



A DROP OF TEA: Wetherby's celebrated Coronation Street with an outdoor tea on Saturday. Helping serve was Alex Britwistle, 12. - Angela Tyler photo

Library program

Halton Hills Public Libraries are offering three no-cost, drop-in programs this summer. We are excited to be able to offer Harry Tuesdays, when we will be reading the newest book in the Harry Potter series. Readings will be one hour and will take place at the Acton branch at 10 a.m. and at the Georgetown branch at 2 p.m. beginning July 2. Children must be at least eight years of age to participate. Don't tuck them in before coming to the library for some special stories! Sleepytime Stories is a family drop in storytime that is being offered in both branches. Children are invited to wear their pyjamas

and bring their teddy bears to this 30 minute program. The libraries hope you'll join us in Acton on Wednesday evenings at 7 p.m., July 5 - August 9, or Georgetown on Thursday evenings at 7 p.m., July 6 to August 10. Fridays are also fun at the library! They welcome children ages six and up to participated in the Drop In Crafts program. Small groups will be accommodated every 15 minutes. You will be surprised at what you can create in such a short time! Proof of age may be required. This program will take place at the Georgetown and Acton branches on Fridays, July 7 to August 18 from 2 to 4 p.m.

Guns must be licensed by 2001

BY MAGGIE PETRUSHEVSKY
The New Tanner

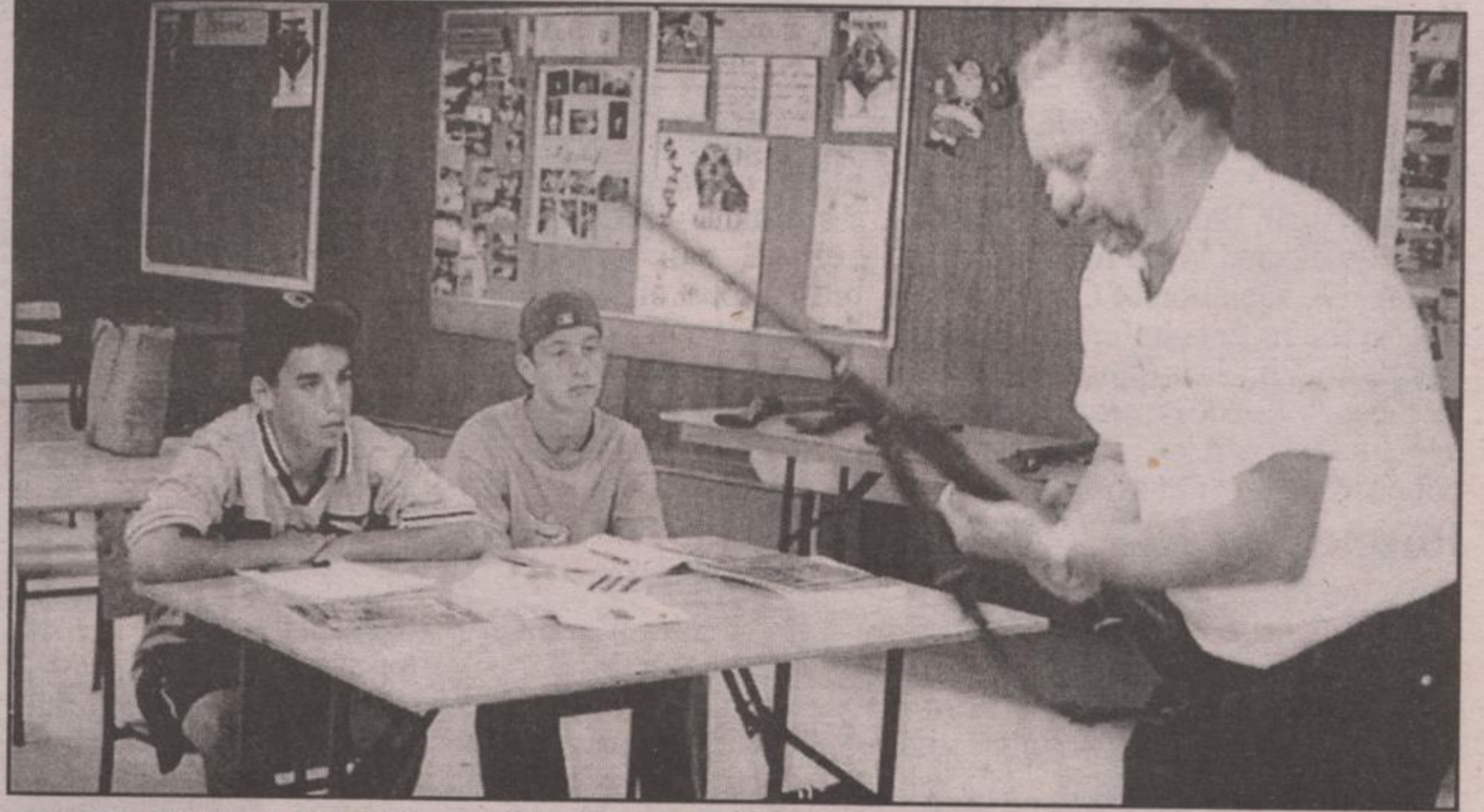
Gun owners need to be aware of how the new firearm legislation can affect them, warns a director of the Firearms Safety Education Service of Ontario.

Art Hawes of Limehouse says most people don't realize how the new Canadian law on firearms could make criminals of them even if their gun is never removed from the same storage place it has occupied for years.

As of January 1, 2001 owners of weapons must have them each registered individually. Straight possession licences can be issued allowing people to own the guns they already have.

Another form of licence is required for people who already own guns and want the right to purchase more. For the acquisition type licence, you must also have passed the Canadian Firearms Safety Course.

Forms for these licences are available at post offices. Right now each licence costs only a nominal sum although it is suggested the prices will rise after October, Hawes says. "Most women hate guns and fear them. Usually they come with absolutely no background so they learn the rules correctly without any difficulty. Guys, or even teens who have seen older men in



SAFE, NOT SORRY: As Shawn Emmerton (left) and Brady Malchin, both of Georgetown, look on, fire arms instructor Art Hawes, demonstrates gun safety basics during a firearms training course at the Acton Scout House recently. - Frances Niblock photo

their family handle guns, tend to have picked up some bad habits along the way. They have to break them first, before they can learn the correct way to handle their weapons and that can be more difficult," he says.

Hawes says the number of people charged with gun law infractions who were initially investigated for something totally different are a warning of what could happen in future.

Right now, for example, a young family member gets involved with a misdemeanor and for whatever reason, police bring a search warrant when they come to arrest him at his home. Even though the parents were in no way involved in their kid's offence, if they own a gun and it is found during the search, they could well be charged with possessing an unregistered firearm or unsafe storage of a firearm. That depends, of course, on whether they have complied with all the existing gun laws, he says. But it shows how innocently people get caught up without even doing anything wrong. Hunters and sport marksmen have never disagreed

with the idea of locking up their guns so they cannot be accidentally discharged or taken during a robbery, he says. What disturbs them is the way the new system can make criminals of law abiding citizens whose only fault is ignorance.

"If I decide not to use my car for a year and I let my licence lapse," Hawes says, "no one will come after me because I still have the car sitting in the back yard on blocks. I know the testing I will face to get that licence renewed when I'm ready to drive again. But no one will come around with a warrant because I failed to keep it current in the first place."

That's just the position in which the new gun legislation leaves gun owners.

Once the guns have been registered initially, the government knows they exist. If their licences lapse the computerized federal registry will show that fact to anyone who might be looking through the files.

"The government has said there won't be any reminder notification when these licences run out. And since the licences are for five years and

not attached to something noteworthy - like drivers' licences are timed to your birthday - how likely are you to remember when your renewal is due? And what are the chances police will be expected to crack down on violators who let their licences lapse just the way they crack down on speeders?" Hawes says.

The real sticker with that scenario, is not just the fines a gun owner might face. He could well wind up in jail. It would also give him the sort of criminal record which would bar him from jobs requiring bonding and prevent him crossing the border for work or even brief holidays in the United States.

Another grey area lies in the licensing requirement for anyone with "care and control" of a weapon. While that might seem natural, there is a sneaky catch no one has sorted out, Hawes says. For instance, if he took his rifle and went on a hunting vacation, but left his shotgun at home where his wife was staying, could police charge her because she is not licensed to use his weapons? Even

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