

# EDITORIAL

with Hartley Coles

## A very good year

It is customary at this time of year to look back and assess the events of the past year, to sort out the achievements and failures, and vow not to repeat them again.

From the New Tanner's viewpoint the high point of the year was the fact the first issue was published the last week in January, 1998, just in time for the grand opening of the new Acton arena, a noteworthy event.

It's ironic that in almost the last issue of the New Tanner this year a demolition crew is pictured removing all traces of Acton's old arena in Prospect Park, a building which we at this newspaper thought was well worth preserving. The former and the latter are probably the high and low spots in 1998 both from a news viewpoint and from general community interest.

However, taken in context, aided by the warming trend of that hero or villain, El Nino, this has been a pretty good year. Here at The New Tanner we saw our circulation jump from 5,000 to a high of 6,100, expanding into Rockwood as well as new rural areas. Like any new newspaper we've had our ups and down, technical and editorial-wise.

We've been struggling with the bane of all newspapers - typos - from our first issue as well as to date. We rely a lot on computer spell check to pinpoint errors but there are many ways the system can be circumvented. It seems we've encountered all of them. At the same time if you can show me a newspaper, from the New York Times to the Elbow Creek Observer, which you may think is perfect and I guarantee I'll find something wrong, either technically or otherwise. Because of the speed with which they are produced, and that includes community newspapers like The New Tanner, the probability of errors increases as the number of pages increases. And that's compounded by the numbers of staff who produce it.

One of our sore points has been the quality of our photos, which you may have noticed have improved in the last few weeks. From the paper's first issues we decided to forego the true and tried method of producing photographs with an enlarger and processing by chemicals, in favour of scanning and then inputting into the computers. Eventually we discovered our efforts were being hampered by the programs we had on the computers.

A number of "expert" diagnosed our problems as being this or that, but eventually we were able to sort out our own solutions and produce what we now consider to be better than "passable" photos. We're still working at improving them with an eye some day soon of producing process colour photos.

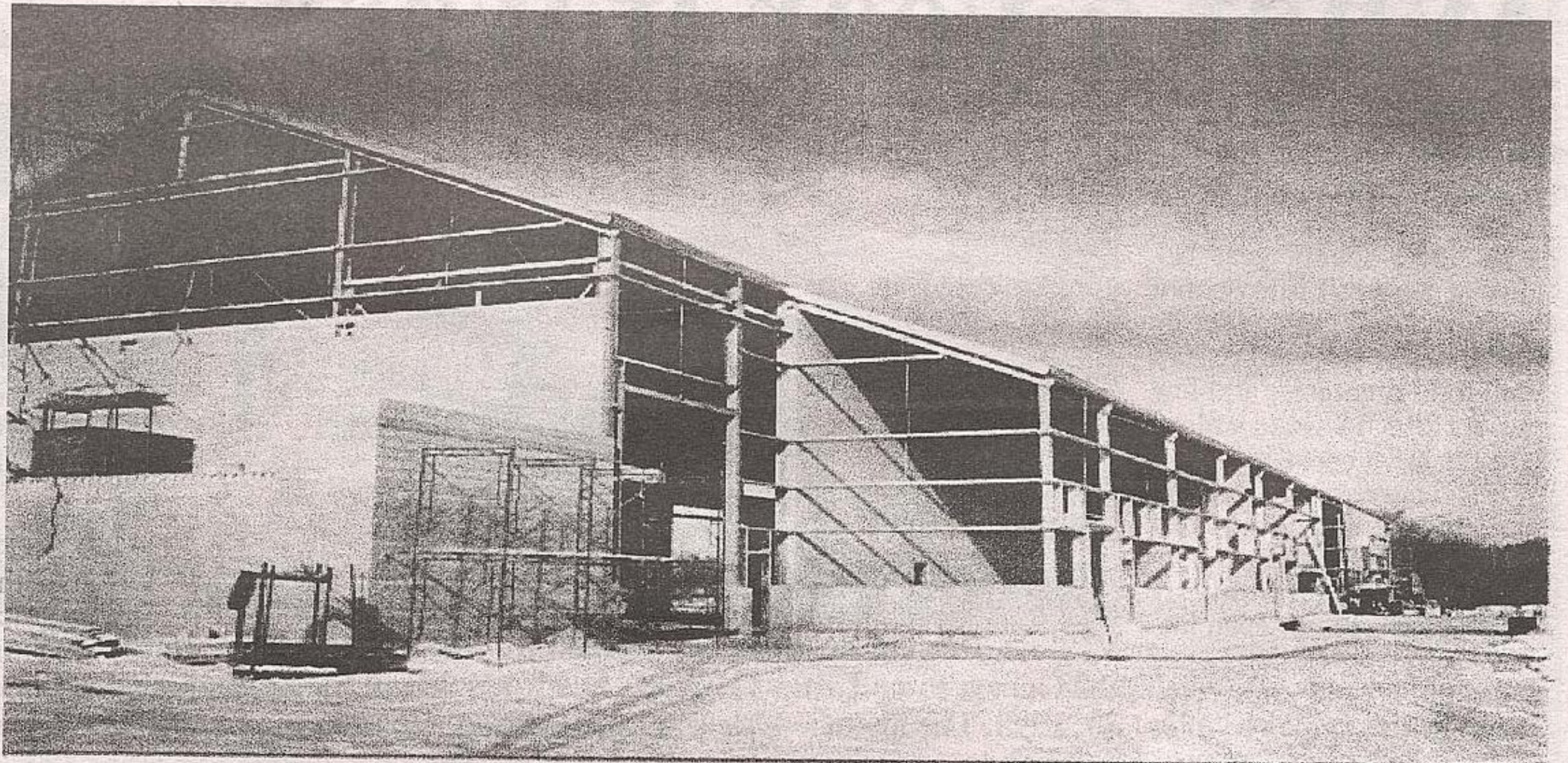
It has been encouraging in the last 12 months to see the warm reception The New Tanner has received not only from our readers but the advertisers as well. Some have even said the reintroduction of the newspaper has saved their business from extinction. Others have been critical but mostly in a nice way, of the fact we're only a small staff and can't be in as many places as we'd like to be.

One of the sore points has been our reluctance to promote subscriptions unless a reader almost demands it. It's because of the cost of sending newspapers anywhere by mail. When you consider the cost of mailing and handling, The New Tanner has to ask about \$100 for a year's subscription, a figure we think is exorbitant. Nevertheless those who are willing to pay this can secure a subscription.

You may remember when your community newspaper's subscription prices were \$25 or \$30 a year. That was before the post office gradually abolished subsidies and raised prices for mailing. In the good old days a "weekly" could be delivered free to anywhere within a 50 mile radius because often it was the only source of news and information available to people in the "sticks". Those days are long gone. Now it's pay as you go and look out. We encourage readers who have friends or relatives who want their "home town paper" to send it themselves.

When we look back at 1998 there have been a number of positive and fulfilling events that have made this area a better place to live. Our senior reporter, Frances Niblock, has combed our issues in 1998 and highlights will appear.

Meanwhile, we wish all of our readers, advertisers, contributors and friends the very best in 1999. We appreciate the warmth and encouragement we received in 1998.



**LOOKING LIKE A MILLION:** Galvcast manufacturing, the Commerce Court company that galvanizes metal for industrial and other uses, is making good progress on its impressive new fully galvanized structure, possibly the first in North America. - Ted Tyler photo

## Sorry, no predictions here

For New Year's, a columnist is supposed to make predictions for the next 12 months. I don't do that. If I could foretell the future I'd pick the winning 649 numbers and blow this pop stand for warmer climes.

Instead, here are a few observations on significant happenings of the past 12 months.

One of the biggest local stories was the demolition of the old Acton arena. We were really sold down the river by that Georgetown council on this one. This town really needs a large general purpose room which could be rented reasonably. I think that was a big part of the reason the Town was determined to rip the old lady of Prospect Park down. They were afraid they'd have competition for the new arena. This was mentioned several times during the final debate. I use the term debate loosely since I am convinced the decision was made long before that final council meeting.

I hope you have been reading Mac Sprowl's thoughtful and well researched articles about the arena and prospect park's history. We should all be alarmed about the Town's plans to remove ball diamonds and turn the park into a "passive park". I was at the meeting at the high school regarding the park. People were clamouring for more recreational facilities. There was a small minority who thought nature walks or art shows should be the park's primary focus. At the time I thought there were airheads. Now I'm positive. The reason for turning the park into a passive area is because Prospect Park is over-used. But of course, we wouldn't want people to actually use the parks. All those rug rats running around and getting exercise and everything; People having fun. We have to stamp that out.

Some councillors resisted giving the Acton Agricultural Society any money towards a new building. They have three areas in town (Georgetown, Esquesing and Acton) and have to treat all the same, as you do with children. Well, children grow up and leave home. Maybe it's time we did because I'm

### The Way I See It

with Mike O'Leary



getting tired of being treated like a child. I would support any move to pull Acton out of Halton Hills.

1998 was yet another year of rancorous relations between teachers and school boards. Here in Acton there was even a suggestion the board might close both Robert Little and McKenzie-Smith Bennett schools. At Bishop Reding High school in Milton the teachers are still on work to rule.

The problem is that neither the teachers' unions nor the boards are trying to settle these disputes. Both are determined to obfuscate the issues so as to put the government in the worst light. In essence, they are fighting the election rather than educating our children.

Most parents I know are fed up with the constant bickering. This is not to say that there are not problems in the education system. Serious problems, that need to be resolved. They never will be, however, until the political agendas are put aside. The children are being used as pawns in this charade. Both sides are hoping the parents will rally to their cause. But the parents are just becoming more and more frustrated as they see the collateral damage being done to the kids.

Both dies are at fault. I think it's time to get rid of local boards and arbitrate a provincial solution. The right to strike must be taken out of the education system and replaced by compulsory arbitration. Most rank and file teachers would welcome such a move. The kids should be the number one consideration of the educational system. Let the union leaders defeat Mike Harris on their own time.

Time Magazine named President

Clinton and Ken Starr as "Man of the Year." Granted, between the two co-winners, they were newsmakers of the year. I wish Time would use this award to recognize someone who contributed something positive to the world. That's probably a Pollyanna view of things though.

The House impeached the president and now the whole mess goes to trial in the Senate. Clinton will end up with a slap on the wrist. All sides will cloak themselves in self-righteousness. I just hope the whole thing is over soon. The people of Iraq can't take much more.

I do want to finish the year in an upbeat fashion. As usual, I look to our youth for good news.

My undercover tipsters "Deep Stereo" muses that there might be a new business starting in town. It would be a dance school - after a fashion. Seems that at recent seasonal soiree, a local lad-about-town was dog dared to (ahem), shall we say - dance provocatively. A handsome sum was cunningly negotiated which our hoover wisely pocketed; while he still had pockets, that is. Acton's answer to Fred Astaire loosened a few buttons on his shirt and rocked on with dignity and cash in tact. It was only a one-sixteenth monte, sniffled one disappointed observer.

Herein lies the commercial opportunity. Rumour has it that there are dens of iniquity in Toronto and other exotic locales, where young ladies doff their duds for a few paltry pence. If they could employ our Twinkletoes bargaining techniques they might substantially increase their RRSP contributions. So, it you see a sign for the "Peeler Palace", be advised it has nothing to do with preparing potatoes. Shy people need not apply.

And they say the next generation has no ambition to acquire wealth. Pshaw!

And on that note, I would like to wish you all a prosperous, healthy and happy New Year. The last year of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It should prove to be fascinating.

**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

**Circulation** Marie Shadbolt

**Composing** Penny Zurbrigg

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