

GRAPEVINE

Superior stitchers

The intricate handwork of four Acton artisans helped draw hundreds of people - quilters and non-quilters - to the Halton Hills Quilters Guild bi-annual show in the gallery at the Georgetown Cultural Centre.

Birds are a favoured motif in the four pieces entered by Guild charter member Margaret Toth who diverse stitching skills were highlighted in a duck quilt, a cardinal and pine tree wall hanging and a paper pieced Iris wall hanging. Fellow Guild member Helen Debeau's first attempt at applique - a quilt she made for her daughter - drew a lot of attention, along with her original designs of birds observed in her backyard.

Leone Brown's quilt of a John Deere tractor and farm scene added a little fun into the show and the fine stitching of Marilyn Young was evident in her lap quilt. The show wrapped up on Sunday.

The Guild is a non-profit organization, a Town Recreation and Parks program, dedicated to the promotion and appreciation of the art and craftsmanship of quilt making. The 50-member Guild meets monthly at Centennial School in Georgetown.

NFLer to visit Acton

Some Acton house league hockey players are in for a treat. Plans are in the works for Indianapolis Colt's kicker Mike Vanderjagt, cousin of Acton Tyke player Dayne Black, to visit the Acton arena during an upcoming playoff game. He may sign some autographs and talk about his NFL career that includes a Grey Cup appearance with the Toronto Argos, and the Colt's 3-and-13 season that left them just short of Super Bowl contention. Vanderjagt is from Oakville, where he's very active with Big Brothers.

Small town treasures

A faithful reader e-mailed a "You might be from a small town if..." mis-

sive that rang too true in a number of areas. A sample:

- You know what the four Hs in 4-H are.

- Directions are given using "the" stop light as a reference.

- Weekend excitement includes a trip to Wal-Mart.

- You decide to walk somewhere for exercise and several people pull over and ask if you want a ride. Small towns - gotta love 'em.

Youth Centre

The soon-to-open Acton Youth Centre on Mill Street will benefit from a concert on Saturday in Georgetown featuring Father Mark Curtis - known as "Canada's Singing Priest."

The Georgetown Youth Centre, also a program of Halton Hills Community Support and Information, will also share in the proceeds from the concert which promises a fun-filled evening of contemporary pop, country, gospel, blues, Celtic, folk and ballad-style music, along with stories and laughter.

The show begins at 7:30 p.m. at St. John's United Church on Guelph Street. Tickets are available in Acton by calling Elly at 853-3310 or 853-3896.

Fair funds

Members of the Acton Agricultural Society's Building Our Future fundraising committee expect to present some good news at Saturday's annual general meeting at Knox Presbyterian Church.

"It's quite substantial," committee spokesperson Janis Fread said when asked how much had been raised to build a new \$350,000 fair building in Prospect Park.

"I think we have reason to be very pleased with the contributions from the community," Fread said, adding they will also find out how well last year's fair did, elect a new executive and get reports from all of the Society's committees, at Saturday's meeting.

Big welfare reduction in Halton: Chudleigh

There has been a big reduction in welfare among Halton residents since June of 1995. Ted Chudleigh, MPP Halton declared this week. In Halton there were 1,648 cases of welfare assistance last month, compared to 5,605 in June, 1995.

"The huge reduction in welfare cases in Halton is tangible evidence that our program for jobs, growth and prosperity is working," said MPP Ted Chudleigh. "It's clear our welfare reforms and strategy of tax reduction is having a positive impact locally."

Since June 1995, there is a reduction of 3,959 welfare cases in Halton. This represents a 70.6 per cent reduc-

tion in the caseload.

"More people are breaking free from welfare dependency and turning their lives around," said Mr. Chudleigh. "Our workfare, earnfare and elarnfare programs are helping people acquire skills, training and experience they need to move from welfare to work."

Community and Social Services Minister John Baird recently pointed out that more than 100,000 people in Ontario stopped relying on welfare in 1999 alone. That represents a 16.3 per cent reduction over the number of welfare recipients in December, 1998.



TWO YEARS ALREADY? Believe it or not, it has been two years since the official opening of the new Acton arena. The new facility has been admired by many people from other communities around the province. The official opening where politicians and bureaucrats snipped the ribbon is shown in this New Tanner photo.

We was bamboozled!

I wondered why John Manley put so many conditions on the proposed financial package aimed at helping small market NHL teams. Then - boom - three days later the Feds killed the proposal. Minister Manley claimed the flip-flop was directly a result of overwhelming public opinion against the deal. He said, in fact, "The Prime Minister and I want them (Canadians) to know that this government listens and takes their views seriously." As soon as I heard that on the radio I knew we'd been had. I just wasn't sure why.

Over the next day or two the news surfaced that an audit of the Human Resources Development Ministries (HRD) job reaction fund found incompetence at almost every level HRD manages, or doesn't, it seems, some three billion (that's \$3,000,000,000.00) in government grants. Amongst other horror stories a reported 15 per cent of the grants, or around \$450,000,000 give or take a few mil. was passed out without even an application. But what was the country up in arms about? Grants for millionaire hockey players, of course. This exercise was a masterful demonstration of subterfuge. The majority of Canadians bought it hook, line and sinker. Even now I find it hard to believe the Feds pulled it off. But they did.

This second shot across our bows came from Health Minister Rock. The day after the "Bucks for pucks" announcement Mr. Rock, unveiled the new graphics the government intends to put on cigarette packages. This was, I assume, to be the old one/two which would punch the fiasco at HRD off the front page. Problem was, smokers don't care what they put on the package and non-smokers were steaming over tax dollars for millionaire hockey players. If the government was really serious about stopping people from smoking they would announce that all politicians' salaries and pensions would come exclusively from tobacco taxes. The majority of smokers would quit the next day. But I digress.

The final proof for me came in an article in the Georgetown paper. MP Julian Reed is quoted as being against the decision to start negotiations with the NHL. Mr. Reed went on to say that he does not

The Way I See It

with Mike O'Leary



"support federal government money directly injected into private industry." One supposes then that our Hon. MP will oppose any more money for Bombardier and/or motels in the P.M.'s riding. I look forward to his interviews on these matters. But I digress - again.

My friends, when a Liberal MP goes public and is quoted as opposing a cabinet initiative one of two things has happened. (A) Hell has frozen over. (B) the policy was never meant to fly in the first place. Your choice.

I look forward to the day, and it will come, when the Feds look us in the eye and tell us the NHL deal would have gone through had the province, municipality and NHL jumped on board sooner. That will happen the day after the Senators, the hockey team that is, has been sold and is moving to the States. If the other senators, the political ones, were sold to the States there would be joyous celebrations across the land. But there I go - digressing again.

For what it's worth, I thought NHL aid package was a good idea. All levels of government were going to pony up \$6 or \$7 million in aid. In return, the governments get back at least \$15 million from Ottawa Senator operations by way of taxes. That \$15 million will disappear if the Senators go south. For those of you who are still opposed to the concept let me know and we can meet downtown. I'll give you \$7 and you give me \$15. Honestly, the lengths I'll go to, to keep my readers happy.

As for the fumbled billions at HRD, the Liberals have been surprisingly low-keyed. But don't worry, I'm sure Mr. Reed will be quoted on this matter in the near future. The Liberals, after all, "listen and take our views seriously."

I wonder how many people communicated with the government? What do you think - 10,000, 30,000, 100,000? Right now the parents of Jonathan Wamback have over 500,000 signatures from Canadians on a petition demanding changes to

the Young Offenders Act. Poll after poll says Canadians want capital punishment as an option for some crimes. So why won't the government react in days to those issues? I guess they haven't heard us, or, they're not listening. Your choice.

★★★★★

At first blush it seemed like a slam-dunk. Premier Harris recently announced that anyone convicted of fraud against the welfare system would, as a consequence, become ineligible for benefits for life. What, however, constitutes fraud? Aye, there's the rub.

To me, this exercise just re-enforces my view that the welfare system needs a complete overhaul right down to the nuts and bolts. On the one hand, one segment of society sees far too many folks who are abusing the system. On the other side we see too many mind-numbing situations where the recipients are ground down by an inflexible and seemingly unfeeling bureaucracy.

There's an old saying that when you're up to your ass in alligators, it's hard to remember that your original intention was to drain the swamp. That's where we are with the welfare system. Are there abusers? Of course. Is there injustice? You bet. Can it be fixed? It better be.

Somehow, we have to give case-workers some latitude to consider circumstances. We can't treat each and every case exactly the same. By the same token, there has to be some accountability for the physical and financial resources the government commits to the program. It's a quandary worthy of the wisdom of Solomon.

There is too much intransigence to change on all sides. I only wish I knew how to break the logjam. I do applaud the government for trying. I hope they will be open to suggestion for moderating their position. We can't keep on the way we are. All parties need to be open to new guidelines. I think most folks know we have to refine the social system. The way it is now reminds me of another old saying. Everyone wants to go to heaven but no-one wants to die. All parties have to realize that this type of attitude is no longer good enough. We need social assistance change and we need it now.



COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND INFORMATION

The next meeting of the Acton Women's Association will be held on Tuesday, Feb. 8 at 7:30 p.m. at the Acton Band Hall, 85 Wallace St.

This meeting will be a dessert coffee evening - a chance to socialize and also look at some ideas for future meetings. Please bring a small dessert and your ideas for speakers or crafts.

The goal of the Acton Women's Association is to give women an opportunity to meet other women in the community. Women of all ages are welcome to attend and there is no membership fee. For more information please call Cathy at 853-3310.

Fundraising Auction: The Georgetown Parent-Child Centre, a program of HHCSI, is hosting a Silent and Live Auction/Dinner and Dance on Feb. 19 from 6:30 p.m. to 1 a.m. at Holy Cross Church Hall. Tickets are \$35 per person and can be purchased from the centre at 873-6502.

The centre is accepting donations for the auction prior to Feb. 10 and arrangements can be made to have items picked up. Call for information.