

MSB library closed to test mould

Some parents at McKenzie-Smith Bennett are unhappy the school's library was re-opened late last week after being closed because of mould following a flood in July.

Those parents wanted all clear from Halton's Medical Officer of Health that the school was safe, but last Wednesday, Principal Elsa Stolfi sent home a letter from the Halton health department saying there is no health hazard.

"We're drafting a letter ourselves to Dr. Nosal to give him information we feel he hasn't received," said former MSB

parent council member Lori Mandy last week, adding "We're

not trusting that the school board has given the doctor all the information."

The advisory parent council asked that Dr. Nosal, an impartial third party, review the final report from a remediation company, Decommissioning Consulting Services Limited (D.C.S.), hired by Halton District School Board to clean up water damage after a hose coupling failed upstairs at MSB, flooding the YMCA daycare rooms, the link area and library below.

Some parents were angry when mould was found after the initial cleanup when parents were told it was safe to re-open the library.

Parents will be advised of what happened in the library in a letter being drafted by the school board, and that's not a minute too soon for a number of parents, including Mandy who was loudly critical of the school board's and school's handling of the flood cleanup at a recent parent council meeting.

Mandy, who has a daughter in Grade six at MSB, contends the library remediation job wasn't done correctly and parents weren't kept informed.

Tony Amalfa, Halton's manager of the environmental health division, said the health department became involved in the mould issue in September after being called by a teacher who had concerns about air quality in the school.

He said tests found there were "no health concerns" at the school and that the remediation done was done within accepted protocols.

He said the mould reintroduced into the library didn't constitute "a severe health hazard" and that "if the conditions were unsafe, we would have taken

some action."

Asked why the remediation has taken so long, John McEagan, the school board's area supervisor for facility services, said they had to address parent's concerns.

The fact that the library has been closed since the beginning of the school year angers former parent council member Susan Job, who has two children at MSB.

"I'd like to know why the cleanup wasn't done between July 9 and September 3 when school opened, and how the delay can be blamed on parents' questions and concerns," Job said recently, adding nobody seemed too interested in getting it cleaned up until parents began to complain.

At least 1,600 books were destroyed by the water and mould and repairs to date to the library and link are \$16,000, and \$5,000 to replace the library rug and install new tile flooring.

Parent council chair, Leslee Einmann concedes that the re-introduction of mould into the library would raise concerns with

some over the quality of the cleanup job, but that she "puts her faith" in the rehabilitation company.

She also said the letter indicat-

ing the library was safe came from Tony Amalfa who works for Dr. Nosal and must have his stamp of approval.

Parents give MSB cleanliness failing grade

By FRANCES NIBLOCK
The New Tanner

Ants in the gym, mouldy lunches in the lost and found and filth in the washrooms should be a thing of the past at McKenzie-Smith Bennett School as the board of education stepped in to help with ongoing "huge" parental concerns with cleanliness and maintenance at the Acton Boulevard facility.

Some parents at a recent parent council meeting gave failing marks to school officials and caretakers when it came to school cleanliness, but in an interview, principal Elsa Stolfi said the school isn't in "terribly bad shape," and refused to grade the school for cleanness.

Halton District School Board will pay for an additional caretaker for two weeks, rearrange the existing caretaker's schedule so she's more effective and give the school more cleaning supplies in response to complaints about dirt and grime, both inside and outside the school.

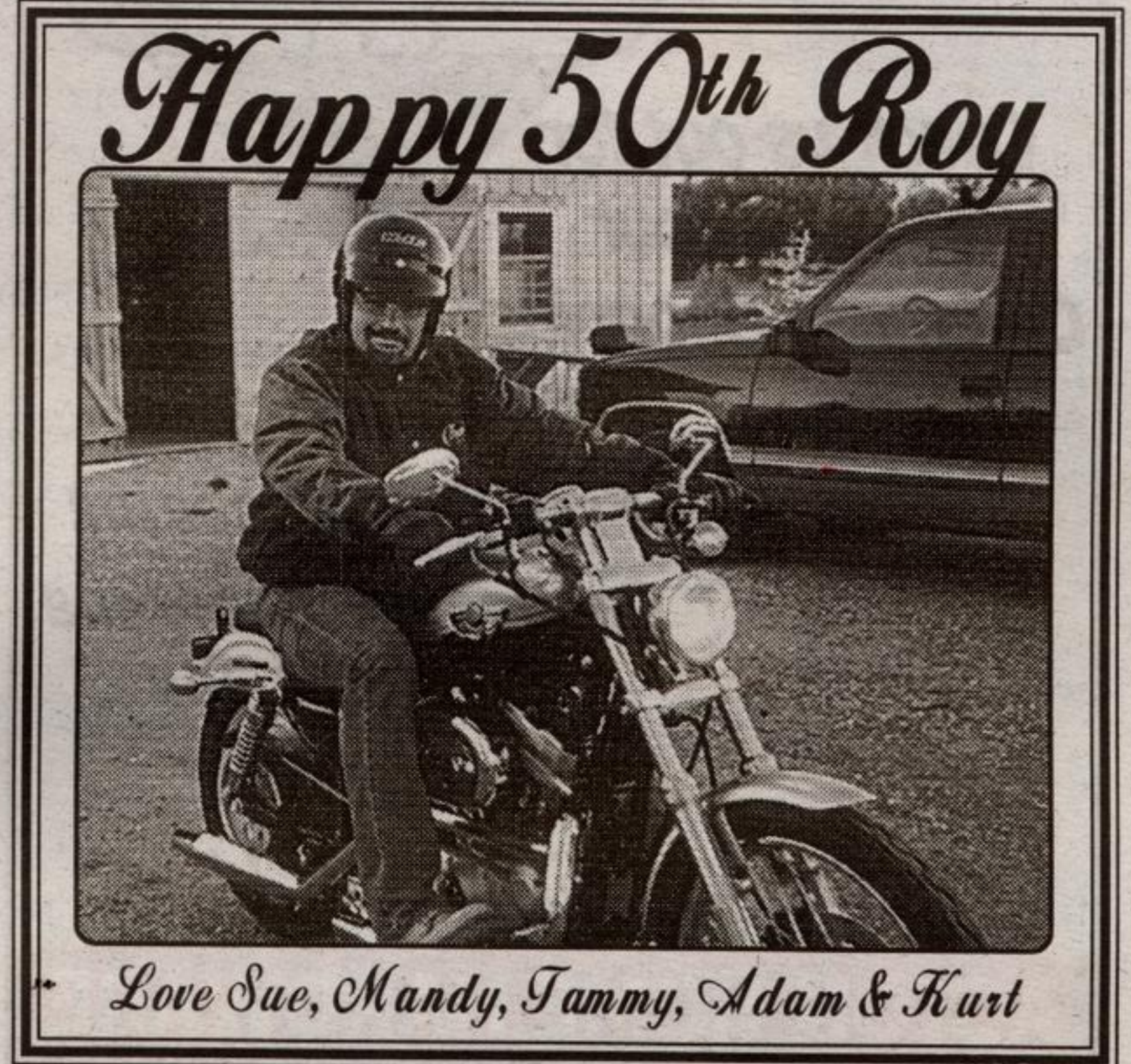
"We're trying to make sure that certain standards (of cleanliness) are met and the ultimate goal is to try to create the cleanest possible environment for the kids," Stolfi said, adding the absence of custodial staff has been an issue.

One parent complained to the Halton Health Department after getting no action from the school after reporting there were feces in a toilet and for three days.

Other parents report their children refuse to use school washrooms because there often is no toilet paper, soap or paper to dry their hands and there are locks missing from washroom stall doors.

To prevent health issues with decaying lunches in the lost and found, wire racks allowing ventilation will be installed and parents and students will be notified that the lost and found will be cleared out every two weeks.

Teachers will be asked to monitor the halls to increase tidiness and high school students may be asked, again, to help clean up MSB's school yard.



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