

GRAPEVINE



Blood Clinic

At Monday's (Jan 5) blood clinic at the Acton arena, Canadian Blood Services collected 41 units of blood, two were deferred and there were two first time donors, the blood agency reports.

During 2008 Canadian Blood Services says they collected 305 Units of blood at clinics in the Acton Legion, which they say saved over 945 lives. There weren't as many donated at the arena clinics but still enough to save 376 lives.

Thank you, Acton, the agency says.

Free Concert

Acton musician John Hribljan of The Music Hall is staging a free concert in the Art Gallery of the Halton Hills Cultural Centre in Georgetown at 1pm on Wednesday, Jan. 14. John says he'll be playing selections from his show, The Kola Club, as part of the concert which is open to the public.

Upgrade skills

Want to go to college? Upgrade your English and Math skills. Free tuition. Part time classes run Monday-Wednesday evening between 6-9pm in Georgetown. Call 905-873-2200 for more information.

Children's programs

Halton Hills Public Library offers pre-registered programs for children ages 6 months to 5 years. There are still spaces in some programs. You can register online at www.hhpl.on.ca or call 905-873-2681 x2520 or 519-853-0301 for more information.

Lorne Scots subject

Rev. Dr. Rick Ruggle is the speaker at the Wednesday, Jan

14 meeting of the Esquesing Agricultural Society. Author of a book on the subject, Dr. Ruggle will speak on the history of the Lorne Scots Regiment, formerly known as the Peel/Halton/Dufferin Regiment. Time is at 7:30pm in Knox Presbyterian Church, Georgetown, at the corner of Main and Church Sts.

Outdoor rinks

It's rink time in Acton as just about every available pond or small body of water has an outdoor rink on it. There are two on Fairy Lake, one on the north arm alongside Elizabeth Drive and the other near the dam on the south arm of the lake beside Mill St. W. Those who shovel the snow off and look after the rinks are often nonplussed when dozens, who didn't help, show up to use the rinks.

Water presentation

Are you worried about the future availability of fresh water and bottled water around the world? Then maybe Maude Barlow, chair of the Council of Canadians and CUPE President Sid Ryan's presentation at Norfolk United Church in Guelph on January 14 will answer some of your questions. Part of the "Unbottle the Water - It's a Human Right" tour the presentation is from 5:30 - 7pm. Open to all who drink water.

Information meeting

A high school information evening is scheduled at Acton High School on Wednesday, Jan 14 at 7pm to provide an opportunity for parents to find out more about high school education. The meetings are for parents of students who will attend Grade 9 in September, 2009.



PIANO RECITAL: Music students of Jennifer Culpeper performed a variety of pieces including many Christmas favourites during their Dec. 19 recital, held at St. Alban's Anglican Church. Students at the recital were: Front, left to right: Sydney Furzer, Janet Chang, Ryan Milford. Middle: Michael Chang, Lili Paradi, Genevieve Solda, Christopher Solda, Erin Hamilton. Back: Szilvia Paradi, Aby Das, Jessika Costa, Sangwon Bak, Kevin Hamilton, Jillian Mullin, Cassie Coker, Emily Loewen and Victoria Miller and Stephanie Mullin both performed but are not in the photo. - Submitted photo

Park needs a new Sheriff

Acton lost a real Damon Runyonesque character just before the new year. Clarence Harding died after a short illness, he was 85 years old. You may not know Clarence by name but if you've ever spent any time at Prospect Park you would know to see him. Clarence was the elderly gentleman on the motorized scooter who kept an eye on the park every spring, summer and fall.

I used to call him the Sheriff of Prospect Park. The Region needs to monitor the water treatment plant and pumphouse in the park. For ease of access they leave the gate open during the day. Now Clarence, a life member of the Acton Agricultural Society, was very protective of the track and grounds. Some people, seeing the open gate, would drive their cars down the track rather than parking in the lot.

When Clarence spotted an offender he'd take off like a bat out of hell and chase down the intruder. He'd start out being polite but if you gave him any grief he'd get excited and start waving his cane around and speaking louder and louder.

The problem was that Clarence had false teeth. When he got a full head of steam up his upper plate, which was loose at the best of times, would flap up and down, which made him very difficult to understand. I've know him for 25 years and there were times I felt I needed an interpreter.

You may have seen him tilling around town on his blue scooter and might have even had an unkind thought or two when he was driving down the road. You see, Clarence was

The Way I See It

with
Mike O'Leary



an old farmer and as far as he was concerned, his scooter was equal to his old Massey Tractor and therefore, he had the right of way.

Last spring Clarence took delivery of one of those 3-wheeled trike type scooters. I tell you, I've never seen anyone that age as excited and proud of his new unit. Clarence would challenge one and all to a "drag race" around the track in the park. While cars were a no-no, Clarence was sure that he and his buddies were free to use the track. How do I know? He told me so, in no uncertain terms.

When he won one of his many races he'd come to see me at the Agricultural Society Building to make sure I knew. Even at his age, bragging rights were important. With his new scooter he had more range than the traditional 4-wheeled variety. That got him into trouble more than once when he ventured out into the country to work on a friend's farm.

The scooter would run out of juice and leave him stranded at the side of the road. Ever resourceful, Clarence would pull out his cell phone and call around to one of his many friends until he found one who could drag his machine back for a recharge.

Why was he out in the country? Always a farmer at heart he was there to help a friend with spring ploughing and planting,

grass cutting and combining. I remember asking him last fall if he really climbed up on a big combine. "Sure," he said. How do you manage that, I asked because he wasn't very steady on his legs. "Slowly," he answered with a big grin and a laugh. He truly had an indomitable spirit.

I have plenty of Clarence Harding stories, but my favourite happened 15 or 20 years ago.

I was doing security at the front gates of the park during the Acton Fall Fair. In those days Clarence drove a good sized garden tractor. I was standing by the front gates with a rookie woman police officer, when I noticed Clarence coming out.

As he passed he juiced the tractor and I was surprised to see his wife, who was confined to a wheelchair, tied on behind the tractor with bailing twine. As the pair accelerated up Knox Ave, she was laughing and giggling like a schoolgirl. She was having the ride of her life.

The cop and I looked at each other and she said, "That's got to be illegal!"

"You want to chase them and do the paperwork?" I replied. She thought for a moment and said, "I didn't see anything, did you?"

"Nope was my reply.

Clarence had a long life, but often a tough one. He farmed, worked at the tannery and lost his first wife when there were very young. When I would comment, he would look at me somewhat wistfully and say, "That's the way it is."

The park won't be the same without him.

'Honey-do' list...

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I'm sure all he heard was blah - blah - blah - blah.

On New Year's Eve the Dude picked me up at the airport and I was so happy to see him and be home. We caught up on the events that transpired while I was away and he was soon reviewing his accomplishments on his 'honey-do' list including keeping the house, shall we say, tidy in the same sense that my father had all those years ago. "It probably isn't as tidy as you have it, but I did my best." The fact that he tried to look after everything I knew I wouldn't have to worry if I go away by myself.

He asked me if I wanted to stop to get something to eat before we got home. I didn't really want to but at that point, no matter how hard husbands try, they still would rather their wives didn't go away and leave them fending.

"Ahhhh, well, we don't have anything at home..." he informed me. Not even milk in the fridge. He told me this one hour after stores closed for the next day and a half.

"Didn't you read the list..." I asked him. Number seven... "You will need to buy fresh bread..." Number seven was part of the blah - blah - blah's. "Well, I didn't know if there was any in the freezer" he informed me. "There wasn't... (after a pause I continued) Did you look in the freezer?"

I didn't really have to wait for the answer. I already knew it. Oh well, at least the dogs were fed and the garbage was put out and even though we didn't have any fresh bread, he still gets an 'A' for effort. In his own way, I knew he had told me he was glad I was home too.