

EDITORIAL

with Hartley Coles

Walking to school

Retired teacher Robert Biddle, a character played in a one man drama by local, multi-talented Jack Carpenter, observed that we bus our 'miserable' kids to school and then have to book a gym so they can get some exercise.

That observation came to mind this week on Wednesday, dubbed International Walk to School Day (IWALK). IWALK was designed to motivate children and parents to adopt an active mode of transportation to and from school, which would reduce traffic on school property and improve air quality as well as promoting safety and physical activity.

At least one Acton school, Robert Little, took part in the Wednesday exercise which was supported by both Halton school boards. It's all part of a larger active transportation initiative called, Active and Safe Routes to School.

The writer is of a generation which had no recourse but to walk to school. There were no school buses, few cars and country schools were still open. Even the handicapped were expected to get there whatever way they could. We don't remember it ever being a struggle, even when the snow was over your knees. And we still had energy left for after school chores and play.

People of that generation are fond of telling their grandchildren they walked two miles to school in knee deep snow – uphill both ways. It may be stretching the truth but it has a ring of truth to it because pretty well everyone had to walk to school, no matter the weather.

The point of all this is that anyone within reasonable distance of schools would be better off physically walking to them. At a time when obesity in school children is becoming a problem it makes even more sense.

Is your home safe?

"Is your home and family safe from fire?" Sadly, for the 101 people who died in residential fires in Ontario last year, the answer was probably "no."

According to statistics from the Office of the Fire Marshal, 85% of all fire deaths occur in the home where people feel most safe and secure.

"No one should ever die in a fire," said Ontario Fire Marshal Bernard Moyle. "The vast majority of fires can be prevented with good fire safety practices and a little common sense."

All it needs is for everyone to take responsibility for fire safety in their own home by following three simple steps:

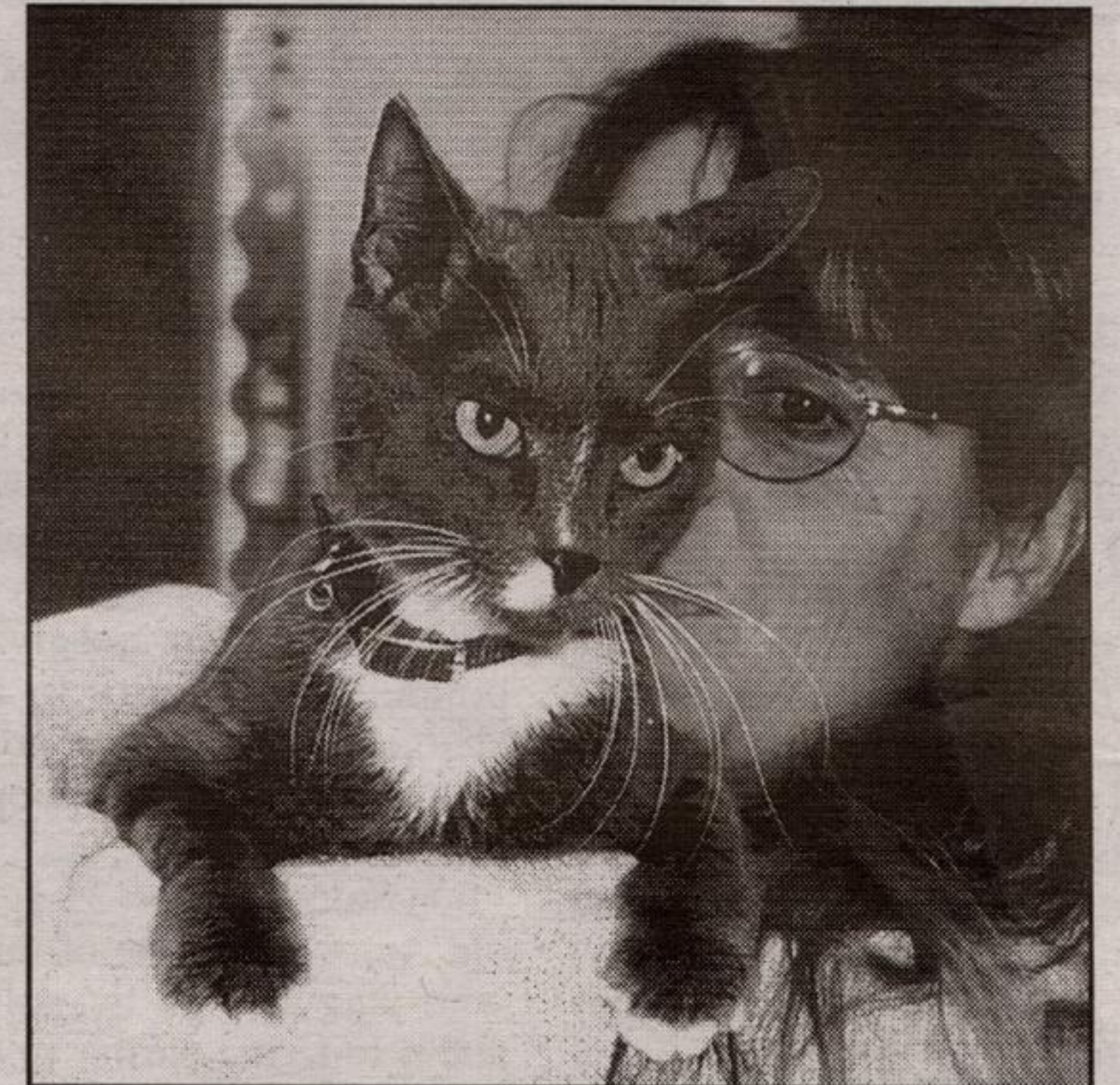
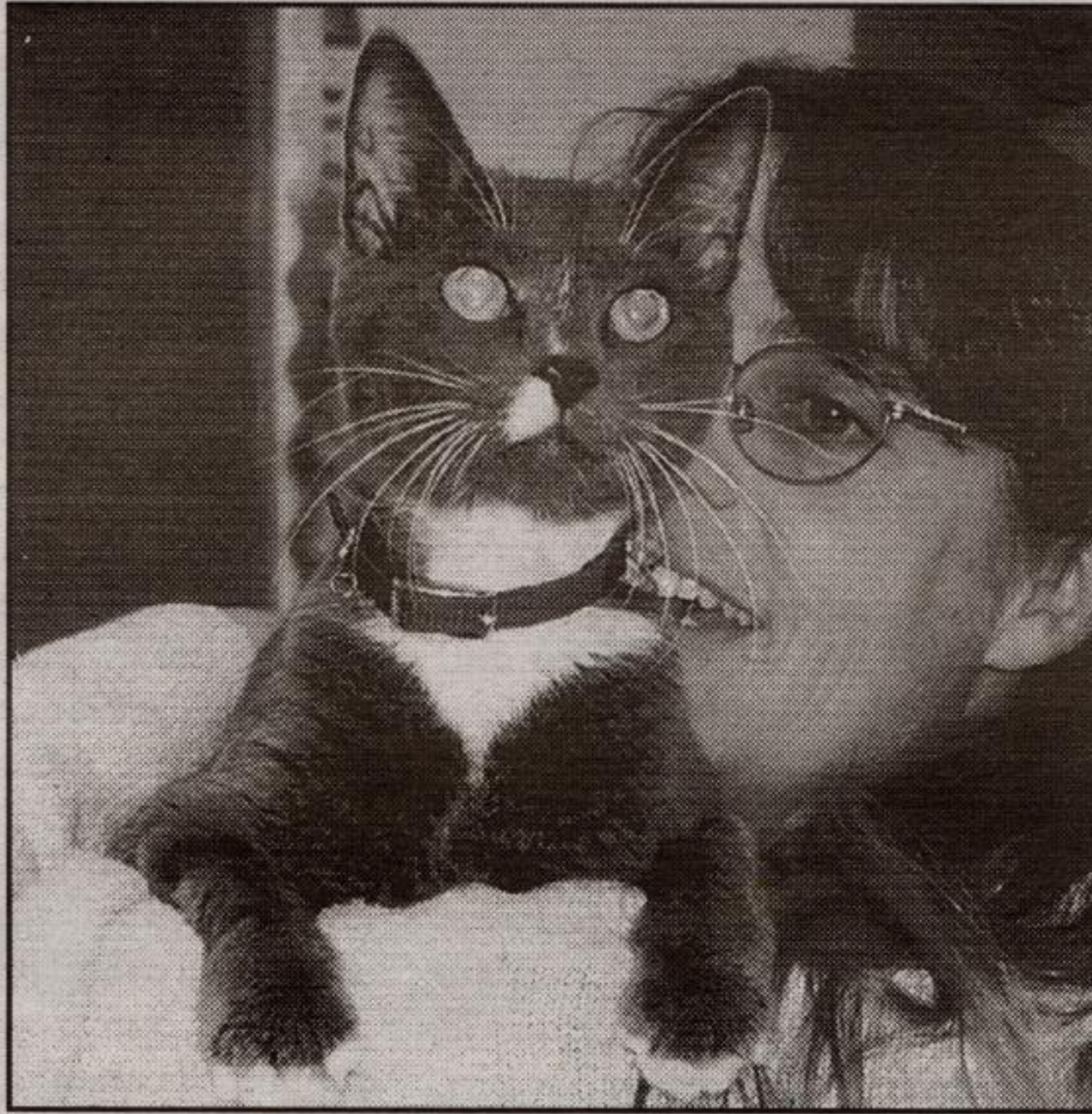
Hunt for home hazards. Prevent fires from happening in the first place. Search out dangers such as matches and lighters left within the reach of children, carelessly discarded cigarettes, objects too close to space heaters, and extension cords used as permanent wiring.

Install smoke alarms. Put one on every level of your home and outside all sleeping areas. Test your alarms at least once a month and replace the batteries every year, or when the low-battery warning chirps.

Develop and practice a home escape plan. Include your entire family. Everyone in the household must know at least two ways out in the event of a fire. Choose a safe meeting place outside and call the fire department from a neighbour's home.

These steps are among the fire safety messages being promoted by fire departments throughout North America during Fire Prevention Week, October 6-12, 2002. The year's theme is *Team Up for Fire Safety*. It encourages the community to think about fire safety and prevent needless tragedies in the home.

Fire Prevention Week may last only seven days, but fire safety in your home should be a year-long event!



PAMPERED PUSSY: Sprocket gets her hugs from Tish Lewis, president of Cats Anonymous, a shelter for cats in need of a home. Sprocket was one of several felines checking for would-be owners at a fundraising book sale at St. John's Anglican Church on Saturday. Sprocket, a seven-year-old mixed breed female, grew up in Regina, then moved to Indonesia with her owners. When their job required them to move again, her family didn't think she would survive the six-month quarantine period to get into England with them, and asked Cats Anonymous to find her a new family. - Maggie Petrushevsky photos

HHCSI offers transitional housing

To the editor,

Halton Hills Community Support and Information, in partnership with the food banks, ministerial associations and Salvation Armies, operates two transitional housing units for homeless families. These housing units are available to homeless families for a period of two months. During this two-month period, families search for permanent housing without the added pressure of not knowing where they will spend the night.

Homelessness is particularly stressful for children – having to leave behind their familiar surroundings, going from one temporary place to another, having their furniture put into storage, and getting used to new people and places over and over again. The goal of our transitional housing program is to offer a period of time when families can have some stability until they can find a permanent place to stay.

The funding for this program comes from the federal government's Supporting Community Partnerships Initiative (SCPI). Transitional housing programs

are operating in other parts of Halton as well as through this initiative.

Volunteers have played a key role in this project right from the start. They have donated and stored furniture, helped pick up and deliver items to the apartments, and helped set up the apartments.

Since this program started, neither of our apartments have been empty. This speaks to the

great need for temporary housing for homeless families. Families that have used the transitional housing units have been most grateful for their existence. If anyone would like more information about this project please call Cathy at Halton Hills Community Support and Information (HHCSI) at (905) 873-6502 or (519) 853-3310.

JoAnne McKie
HHCSI

Two new trains on Milton GO line

The two new trains running on the Milton GO Train line are expected to make travel more convenient as well as help people make the switch from car to the train.

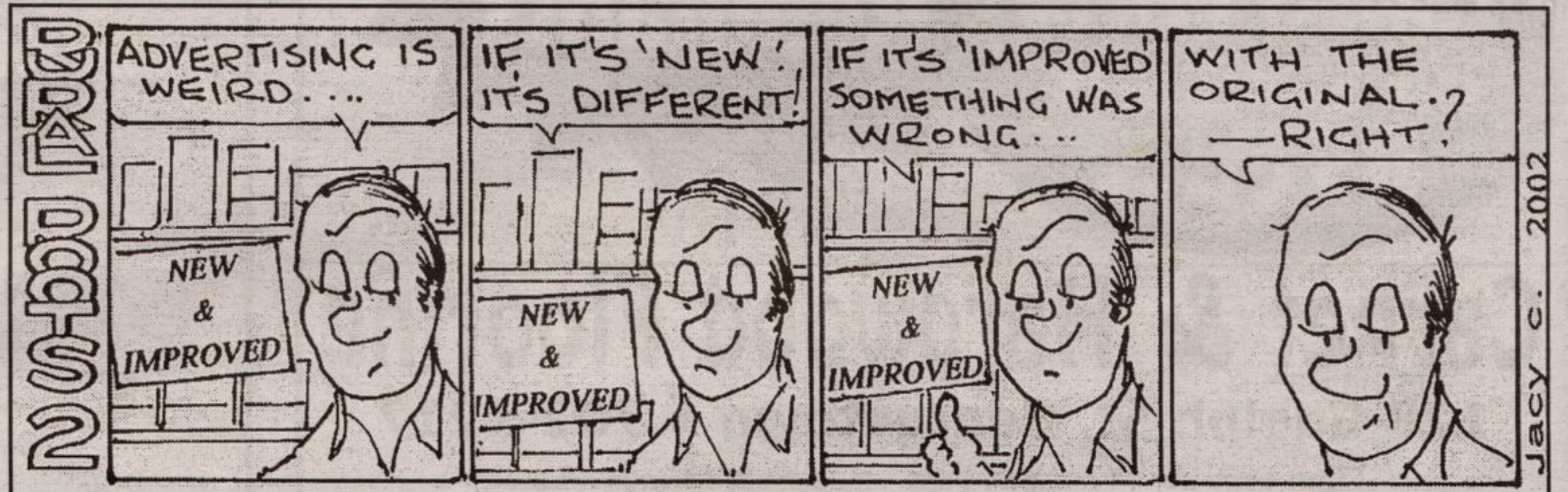
One new train is now running during the morning rush period. The other train serves the afternoon home-bound rush.

"We know that convenience and flexibility are the key considerations for people thinking of making the switch from their car to the train," says Region Chairman Joyce Savoline, who serves

on GO Transit's board of directors, "this directly addresses the need for convenience."

GO ridership on the Milton corridor has more than tripled since it was introduced in 1989, from 6,000 to 20,000 commuters per day.

"A visible transit network is critical to reducing traffic congestion," says Savoline. Halton Region recently issued a report outlining ideas for Halton's future. Finding new ways to foster and promote public transit is one of the core themes of the report.



THE NEW TANNER
PUBLISHING LTD.

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