



UNWELCOME ENCROACHMENT: Birchway Place residents whose yards back onto the shoreline of Fairy Lake are allowed to mow four feet of Town land beyond their fence line, but many have trimmed, and even planted trees, on wider sections of the open space area. - Frances Niblock photo

No more encroachment on lake border - Council

BY FRANCES NIBLOCK
The New Tanner

"Natural is better" is the sentiment of Town councillors who denied a petition from some Birchway Place residents who want to cut and maintain more Town-owned land beyond their fence line towards Fairy Lake.

Last summer, complaints of dumping in the open space at the rear of the homes led to a Town inspection, and violation notices to those homeowners who had cut more than the allowed

Birchway residents restricted to 4 feet

four feet onto Town land. At Council last Monday, Birchway Place resident Debbie Szymasski presented the Town with a 15-name petition, asking for permission to "clean and beautify" a minimum of 30 feet, or have the municipality do the job.

Holding a bag of weeds, including several noxious ones, which she said grew into her yard from the open space land behind her property, Szymasski admitted that she has mowed about 20 feet of Town property beyond her back fence.

"We all love the natural beauty of Fairy Lake and we do go down there to keep it beautified and pick up the garbage and other stuff that's down there, and shouldn't be," Szymasski said, adding they have not killed seedlings planted by school children, as alleged by members of P.O.W.E.R., the North Halton environmental group that had students plant in the area.

"Nobody comes down there and looks after this area of the lake... who is responsible for this land?" Szymasski said, adding if the bylaw can't be changed to allow the homeowners to control more than four feet beyond their property, then the bylaw governing destruction of noxious weeds

should be enforced.

Although an advisory is registered on title that the land between the backyards and the lake would be maintained in a natural state with possible future improvements or passive recreation uses, staff said there are no plans for a trail or pathway.

Georgetown Councillor Moya Johnson said people are more environmentally aware than 20 years ago when natural areas were thought to be "messy" and she has concerns about allowing people to cut more of a buffer area between the housing and lake.

"The larger the buffer can be with nobody touching it and not cutting down anything, the better it is for the environment," Johnson said, adding putting up with some weeds is part of living beside a natural area.

"I think that what we have to do is educate the public that natural is better... that we're not going to go in there and spray it and do a lot of other things, because it is better for the environment if it is natural," Johnson said.

The petition also said residents of the Birchway Legion seniors' building are concerned that a storm water pond beside them could be a breeding ground of mosquitoes that carry the West Nile Virus, (WNV) and asked that it be inspected.

Warren Harris, the Town's manager of parks and cemeteries, reported the storm pond and area catch basins are being monitored for WNV and the weeds will be monitored, and hand-pulled, if necessary.

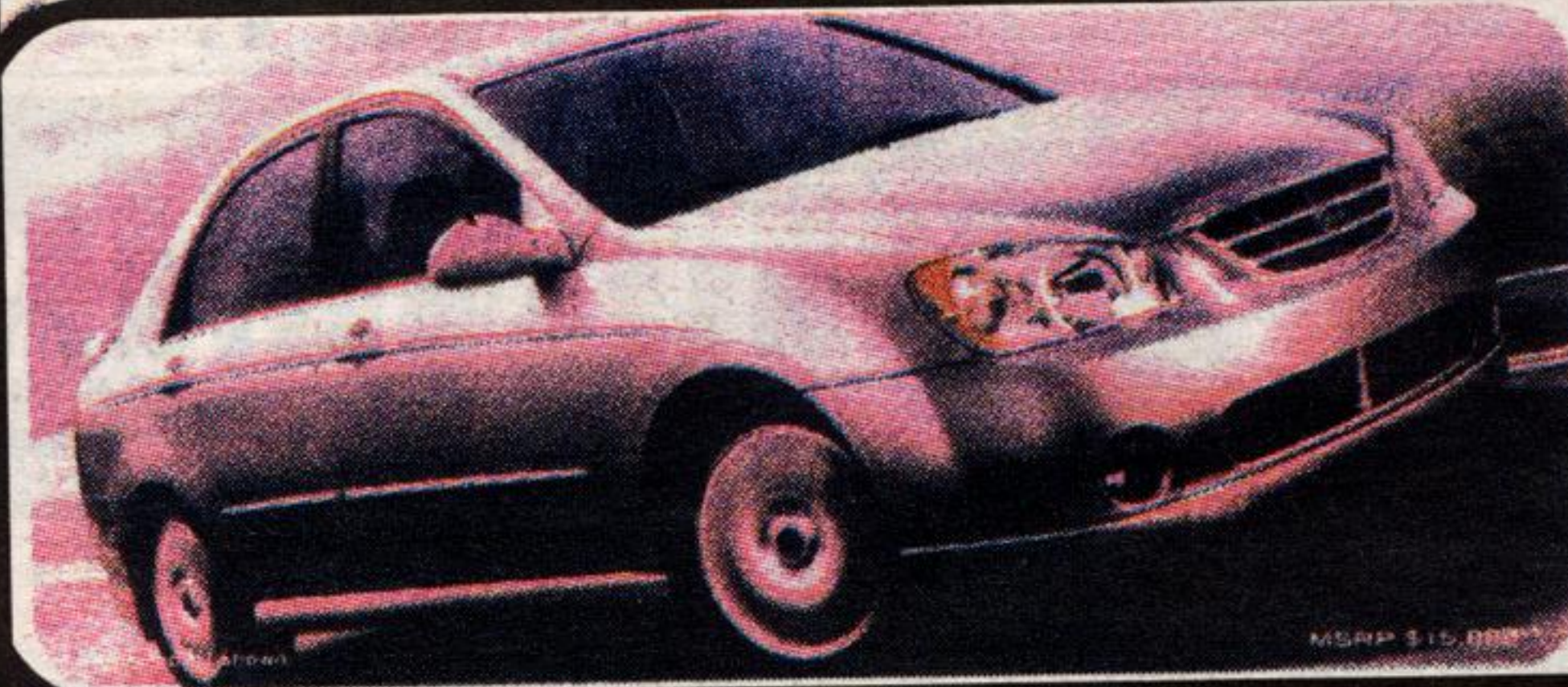
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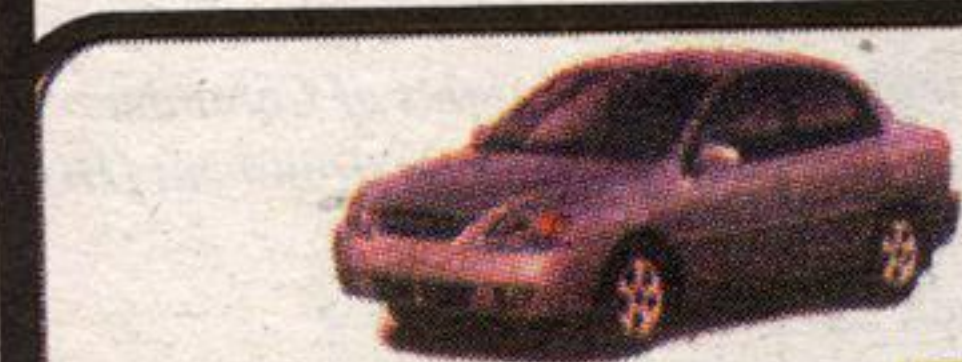
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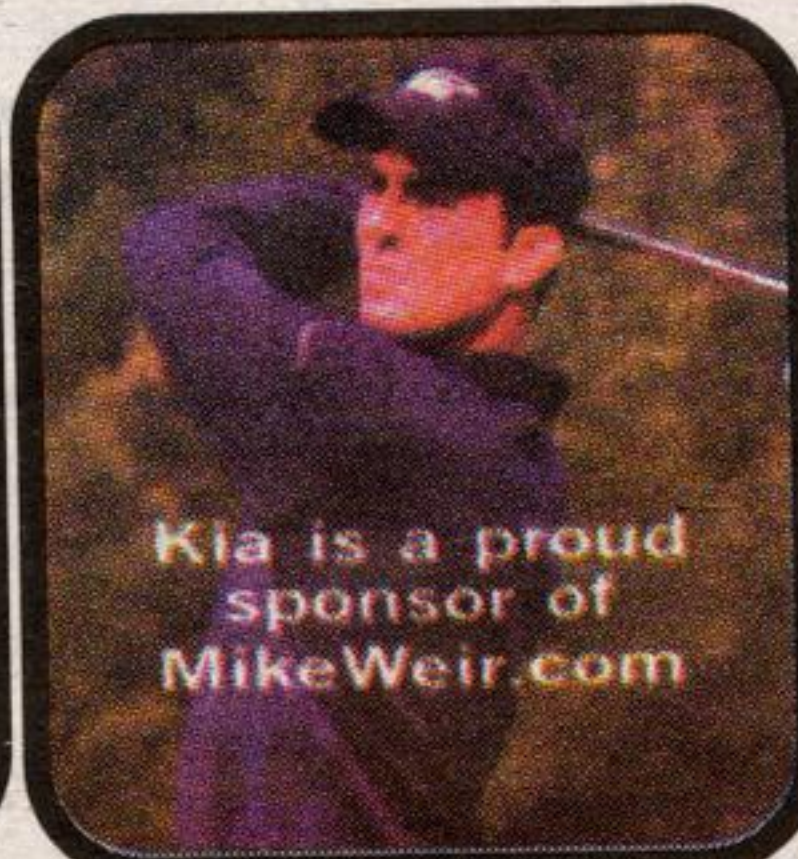
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