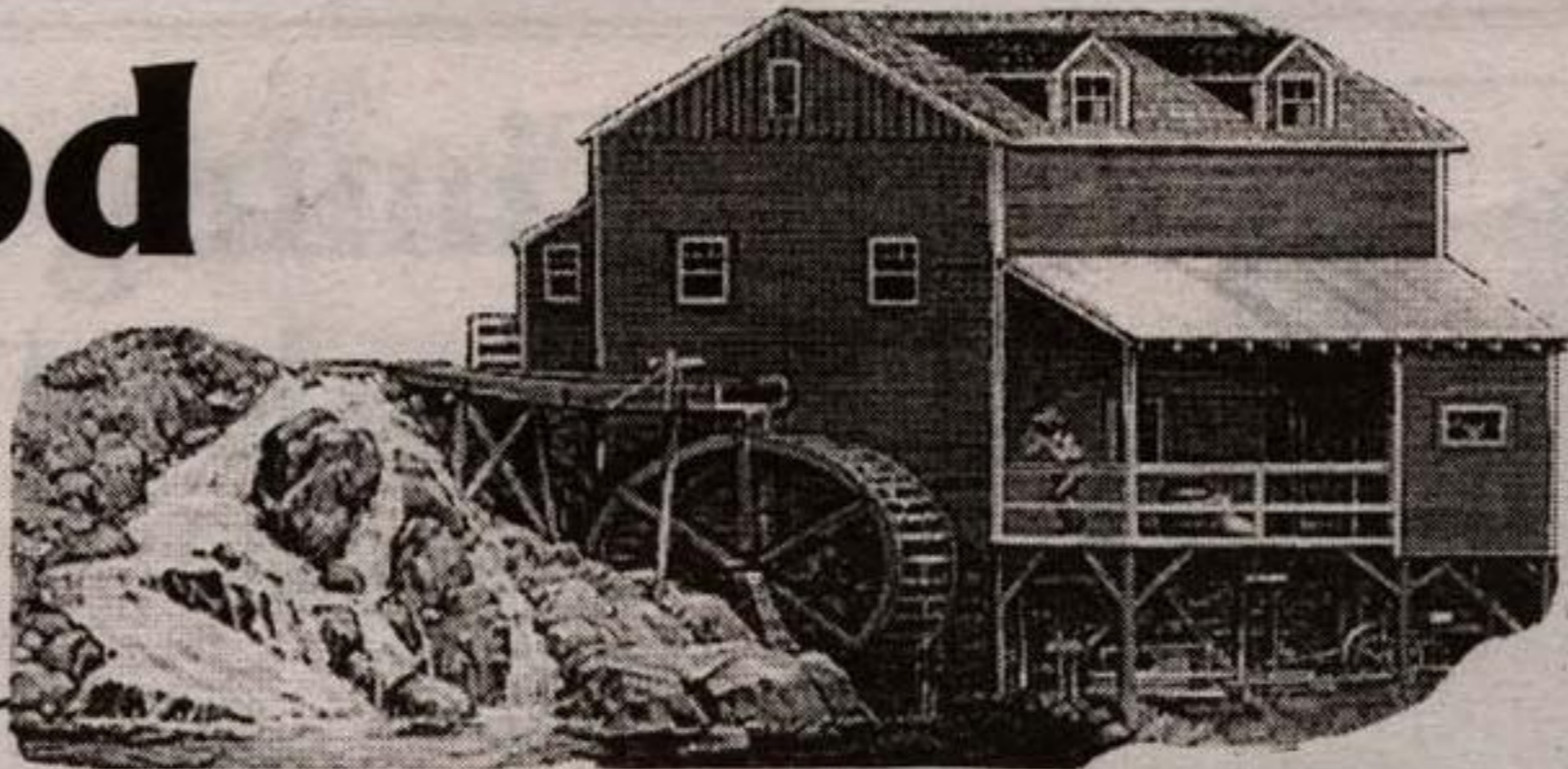


# The Rockwood MILLER



## Amazing turnout for benefit social

## Wiarnton Willie escapes Black's suit

BY MAGGIE PETRUSHEVSKY  
The New Tanner

In an interview earlier this

week Rockwood lawyer Doug Black said Wiarnton Willie's predictions regarding the continuation of winter had better come true this

Groundhog Day (Tuesday, Feb. 2).

Although he wasn't personally planning a lawsuit against the furry forecaster,

he wouldn't rule out the possibility of someone else taking on the task one day.

Black said (tongue-in-cheek), he considered suing the reticent rodent a couple of years ago, then decided against it. Given Willie's income even if the suit was concluded in Black's favour, what hope would he have of collecting damages?

"It would be like getting the proverbial blood from a stone," Black says. "He deserves to be in court for his often less than perfect prognostications. Unless he becomes more accurate with his predictions there's going to be someone go after him one of these days."

Black suggested this could in fact, be an ongoing story, since Willie's predictions have the potential to influence a lot of people.

It could be an ongoing story, all right. But of a different sort.

Willie died over the weekend, in his burrow waiting for his big annual moment in the spotlight.

Suspecting a skunk in the woodpile, this reporter checked with staff at the Wiarnton Echo before accepting the truth of radio announcements about Willie's demise.

"Yes, it's true," said a woman who identified herself as a member of the paper's custodial staff. "Willie died Sunday. Now they're looking for his son. But we understand he's on vacation and won't be back until summer. Meanwhile Willie left Mother Nature a message saying it would be an early spring."

On a less bantering note she explained Willie was 22 years old, a rare age for any groundhog let alone one of the white variety.

"In the wild groundhogs usually live to be four or five years old," she said. "But the white ones rarely survive their first year because other groundhogs pick on them. Willie was given special food and treated and given vet care so he was a very pampered fellow."

There were actually three white groundhogs, she said, but two died last summer.

"That was kept very quiet, but we knew then Willie's days were numbered."

A replacement will be found once warm weather arrives and the local groundhog population reappears. White groundhogs are fairly common in Kepple Township, so a son, nephew or cousin should be available for drafting to Willie's exalted position of national prominence. Willie has been a legend in the area for 43 years, the woman said.

Now as for that continuing saga. Did someone put out a contract on our wily rodent when no one was looking? Or was that a hex?



Rockwood lawyer Doug Black once planned to sue Wiarnton Willie. Tanner file

## Rash of thefts occupy police

Guelph OPP have no suspects in a recent series of break-ins Eramosa Township. Const. Dale Gear says vehicles, garages and sheds were entered at five properties on County Road 29 on Saturday with everything from frozen meat and power tools to car stereo systems being taken. A stereo was also removed from a car in Eden Mills on Jan. 26.

### Men beaten

Suspects are known and arrests are expected soon in the serious beating of two men in their Erin Township home Monday afternoon.

Const. Dale Gear says two cars brought five to eight men to the Fifth Line residence around 4 p.m. They beat two brothers, aged 17 and 32, causing the men to be taken to Georgetown and District Hospital with broken teeth and ribs and a concussion. It appears the beating was in retaliation for an earlier altercation but police are still investigating the incident.

### Home entered

Thieves made off with alcohol, a VCR and a microwave oven from a home on the Sixth Line of Milton during a break-in on Jan. 26.

Halton Regional police say entry was gained by a basement window some time between 1 p.m. and 8 a.m. The stolen property is valued at about \$4,000.

### Thefts from cars

A stereo was removed from a pickup truck on Cobblehill Road in Acton some time between 1:30 and 5:30 a.m. on Jan. 24. Entry was gained by smashing a vent window, Halton Regional police say. The same day change was also removed from a car parked on Kingham Road.

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Hello, my name is Rory Gibbons. I own Gibbons Painting and Decorating. I have been serving Halton Hills and surrounding areas with 10 years experience. I started painting 10 years ago in Toronto, but after starting a family we decided to come to a community-based town. We chose Acton. I have found Acton and area to be a friendly and warm environment to work in. I take great pride in my craft and customer satisfaction is guaranteed. I do interior and exterior in both oil and latex. I offer competitive rates and have references available upon request. I look forward to serving you.

*Rory Gibbons*

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Dear Editor,

Our community held a benefit social for my husband, Brad Macfarlane, on January 30, 1999. There was an amazing turnout thanks to the wonderful planning and advertising done by the committee.

Attached is a copy of the speech that I was going to present but couldn't because of the overwhelming emotions I was experiencing. No one can imagine the feeling one gets when people you may consider to be neighbours, teachers, proprietors of businesses within your community turn out to be friends and a very important part of your family, because of their support and show of affection.

I'm hoping you can print this letter to give me the opportunity to thank all of the people who deserve to be recognized for helping me to realize the true meaning of "community".

Sincerely,  
Anita Macfarlane

Thank you!

To our community:

Our community has come together in an overwhelming surge of support in our time of need. Knowing that we live within such a caring community provides comfort and relieves the pressure of feeling that we are alone in such a difficult time. It is so difficult to express the gratitude and appreciation that our whole family would like to convey. For all of you and what you have given us, I thank you.

To our care givers:

We have learned a lot about the health care system in the past year! There are so many strangers that have given their absolute best to save, repair and maintain

Brad's life. They are special people for the path they have chosen. These people have become our friends and teachers. They have counselled, educated and comforted us through this horrifying time. For this, I thank you.

To our family:

Through thick and thin. You never truly appreciate the meaning of some of the old cliches until you live them. I can't even imagine how we would have survived our crisis without the love and support our family has shown us. For your unyielding sacrifices we are eternally in your debt. I thank you.

To our children:

They have endured a treacherous time. Without knowing or asking about the consequences they give us their unconditional love. They inspire us by being brave, sad, happy or unsure. They answer our questions of how to guide them by asking the questions. They give us the strength of family and the will to live! For this, I love you and thank you.

To Brad:

You have all had the opportunity to witness the bravery and strength that exists within my husband. He not only has a powerful will to live but insists on maximizing every situation he has faced. In doing so, he also challenges me and this makes me a stronger person. For all of what he is and what he makes me, I thank him.

So many people have impacted our lives, not only through the last eight months, but through our entire lives. We are part of an intricate circle of relationships. We take this for granted until something forces us or the people in the circle to step up. I will count my blessings ever day and thank everyone who enriches me life!



Brad Macfarlane and wife Anita manage to keep wearing smiles despite his tragic accident last summer. Tanner file photo

**RALPH MacDONALD**

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