

# GRAPEVINE



## Half-staff bill

Halton MPP Ted Chudleigh thinks flags should fly at half-staff at all provincial buildings whenever a police or corrections officer is killed on duty.

Chudleigh introduced a mandatory flag bill at Queen's Park before Christmas, as a matter of respect he said, after the flag was not lowered at the Milton courthouse following the death of Sgt. Rick McDonald, killed while trying to stop a fleeing car in Northern Ontario.

## Sun skating

Acton's Bronwyn Marshall is in the sunny south, shivering in a cold arena. Marshall is a member of Black Ice, a synchronized skating team that's competing in an international meet in Orlando, Florida.

Marshall, who also skated for Burlington-based Ice Image, has competed in national and international meets in Europe and the USA.

## Musical ride

For almost six decades, Acton's Aldo Braida (with his trumpet) has joined members of the Acton Citizens' Band on its annual musical ride, Christmas concert on wheels.

Just before Christmas, band mem-

bers toured town playing Christmas carols at various locations, a tradition going back 58 years.

Braida said the carolling began with a Mrs. Reta Stuckey, a wheelchair-bound woman who lived across from the Town Hall.

"(Band founder) Charlie Mason said, 'wouldn't it be nice if we went across the road and played a few Christmas carols for Mrs. Stuckey,' so we did, and then we went to another lady who was in a wheelchair and housebound and we did it every year," Braida said.

## Acton storms Guelph

Acton IGA will sponsor the Acton Hockey Day at the new Guelph arena on January 28, and give the first 1,000 fans through the door of the brand-new facility - the former Eaton's store - a Hockey Moms of Acton calendar.

The calendars feature photos of Acton house league and select hockey moms at various arena locations and the teams will use money raised from sales.

IGA, a strong sponsor of the calendar, snapped up 1,000 calendars to distribute at the game, and two hours prior to the 2 p.m. Storm game, Acton Tyke and Novice players will take to the ice in exhibition games.



**WINTER GARDENING:** Much to the delight of these hockey-loving boys, their dads, lead by Mark Kri (standing left), have created a great outdoor rink at Sir Donald Mann Park. With water and electricity (for night skating) from the Town, tender care from Kri's crew and cooperation from Mother Nature, the ice is fast, flat and very popular. - Frances Niblock photo

## 2001 spaced-out oddities

We had a pleasant evening just relaxing and welcoming the New Year with dear friends. We had a wonderful dinner, watched the fireworks from Toronto and were home by 12:30 a.m. I guess we're getting older but I sure didn't miss the New Year's Day hangover of years past. I am especially relieved that the controversy over when the new millennium actually started is finally finished. Who cares? It was a silly argument since there were mistakes made in determining Christ's birthdate when the Julian calendar was introduced and the second millennium actually began in 1996 or 1997. Also, wasn't it nice not to have to endure that Y2K nonsense again?

I took a week off to complete the move of our office/warehouse to new quarters. Someday, hopefully soon, I'll get finished. I always underestimate the amount of time and work projects like this need. One thing is for sure: I'm not selling the house. They can take me out feet first and the girls can clean-out the basement. I hate being confronted with the fact that I'm a pack-rat.

I was pleased to see that Angela Tyler included me in her list of people who help make Acton interesting. I am concerned, however with the line "you may love him or you may hate him." Hate? ... Little ol' me? Angela, Sweetie, some misguided souls may disagree with me on an occasional minor point but surely no-one could hate loveable me. Why one lady stopped me in the IGA parking lot to tell me she missed my column last week. (Thank you my dear, I was having a terrible day and you brightened it considerably) and she wasn't even a relative. So please, dear readers, don't hate me. My introverted fragile psyche couldn't handle that. I do thank Angela for including me in her list. Len Tuitman also made Angela's assemblage for his sybaritic calendar pose. If you haven't bought your "Men of Acton" calendar yet you must. The pictures are fantastic. Who needs the Chippendales?

### The Way I See It

with Mike O'Leary



The big news over the holidays was the possibility of Magna building a plant in our town. We need a major employer to come here. I am encouraged by the fact that provincial, regional and town officials appear to be solidly on board. The concern is that Magna wants a building permit in three months. I sincerely hope the governments involved pull out all the stops to accommodate this project. Bureaucratic delays would be unacceptable to the people of this town. "Make it happen" should be the motto for this project.

A few other news items piqued my interest over the holidays. Here's how I saw them.

The federal government is paying a Saskatoon company \$5.7 million to grow and harvest premium quality marijuana 350 yards underground in an old mine shaft. Some of the funds will go to ensuring tight security. Now isn't that typical of governments wasting our money? Hell, I can think of a half-dozen guys who would happily (and I mean that) grow the government's pot as long as they didn't get busted and could keep the over-production. As for security, a few pit bulls with AIDS would keep the outlaw tokers at bay. Instead, the Liberals put \$5.7 million up in smoke. The trouble is that Mr. Chretien thinks the old film "Marijuana Madness" is a documentary.

Air Canada apresident Robert Milton proudly announced the company had hit it's service improvement targets 60 days before his self-imposed deadline. He then announced, three days before Christmas, that AirCan was going to cut 3,500 jobs and raise air fares six per cent starting January 01. Sure, monopolies work. Right? The good news is that

the airlines' employees have learned to tell complaining passengers to piss-off in both official languages and can lose your luggage at every airport in the country. Also, a new 10 year contract with caterers Plastifoods-R-U's has been signed. Friendly skies indeed.

If you haven't sent away for your stupid gun licence yet you're officially a criminal. The same guys who refuse to apply the gun laws we now have on robbers and murderers have created a new class of outlaw. Yes friends, the self-financing gun licence department, which has already cost us over \$500 million, is well on its way to achieving its final goal. Absolutely nothing! This registry will not stop one crime, not one robbery, not one murder. We do, however, end up with more red tape, more expensive bureaucracy and more government control of our lives. That spells L-I-B-E-R-A-L to me. What a boondoggle.

Thank God the US presidential election is over. Political ideologies aside, I think Bush will be a better president for Canada than Gore would have been. If the North American economy goes into a downturn than plants will close and jobs will be lost. Gore is much indebted to the powerful unions and would be more protectionist of American jobs at our expense. Bush is more of a free trader and we may escape some of the effects of a North American slowdown.

I also think that, in spite of media attempts to portray him as a buffoon, that Bush will conduct a workmanlike presidency. At least we won't be constantly bombarded with moral and ethical crisis! That, in itself, will be a relief. Besides, ya gotta love a country who elects a guy named "Dubya" to its highest office.

And finally, on his first visit to North America, Russian president Putkin visited Castro and Chretien. Certainly seems to be a case of birds of a feather flock together. "Dubya" must be laughing his ass off at us. This, my friends, is not a good start with a new president.

## So long, but ...

Cont. from Pg. 4

on my face in snowbanks. Hey, I've lost a third of the required poundage without even exercising by any official regime. Not bad for a great gran-nie!

I will miss our little "Tanner family." Hartley Coles was the Free Press sports editor when my first column was published all those years ago. He also headed up the competition when I went to the Herald. Frances Niblock and I were classmates in Sheridan's journalism course in 1976 and continued to meet at assignments through the years. Marie Shadbolt was the Herald's circulation manager and our friendship remained as our careers split. Even our first office manager/production staffer Karen Wetmore was a former co-worker as a Guelph Mercury summer student before joining the old Tanner. And then there's "Publisher Tyler." His father drove me to high school every day and Ted was one of the spare drivers. While it was a tenuous connection, he wasn't a "stranger" when I button-holed him to let me join the New Tanner staff.

Not being a subscriber of the former Tanner, Mike O'Leary's writing was unknown to me when I first met him. But that first lecture over my failure to uphold my heritage on St. Patrick's Day 1998 (Mother was a McEnery) cemented our arguments forever. I now remember to wear my green - even if it's only my emerald birth stone ring - on the appropriate day. I've learned to value Mike's opinion and to appreciate his way with words - even when we have to censor them and defend our narrow

minds. I'll miss setting your column every week, Mike.

My year has already begun well although I'm having trouble making my family understand how I could "get lucky" twice in two weeks. Christmas Eve a couple in a half ton backed into the side of my car in the parking lot at Stone Road. My granddaughters were by the doors they hit and came through unscathed. Nor could they do the hit and run thing since I had them trapped between a curb and my car. I have all the insurance information I need. Lucky, right?

Then New Year's Eve the handle broke off the kitchen tap as I was rinsing the turkey for the evening meal. I had water raining down from the ceiling and guests due in an hour. I dove under the sink for the shut off valves only to find them welded with age. An application of wrench to nut loosened the cold water valve enough to make it leak at the handle. Downstairs for the main shut off valve. Four days later and we still haven't found that little sucker. I yelled for my new son-in-law only to discover he knows diddly about plumbing. In desperation I started on the yellow pages. Salmon Plumbing in Rockwood came to my rescue. I don't give away free advertising but finding a plumber on Sunday and New Year's Eve at that merits some sort of reward. Thank you Mr. S!

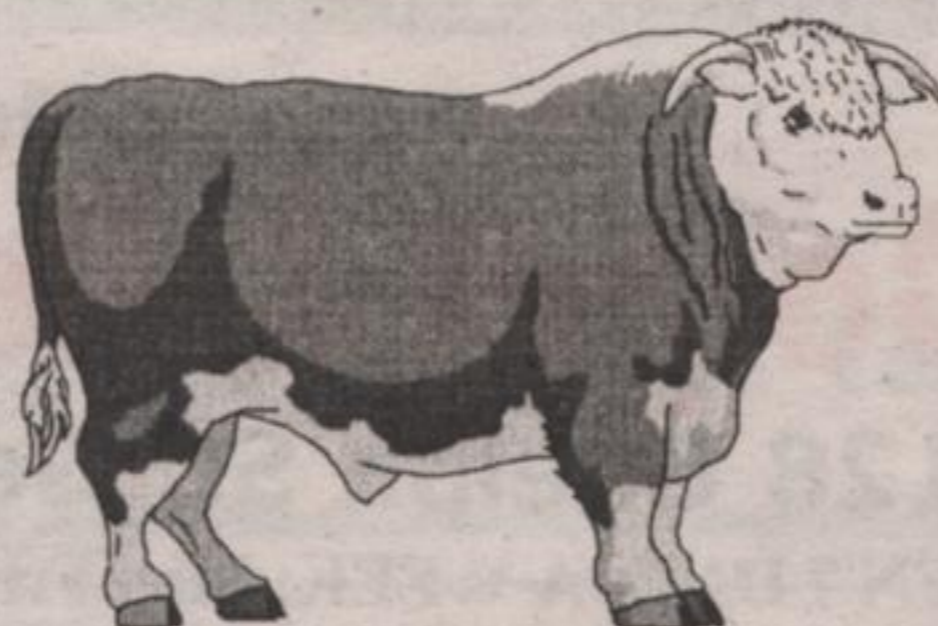
By the time my company landed my tap was band-aided, my floor was re-washed, my ceiling had stopped dripping, the turkey was starting to smell delicious, the veggies were peeled, I'd showered and changed and the laundry was done. Now don't tell me that's not lucky!

The trouble is, I know things come in threes. I should be heading for the hills because this next one is going to be a doozie. But I'm fascinated. I (almost) can't wait to see what happens next.

Whatever it is dear readers, as my Cossak used to tell me - nosdorovia. Or as my Viking says, skaal. Even my own Celtic ancestors had their term for it. Slainte mhor. And since we were all raised in - or assimilated to - the land of the Sassenach and their language - I suppose I should say it their way too - (a toast) ... to your health ... and the future.



Hometown news that people read!



## WHAT'S YOUR BEEF?

Put it in a letter to the Editor!

Deadline is Tuesday at noon.