

GRAPEVINE



Sluggers to slurp

When rookie homerun hitters from Acton pull up their shirts at Tim Hortons this summer they won't be showing off their tummies - they'll be rolling up the rim of their uniform to collect on their sponsor's generous offer of a cold drink to sluggers for a job well done.

Corporately, Tim Hortons has offered to sponsor the entire Blast Ball (formerly T-ball) division which this year will be four teams of five and six year olds.

Acton Minor Ball Association officials are also happy to be welcoming McDonalds as a team sponsor this season. McDonald's uniforms will include their logo - the burger giant paid more than the usual \$275 sponsorship fee to brand their teams' uniforms.

Kindergartner call

If you have a child who will be four or five years old by December 31 this year, staff at Acton's three elementary schools want you to register now for Junior and Senior Kindergarten for September 2002.

Parents of eligible students should call the school their child will attend to make an appointment to register.

Literacy volunteers

Are you patient, literate and have three hours a week to offer someone who needs help with basic literacy skills?

The North Halton Literacy Guild has limited space available in its upcoming volunteer tutor training session.

The tutors help adult students with reading, spelling, writing and basic computer skills. No teaching experience is necessary. For details, call the Guild at 905-873-2200.

Law & ornament

The front windows of the police sub-station on Mill Street are about to get a major spruce-up thanks to the artistic talents of some Acton High School students.

Village Constable Gary George says they've "partnered up" with senior art students who are planning two community-based murals for

the windows.

Constable George also said the lease for the Mill Street police sub-station had been renegotiated until the end of next year, and hopefully longer.

Service award

Kudos to Acton's Dave Banks, a sergeant with the Halton Police Service, one of four officers who recently received awards marking 20 years of service.

The Police Exemplary Service Award is a Government of Canada medal that recognizes long and outstanding service in the high risk job of public safety.

Banks, a veteran of 19 homicide investigations with the identification bureau, is a supervisor in the forensic identification unit. He is also the recipient of a National award of excellence for police photography.

Footloose flapjacks

Sturdy footwear and a hearty appetite are required on Saturday for those taking part in the second annual Pancake Breakfast Hike in Limehouse.

Sponsored by the Halton chapter of the Bruce Trail Association, the short walk (1.5 hours) begins in the Limehouse Conservation Area and ends at the Memorial Hall, where breakfast will be served. Hikers should meet at the Limehouse School at parking lot at 9 a.m.

The hike is free, but the food isn't. For details call Maureen at 905-873-9757.

Good bye, Acton

Masood Atchekzai, the associate dealer at Mac's was sad to leave the Acton store yesterday (Wednesday) as he transferred to a larger store in Cambridge after four years in Acton.

"I will miss Acton big time because the people are great to deal with and it's a family town and people are very polite and very honest," he said on Monday.

Masood was top employee in this district and his reward is a weeklong family trip to Mexico that he begins on Saturday.



BEARING THE CROSS: Flanked by walkers wearing the uniform of Roman soldiers, Rev. Emrys Jenkins leads a few of those who bore the Good Friday cross from Churchill Community Church to McKenzie-Smith Bennett School where they were joined by members of St. Joseph's congregation. Dusk was falling as well as rain as the procession wound its way to Trinity Church for a Tenebrae service, one of many Good Friday services in churches throughout the area.

Who will save the children?

The silence is deafening. Do we not care how many children are murdered or scarred for life by sex offenders set free into our communities? It would be easy to conclude that this is the case. If I could speak face to face with each of you individually I'll wager the vast majority would express your outrage and contempt for those depraved beings that prey on our children. And yet, year after year, decade after decade, we stand mute while more children are brutalized.

Perhaps we think we are isolated from this scourge living in a small town. If so, you're living in a fool's paradise. The good people in Pickering probably thought the same thing. They, too, live about an hour from the city. Earlier this month they were surprised to discover that not one but two child molesters were living, in the same house, within walking distance of three schools. Both were long term multiple offenders. One of the child molesters moved, the other is still there.

The residents of Pickering looked to the Police for answers as to how these two could be allowed to live in their community in anonymity. When a detective told them that "It's not a practise of our (Police) service to notify the public of every sex offender," the crowd was angry. "Who pays you," one man screamed. Well, I think he had the right idea but the wrong target. The people we employ who can change the rules regarding sex offenders are our MP's and MPP's. The police can only work within the guidelines the law provides!

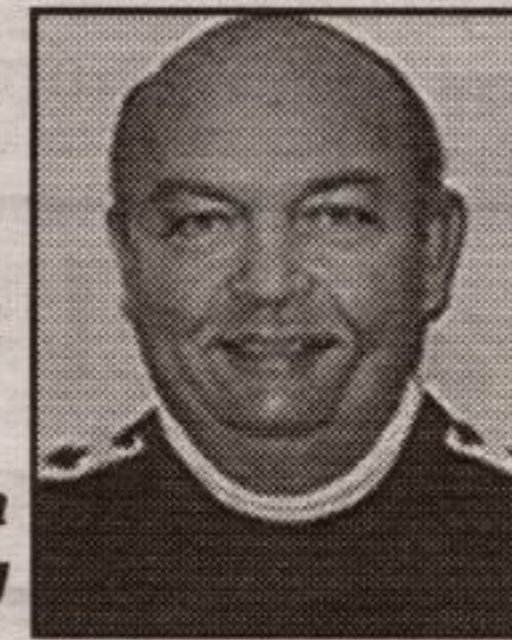
I sit on a town citizens' committee which advises the Halton Regional Police on local issues involving community policing. The matter of reporting a sex offender who may be living in Acton has been discussed the past few meetings. A letter has been sent to the chief asking for a clarification of Halton's policy regarding this issue.

My experience is that the Halton Police have not, in the past, issued warnings. Several years ago I printed the fact we had an offender with over 20 convictions in town. He went off his medication and was forced to move. He went to Hamilton where he re-offended in short order. Perhaps the policy will change under this Chief. Time will tell. Other police forces release pertinent information.

There are 3,238 registered sex-offenders in Ontario. 1,381 of them live in the golden horseshoe area. Over 500 live within an easy 45 minute drive from where you are sitting plus another 566 in Toronto. So tell me, do you still feel complacent? Last week, in yet another blow for "Freedom" the BC Supreme

The Way I See It

with Mike O'Leary



Court ruled that sadomasochistic writings depicting men having sex with boys had "literary merit." The few descriptions I heard were enough to make a maggot vomit. Writers' Advocacy Group PEN applauded the decision as freedom of expression. Det.-Insp. Bob Matthews of the OPP's "Project P" Child Pornography Unit disagrees. He says child porn stories are "like putting gasoline on the fire of a pedophile who may be at the point of deciding whether or not he's going to touch a child." I know whose opinion I value more.

Child porn is not an academic argument to be confused with freedom of expression. It's often been said that your freedom of expression ends at the end of my nose. In other words, no freedom is absolute. When actions cause harm to others we, as a society, have the right and indeed the obligation to enact laws which protect society as a whole. We have many such exceptions to our freedoms in various anti-hate statutes. These restrict what we can or cannot publish. Why are our children not worth the same, or even stronger, protections?

In Ontario we are told that Sex Offenders Registry will help protect your children. The act, also called "Christopher's Law," in memory of Christopher Stephenson who was murdered by a repeat offender, does little or nothing to protect children. Upon reflection, I think it's insensitive to name this legislation after him. Christopher's killer was released into the community and was, incredibly, working for a social agency assigned to duties where he would come in contact with children even though his past record was known.

It's true that this act requires convicted sex offenders to register with police. Offenders have 15 days after release or after moving to register. Why give them two free weeks? Then, after registering, they don't have to report for a year unless they move or re-offend. Generally, young offenders are exempt. That's no surprise.

While this law may help the police round up the high-risk suspects after an assault I don't see how it's pro-active and protects children in the least. Most of these perverts are repeat offenders. Many have assaulted 10, 20, 30 or more times. Do you think being required to register

is any kind of deterrent?

One problem I see is that every pervert from a flasher, to a pornographer, to a rapist, is lumped into the general category of "sex offender." By no means do I think that any of these offences are acceptable but I do say that those who physically assault children should be in a separate classification. Those animals should be locked-up for the rest of their miserable lives. No excuses, no parole, no mercy.

There is no "cure" for pedophiles so why should we have them out in our midst? And no, I don't care about their rights. I care about the rights of our children. Once they are strengthened, then we can have philosophical discussions about academic freedoms.

Federal and Provincial politicians have not acted because they feel no pressure. They know the "free everyone" brigade will put up a hell of a fight. There is no indication the average Canadian will do anything but "tut tut" every time another child is attacked. So politicians avoid the issue and potential controversy.

The whole issue in BC could have been settled if the Liberals had invoked the "notwithstanding" clause in the constitution. It was included to give future governments the means to handle unforeseen circumstances. But it's easier, and politically expedient, to let the courts settle the question. It's also the coward's way out. Better the people should be mad at some judge. He doesn't have to stand for re-election.

This is not the first time I've written on this subject. I always pray it will be the last. I've asked politicians on several occasions "How many more?" How many more have to be raped, attacked, killed? I've yet to get an answer other than an assurance that everything is fine. The body count continues to rise.

As a father, a neighbour, a Canadian; I fear for our children. It's not that I care more than the next guy, but I have this space to give vent to my concerns. I wonder how many responses this column will get. Maybe one or two? I hope you prove me wrong.

We have a right to know if the "justice" system places or releases a child molester into our community. We must demand our governments, particularly federal MP Julian Reed, move now to enact laws which protect children. They spend untold millions on TV ads attempting to protect kids from second-hand smoke. How often have you seen anything on protecting children from pedophiles even though there are incidents reported every week?

It's up to us to act. Who will save the children? If not you - Who?



CELEBRATE 69 YEARS: Bruce and Jean Leitch celebrated their 69th Wedding Anniversary on March 29. Granddaughter Melissa Rogers holds the cake. Bruce and Jean were married on March 29, 1933 and their family helped celebrate the day. - Photo submitted.

My time with the Queen Mum...

Continued from Page 4.

Scottish Regiment at the Royal York.

She looks like a fairy godmother - like what I thought royalty should look - a glistening diamond tiara, her six-tiered organza gown sprinkled with gold sequins and topped with the Order of the Garter.

On learning of the Queen Mum's death, my dad's memories of that summer 1965 visit spans generations.

"I was thinking how proud my dad, who took me to see the King

and Queen when the Royal Train which made an unscheduled stop (in Truro, Nova Scotia) to take on water outside Halifax in 1939, would have been to see his granddaughter present a bouquet to the Queen Mother and to see his son escorting her as she reviewed the Toronto Scottish Regiment," he said.

Over the years, the Queen Mum has been special to my parents and family - pictures of that visit adorn our walls and memories of our brush with Royalty have special places in our hearts.