

# EDITORIAL

with Hartley Coles

## Downtown changes

Reconstruction of Mill Street from Main Street to where Bower Avenue intersects with the CN railway tracks has been a long awaited improvement in downtown Acton but there's no doubt it is going to cause some major traffic disruptions.

The \$1.9 million project is expected to receive final approval by the middle of April and be finished in three months. Plans call for construction to be phased in block by block and to always keep one lane open to reduce the pressures of vehicle traffic.

Not only will the water and sewage pipes be replaced on Mill but the contractor will fan out with new pipes on the north side of Mill on Frederick, John and Elgin Streets and both sides of Willow Street. When the underground work is completed the Town - with 90 per cent subsidy from the Province - will reconstruct and resurface the roads, and do storm sewer and curbs. There'll also be some cosmetic improvements made on John Street as well as some sidewalk bump-outs at the corners of Willow and John Streets at Mill.

The changes should go a long way towards improving the downtown and especially the side streets where the potholes take more space than road surface. However, let's face it, the improvements are not going to do much, if anything, to improve the volume of vehicle traffic which uses Mill Street as a conduit.

Traffic surveys have shown over 14,000 vehicles pass through Acton each day and volumes are at their peak, of course, in the morning and afternoon hours as people go to and from their offices and factories. At some points in the day there is little congestion on Mill Street.

Although volume won't be affected by the changes the removal of 12 parking spots on both sides of Mill from Main to Willow streets and on the north side of Mill from Willow to John should make the drive less hazardous.

When Acton was laid out Mill was a secondary road from the flour mill to the Grand Trunk Railway station. Main Street, with its north-south direction, was considered to be the hamlet's "main" street. However, as events unfolded Mill became the main business section, despite its width. Parking on both sides of the street has made it hazardous to open a car or truck door during peak traffic hours.

Parking spaces which will be lost to new improvements are readily available in the new parking lot constructed from the Town's acquisition of the old rest home and one time Legion building on Main Street. It has opened up parking from Willow to Main Streets and provides better access to businesses on Main St. N. and the former IGA plaza with its Giant Tiger store anchor.

There have been dramatic changes to the old downtown, a metamorphosis which started in the 1970s. Those of us who have seen its scope and size change over the last three decades have probably not grasped their full significance. However, it is doubtful if someone who left Acton 40 years ago would recognize the downtown now.

Some of the landmark buildings such as the red brick post office with its clock tower, the Dominion Hotel, the old Legion building and the Roxy Theatre, are gone now, replaced by new ventures. Only the old YMCA building and MacKinnon Funeral Home remind us that everything old is new again.



**A PAGE FROM THE PAST:** Remember when local churches had their own orchestras? This photo, taken nearly 87 years ago, depicts the Methodist Church orchestra of 1917 and features some well known names in Acton's musical circles including front, left to right, William Laird, George King, John Hill, Rudolf Spielvogel, Chester Matthews. Back row, the Mason twins Lottie and Hazel flank Ernie Brown, Ethel Coleman and Nelson Moore. The Methodist Church later was incorporated into the United Church of Canada. It stood on the lot now occupied by Trinity United Church.

## Customs officers are so unemotional

After battling the cold/flu for three weeks, I was officially tired of blowing my nose. I went through so many boxes of tissue, I felt like I was now an owner in the Kleenex Company.



By **Angela Tyler**

Over-worked and exhausted, my family and I needed to head south for a well-deserved break. Stress had become a lifestyle instead of an odd annoyance. We needed relaxation. My mom unwound by walking the beach at daybreak. My dad said he didn't care if he moved from the couch all week. My sister read and slept while I retreated to the poolside to sleep.

We would have no stress, especially with instructions to me from my mom... "no arguments with your sister." Our biggest decision while away was to be where to go for dinner. We were relaxed and it was glorious... *I was relaxed.* That was until we came back and entered the Canada Customs area. The anxiety made no sense. None of us were over our spending limit, so why worry?

Decisions had to be made. Which line to enter? Do you go behind the business guy or the family who was at Disney World? Do you go with the older Customs agent or the young one? Our Officer didn't look happy. He didn't smile and hardly asked anything. Was that a good thing? When he scanned our passports it was like he was giving us

the "stare down". Then he sent us on our way.

We looked at our customs slips. Terror struck. Why did each slip have a different code in red ink on the top? Why was I an R55 and Tracey an R33? Tracey and I kept looking at our cards. With three different codes, does that mean one or all us may be inspected? Whose head was on the Customs chopping block? There was more stress going through me in those few minutes than I had in a week.

We pushed our baggage carts to the exit and were thrust into the final obstacle. There he stood. Another "happy camper" with no expression, just a blue uniform and a blue latex glove reaching for our Customs form. Would he ignore us, which meant we could leave, or would he motion us to be inspected like the lady before me?

As I started to go by, I thought he moved. Did he move? I was all ready to confess the sixteen tencent grapefruit from the Orange Blossom Grove I had in my bag when he spoke... sort of. It was more of a grunt motioning me to carry on. I was free.

Walking in the terminal I started

to grumble. Why are customs officers so unemotional? What's with the "stare down"? Wouldn't it be nice just once if they asked you how your trip was? Why did the one need to wear latex gloves to collect the paper forms?

One of my former neighbours, Buck, is a customs officer. I see him quite often at the airport as he heads for a coffee break. He's usually smiling and joking around, but if he didn't have a uniform on, you wouldn't think he was one of them.

A few years ago at a neighbourhood barbecue, I tried to get him to decipher the secret code that the inspectors mark on the forms. I thought that in a relaxed environment he would divulge this. Quickly, Buck the neighbour left and Buck the Customs Officer appeared. There was no way I was going to be told.

He did tell me one thing. At the time, he was one of the inspectors who search your bags when you are "pulled in". His only rule... don't lie to him about what you have in your bag. He said if you lie to him, he'll find everything.

Maybe I am wrong. Maybe it takes a special person to be a customs officer. Maybe they appear miserable because every day they have to deal with people trying to "pull one over" on them... like people sneaking grapefruit back in their bags.



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