and 5 at the old Acton public school in 1948 she found one of the boys was 16 and couldn't count to 10. Others were doing Grade 2, some Grade 3 and the majority of Grade 4 and 5 were doing Grade 5 work. Now retired in British Columbia, Mrs. Alger was only able to recall some of her students. In back: standing are Ron Holloway, Brian Thorenson, Joe Jany and Wayne Currie. Next row included Lorna Brown, Elaine Rachlin, a Jordan girl and a Sargent girl. The next row included a Halliday girl, a Winters, Frances Oakes, Babs Tyler and Dorothy Dawkins. She only remembers a Shepherd boy, third from the left in the front row. Anyone else who can identify the students? Remember it is 50 years ago.

Once upon a time - before 911

It was bitter cold. The wind cut through her like a knife. She wondered if she would ever be warm again. She pulled her scarf tighter around her. It did little good. They had no home, no shelter from the freezing blasts. Her man was off desperately seeking a place to spend the night.

Her stomach rumbled. How long had it been since they last ate? Early this morning? Then a long day's struggle through the winter storm. 'Where is he?' she wondered, somewhat impatiently. It seemed he had been gone for hours. In reality it was only minutes but when you're this cold any kind of wait seems interminable.

The baby in her belly stirred. Great, she thought. That's all I need. She lowered her hand instinctively to comfort him. Softly she made circles around her extended navel. 'He's probably as cold as I am,' she said to no-one in particular. 'Well, almost.' She giggled.

'How did we get into this mess?' she wondered. It had all sounded so simple. Their destination was less than 100 km away. It was, they knew, a bad time of the year to travel. Still, the whole world seemed to be on the road so better to get it over with they decided. The trip would be even more impossible once her baby was born. And that's how they found themselves homeless, in a strange city, in the middle of a storm. 'Where is he?' she wondered again. The baby squirmed even more.

She was barely more than a child herself. Around 15 or 16 years old. In her culture women married young. Her man was quite a bit older than she. They weren't yet married, a fact they didn't advertise. Pregnant, unmarried women were treated harshly in her culture. 'But as soon as this trip is over,' she resolved, 'we'll set that situation right.' She smiled to herself when she thought of him. 'He'll be a good husband, a good provider. He has a good trade.' The baby jumped even more. 'Hush lit-

The Way I See It

with
Mike O'Leary



tle one,' she crooned. 'Soon we'll be warm and fed. Where is he?' She looked all around. She stamped her feet. She was getting angry.

Finally, he came around the corner, shoulders hunched against the wind. 'Well?' she asked.

'Nothing,' he said. 'Everything is full. The storm has driven everyone off the road.'

'There must be someplace. We'll freeze if we don't get out of this weather.'

Her fear became palpable. She could taste it in the back of her throat.

'The man at the hotel said we could stay in his shed.'

'The shed?' she exclaimed. 'Is that the best we can do?'

His eyes remained downcast. He didn't want to see the shock and disappointment on her face. He had failed her and the baby. 'Come along,' he said.

'At least we're out of the wind,' she thought. He had fashioned a makeshift bed out of straw and rags. She was feeling a little better but now a new and larger problem arose. The baby was coming. There was no doctor, no midwife, no mother to coach her through the birthing ordeal. 'Dear God,' she thought. 'Am I to have my first child here in this drafty shed? And somehow they got through it. He and she, and the baby survived to grow up and change the world.'

Two thousand years later we still celebrate His birth. With all the hustle and bustle around Christmas these days I think it appropriate to stop and think about those events of long ago. To tell our children about the story of the Christ Child, born to such humble beginnings but at whose name future kings would bend their knees.

The Christmas story has had a

deeper meaning for me since I became a parent. Our first child was a dangerous, premature birth. In fact, after getting my wife to a hospital, the first words the doctor said to me were 'The baby seems dead but we think we can save your wife.' This with all the medical knowledge and machinery we have these days. Imagine the tension in that stable those many years ago. Mary and Joseph showed tremendous faith that night. An inspiration for mankind which has endured to this day.

It is, perhaps, the Christmas story that causes us to be more charitable, more generous for those few weeks. For many, the efforts of the Salvation Army touch us especially deep. It's easy to become jaded about the poor and homeless those days. It seems that everyone has a story about someone ripping off the system. Through it all the Sally Anns are a beacon of hope. They practice their ministry with the less fortunate without prejudice. The annual Christmas kettle program funds many of these efforts. I find it hard to pass one so I seldom do. Seems there's always a looney or a tooney at the bottom of my pocket. I have also tried to pass that sentiment down to the children. I don't want to say 'Sorry - there's no room at the inn.'

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Mary, our children and I would like to take this opportunity to extend to each and every one of you our very best wishes for the Christmas season. We hope that your family will enjoy the peace and joy of this Holy season. For each of us, the "real meaning" of Christmas is subtly different. There are a myriad of customs and traditions. However you celebrate, I hope you can find the time to slow down, relax and let the Christmas spirit set your heart aglow. That feeling is the best gift we can give to ourselves.

Peace on earth and goodwill to all. Pass it on.
Merry Christmas.

In My Opinion

Commercial, Industrial tax here Region's lowest

BY MAC SPROWL N. Sch.

The property tax is the second largest source of tax revenue in Ontario after personal income tax. A number of years ago the Chamber of Commerce, in researching taxes, found there are 44 taxes one could pay from the cradle to the grave and 43 were regressive. Only one in 44 was progressive. It was Income Tax.

People owning homes are sometimes called asset rich but cash poor. In Canada today 50 per cent of the population own homes and 50 per cent of the population rent them. Australia has the highest home ownership in the world with close to 70 per cent owning homes Down Under. In September, 1991, a 49 member working group established by the Provincial Treasurer was to study two questions.

1. Is the current property tax system capable of meeting the revenue requirements associated with local governments and school board program delivery responsibilities while imposing a fair tax burden on property owners.

2. If not, what changes should be made to the property tax system and/or other funding sources for local government and/or school boards to improve fairness in their revenue raising requirements.

Property tax is regressive when municipal expenditures grow more quickly than assessments and that often is not related to the benefits received by property.

In the Regional Municipality of Halton the assessment ratio of residential and farm to commercial, industrial and business goes as follows: Town of Milton residential and

farm is 70.07 per cent. Commercial and industry and business is 29.93 per cent.

The City of Burlington residential and farm is 74.46 per cent. Commercial and industry and business is 25.54 per cent.

The Town of Oakville residential and farm is 70.07 per cent. Commercial and industry and business is 18.03 per cent.

The problem now is Halton Hills is it has the highest residential and farm assessment and the lowest commercial, industrial and business assessment in Halton Region. All the futures residential development slated in the next couple of years could push the residential and farm assessment even higher. New homes means schools have to be provided and if new commercial and industry and business cannot be attracted by the council of Halton Hills those of us left could see our property taxes climb to a point where many will find it difficult to own property.

The present council must make every effort to bring commercial, industry and business assessment up so there is a better balance than at the present time.

In closing, the council of Halton Hills has a great challenge ahead of them and need to have some serious thinking where the town is heading. The population has increased from 1992's 36,991 to 41,540 in 1997. That's 4,549 more persons while the number of households has increased from 1992's 13,263 to 14,563 in 1997. That's 1,300 more residences.

Just think what will happen with around 10 more developments coming. Let's hope for the best.