



After the Town of Halton Hills recently adopted a new weed-spraying policy, a group of concerned individuals gathered in Norval Park to protest the use of pesticides being applied on the ball diamond, especially in close proximity to the day-care centre nearby. On hand to protest were (from left) Ruth Kuchinad, Carolyn Martin and 'Scoobie', Barbara Halsall and Julie Pomeroy.

Photo by Ted Brown

Residents divided on town decision to weed-spray

As town staff continue spraying town parks and sports fields with pesticides this fall, residents' opinions are split on council's controversial decision to resume spraying on town-owned or leased properties.

Receiving pesticide spray—Round Up or Par 3 applied in liquid form—in September were Gellert Community Park, Norval Park, Croatian Centre, Fairview Cemetery and Greenwood Cemetery. This month, targeted areas are: Barber Dr. Park, Georgetown Fairgrounds, Emerson Park, Rotary Park, Prospect Park, Remembrance Park, Limehouse Park, Glen Williams Park and Hornby Park.

In 2002, council approved a policy banning pesticide spraying on all town-owned and leased properties. Instead, the town began a three-year trial of alternative turf management practices. However, during budget discussions, council cut funding for the alternative methods such as aeration, top dressing, seeding, and increased labour costs, to make the alternative management program effective. The result: numerous sports fields approached critical condition for safe playing and/or turf replacement as well as numerous complaints from the public on conditions of parks, boulevards and cemeteries.

In September, council adopted a new policy to spray town properties that had become so infested with weeds and pests it can no longer be controlled by anything other than pesticides. Thresholds were set in the new policy to mark the point at

which spraying should begin.

A number of properties reached and passed those thresholds this summer.

"These (alternative) solutions may be effective if all neighbours maintained good practices," homeowner Doug Pratt of Acton told council at recent meeting. "But what if your neighbours are not so inclined?"

"My significant neighbour is a problem. He only cuts it when it is much too long and then cuts off only two thirds of it. These cuttings are left to smother what remains. He never aerates or waters or fertilizes and hasn't tried to control the weeds for some years now. That neighbour is you—the town."

Pratt's property is adjacent the town-owned Bovis Creek Park. He said the town's decision not to spray its property has forced him to use pesticides two to three times a year to maintain his lawn, instead once every two years.

Pratt praised council for having the political courage to rethink its policy.

"While I'm here to applaud your

recent decision (to reverse policy), it may be too little too late," he said, suggesting that weed coverage is so extensive on some properties that costly rehab of turf will be required.

But others disagreed with Pratt's view on pesticide spraying including Ruth Kuchinad, Willow Park Ecology Centre co-ordinator and Julie Pomeroy, member of HOPE (Healthy Options for People and the Environment). The duo protested with signs while a town staff member sprayed Norval Park, adjacent to a Willow Park Ecology Centre and a daycare centre recently.

"Norval Park is an example of a park that does not need to be sprayed," said Pomeroy. "The turf looked in reasonable shape and there were not a lot of weeds."

Kuchinad and Pomeroy say alternative methods to spraying to promote healthy turf are used in other communities such as Burlington, Oakville, Caledon and Toronto. But added the town needs to back those alternatives with funding during the budget process.

—By Cynthia Gamble, staff writer

Police blotter

Local man charged with assault, threatening

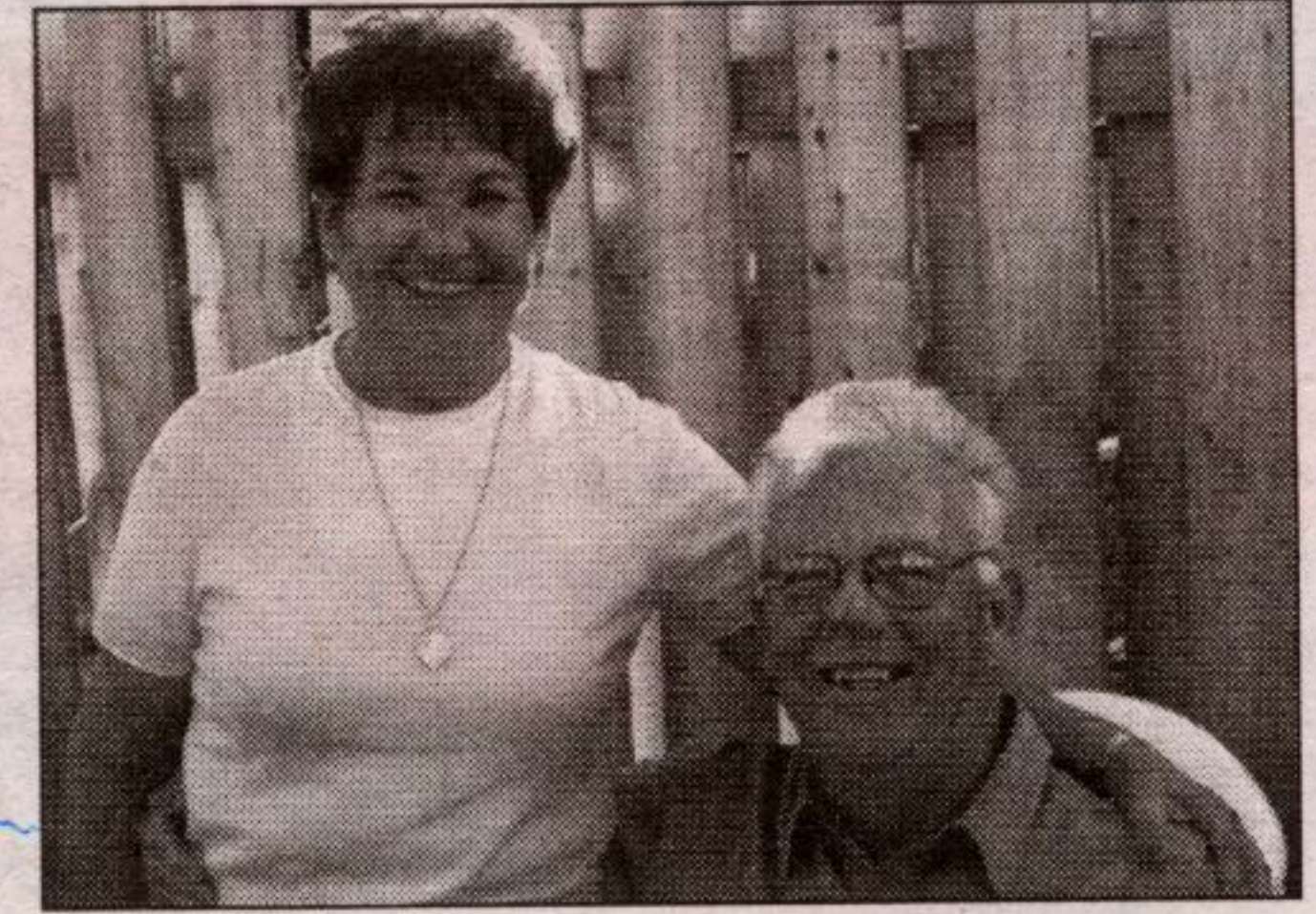
A Georgetown man is facing charges in connection with a disturbance involving two men and two women at a Pine Valley Trail residence Saturday evening. No one was injured.

Charged with utter death threat, cause disturbance and four counts of assault is Michel Carriere, 35, of

Ewing St.

Approximately \$500 damage was done to several trees at Tuitman's Garden Centre on Regional Rd. 25 Saturday evening after Halton police say they were run over by two males riding a yellow Gator.

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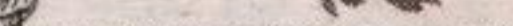


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