

# EDITORIAL

with Hartley Coles

## Christmas dreaming

It may be the Christmas festive season conjures up visions of sugar plums in our head but wouldn't it be appropriate for Acton to have its own theatre? One designed so Acton Citizens' Band and other groups could stage concerts in a building in which acoustics aided the performers.

Perhaps it could be a multi-use theatre, one where movies could be shown, concerts given, dances held and a stage where little theatre productions could be staged. We had them all one day in the past when Acton was only a village, stage and dance facilities at the old town hall, a movie theatre, an active YMCA, theatre groups. Now they are all either gone or going through a metamorphosis. Performers must use facilities never meant for concerts or other public functions.

Fortunately the Royal Canadian Legion has an admirable facility for large gatherings. They can be utilized for events such as the Christmas concert by Acton Citizens' Band Sunday night but they weren't designed for these functions. The result is the performers have to contend with acoustics never meant for concerts.

Georgetown has the John Elliott Theatre but it is too small for some events. Concerts by the Georgetown Choral Society are held in the churches because the theatre is meant for more intimate productions.

Acton schools have gymnasiums but they are built with that in mind, both audibly and physically. The Agricultural Society is struggling to raise \$360,000 to build a new exhibit hall, hampered by the fact facilities which duplicate those at the new arena won't be allowed. It is just a thought. If the projected building were to include a concert hall, movie facility and dance hall it would generate larger support. Obviously, a project of that magnitude would cost a lot more money. We're willing to bet it would create a lot more support. And could be used year around.

Christmas dreaming? Perhaps. But without dreams some projects never fully take off.

## Town's lit up!

We've just crossed the threshold of December but already the district is blazing with festive lights and displays. Some appeared as early as the second week in November, suggesting residents couldn't wait for the Christmas season to brighten their lives.

Traditionally, the signal to start festive lighting has come from the date of the Santa Claus parade and downtown lighting. However, the unseasonably warm weather of November triggered an early start on setting up lighting displays. Far easier to put these string of lights up when your hands aren't freezing and the wind howling around your ears, not to mention the lack of snow.

Nevertheless as attractive as festive lighting is in grey November the presence of snow added much to the display conveys more of our traditional Christmas feeling. We may hate it, shovel it, curse it and slip on it but without snow the festive season somehow wouldn't seem complete.

Those of us who leave lighting - and shopping - to the last minute are procrastinators. We keep putting it off hoping some day others will take a page from the past and wait at least until December to start the festive season. We're the ones who install our lights late and leave them lit to February. No hurry to put them up; not hurry to take them down.

The way we see it the early birds sometimes take the allure off the decorations before Christmas actually arrives. It's 'old hat' by then. The procrastinators, meanwhile, sometimes never get their festive decorations up.



**HE'S A WINNER:** Pete Smith of Georgetown held the winning ticket for the Acton Agricultural Society's decorated Christmas tree. 1999 Miss Acton runner-up Krystle Thompson presented Smith with his prize. The draw raised about \$2,500 towards the society's new building fund. - Maggie Petrushevsky photo

## An Actonian who dared to dream

The Chamber of Commerce recently received a letter from Florida asking about the value of some shares they found dated 1932, concerning a business conducted by a Mr. A. Seynuck. Did this long time Acton resident know anything about the shares and Mr. Seynuck, a chamber worker asked.

The query brought back a whole string of memories about Anthony (Tony) Seynuck but the value of the shares? I doubt they are worth anything if they're connected with Tony's famous ill-fated oil well.

Tony Seynuck (pronounced Chinook), businessman, raconteur, bootlegger, entrepreneur, dreamer, was a well known, controversial figure in Acton for decades. He and wife Mary operated the restaurant and confectionery where Andy's Restaurant is now located.

It was a magnet for teenager bobbie soxers. They like to sit in the wooden booths, drinking their malts, Chicago Specials, sodas and eating banana splits and tin roofs to their heart's content, discussing their latest love life. Not much different than teens today. They could get noisy, too, but Tony brooked no rowdiness or smoking by the youngsters. One warning and on the next offence you were expelled.

The restaurant was squeaky clean with shiny hardwood floors and glass show counters that sparkled. Tony usually sat in the rear when he wasn't at the counter, talking politics with cronies. He was an enthusiastic socialist who admired the Russian system of government especially when they came on the Allied side in World War 2.

It was a kind of anomaly because Tony Seynuck was also very much a free enterprising entrepreneur at heart, a thinker who wove wealthy dreams for investors in his oil exploration dealings. Tony, an immigrant from Roumania, built a dance hall on the hill which overlooks the "Gore", a slice

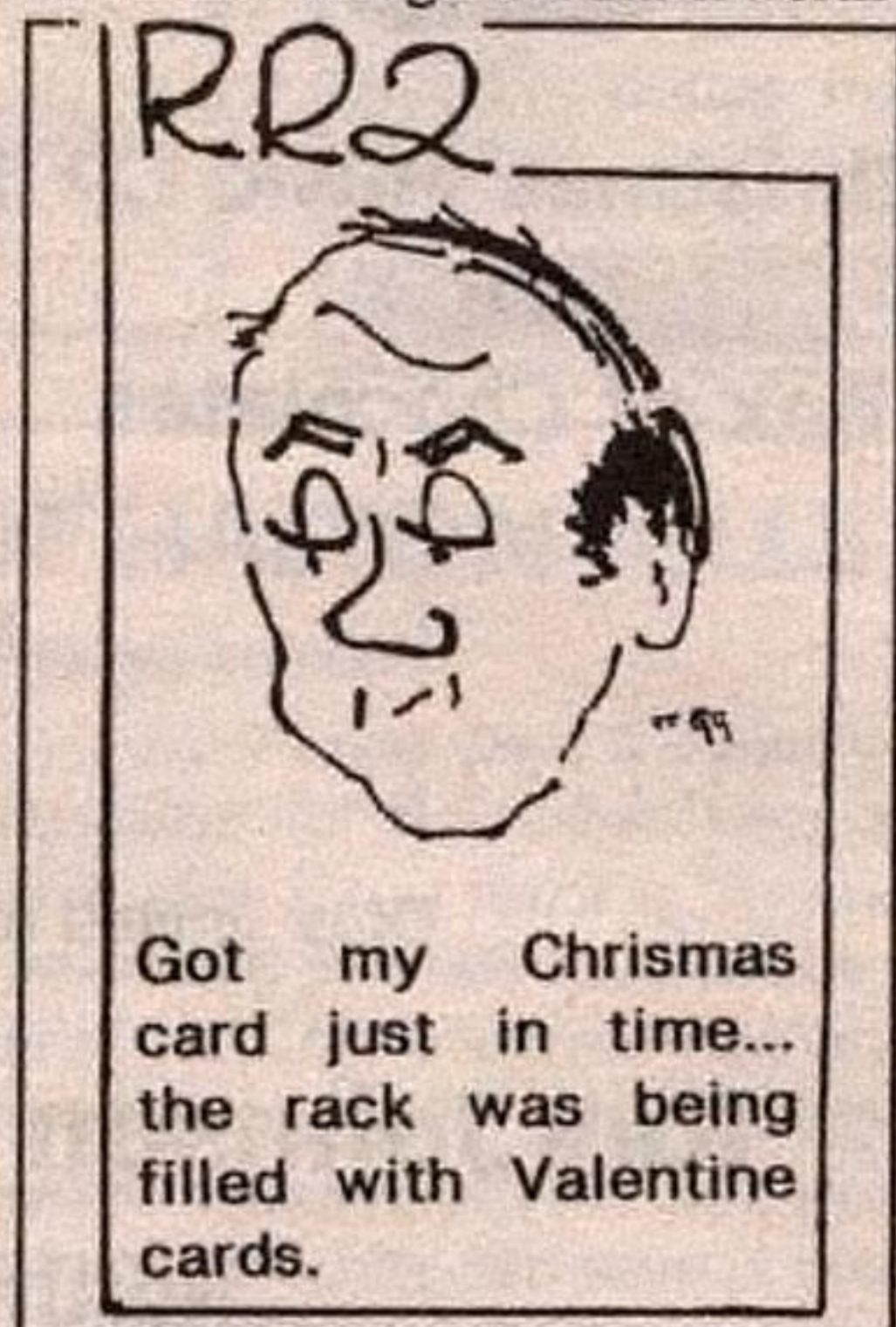
### Coles' Slaw

with  
Hartley Coles



of almost virgin land which include the Blue Springs Scout Reserve, then a park. Situated west of Acton at the dead end of the Town Line and accessible by the old Toronto Suburban Electric Railway which had a stop there enroute from Toronto to Guelph.

Not far from that dance hall was an oil derrick, known locally as Tony's Oil Well, where Mr. Seynuck and his associates drilled for that black gold which made the Rockefellers rich. That spot was chosen apparently because Tony had a dream there was oil under that rough terrain, sparked because he had seen traces of oil in the Blue Springs Creek which flows through the Gore, Blue Springs park and on to the Eramosa River near Eden Mills. Rumour has it Tony struck oil but not enough to make it worth-



while. He also struck natural gas, not much of a commodity then.

The real gold was in the dance hall. In the days when Acton and most neighbouring communities were "dry." It is said Tony served the bootlegged stuff, seeing no wrong in serving drinks which most Europeans - and others - considered part of their diet. But he was flouting the law and one day the law pounced. A fine, which by today's standards would amount to ten thousand dollars, was levied. The whole empire collapsed - dance hall, exploration for oil, etc., etc.

The hall came down. The derrick stood for many years before it fell to the vagaries of the weather. The railroad went broke. The dream had become a nightmare.

But, as one famous announcer says, that's not the end of the story. Others may have given up but he still had faith in his dream of striking oil in the scenic plot of land overlooking the valley of the Gore.

After World War 2 he and others from Acton and area invested in another scheme to drill for oil - and natural gas. This fuel was becoming popular for heating and cooking. Tony foresaw the day when natural gas would become an everyday commodity in this neck of the woods.

He and others formed Anthony Gas and Oil Explorations - and started drilling again. Not much oil there but substantial amounts of natural gas were found. Geologists also confirmed that this whole area probably had deposits of natural gas waiting to be discovered. Subsequent drilling in Halton Region confirmed it.

"Without the resources" to develop their finds, the company sold its several wells to one of the giants of the business, Union Gas, which we believe capped most of them for future use.

Tony Seynuck's faith in his dream of oil at the end of the dirt road from Crewsons Corners never materialized

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