



BRUCE BROWN sits on a "motocross" bicycle in front of his window display. Many of the sports goods he supplies are shown with bikes, tennis racquets, golf bags, shoes and a Team Canada sweater.

Spotlight on Business

Anticipation key to sports business

By Lee Fairbanks
It may seem like the baseball playoff season to you, but Bruce Brown has been thinking of hockey for the past few months.

Mr. Brown operates Brownie's Sporting Goods on Mill St., and it's part of his job to look ahead to the next season just as this one is getting interesting. He has to estimate his needs for hockey equipment before the summer starts, so the manufacturers can include his order in their production.

Brownie, as he's known to most people, remembers when the sporting goods business was fairly simple. He came to Milton in 1970 to run Brownie's, which was a branch store of Corbett's Sports in Oakville, owned by his brother Ken.

Business changes
"Basically, six years ago the sporting goods business in Milton was a baseball and hockey operation," he said. "In the last few years, however, with the expansion of the parks and recreation program, the building of more tennis courts and the second arena, and just the general awareness of people in Milton towards other forms of recreation, the business has changed. It had to keep up."

"Now I'm into bikes, tennis equipment, soccer boots, track suits, golf, you name it. Plus, of course, hockey and baseball."

Brownie tries to provide a complete line of services for his equipment, ranging from a bicycle repair shop to skate sharpening. He can restring racquets and, thanks to a new transfer machine, he can custom-crest team shirts and jackets. He also sells trophies.

"We sell a lot of trophies in Milton, because everyone here is a champion," he joked.

Focal point
Jokes and small talk about local sports are as much a part of Brownie's store as the equipment he sells. Sports stores in small towns are often the focal point for local sports gossip and Brownie's is no exception.

He likes to be involved in the local sports scene as much as his time will allow. He's a member of the tennis club (although insiders report he hits more flies than tennis balls when he plays), he helps out with minor hockey teams, and has sponsored both

soccer and hockey teams in the last few years.

He still likes to don the skates himself once in a while, playing in a Sunday morning league.

This contact with the sports community keeps him abreast of the latest developments, and helps him make decisions on which sports have increased or decreased in popularity, and therefore how much stock he should buy.

Too much
Sometimes he gets burnt, however. One year, he recalls, he found himself with a fair amount of unsold camping equipment at the end of the summer. In a case like that the consumer benefits, because the goods are sold off in clearance sales, or marked down as last year's models in the spring.

"You've got to take a chance sometimes," he philosophizes.

He's gearing up for the hockey season at the moment, and visitors to the store are greeted by stacks of hockey skates, hockey sticks, helmets and pads, piled on the floor. Brownie's has all the top lines, Lange, Daoust, Bauer, CCM, Koho, Sherwood, a who's who of sports equipment.

With the "participation boom" in Milton as he puts it, his business has also boomed. When he came to Milton the store was only half its present size. Now the summer sports names of Peugeot, Raleigh, Adidas, Slazenger and Cooper have been added.

And then there's the prices.

Oil base
"Prices have skyrocketed in sports, just as they have in everything else," he admits. "A lot of equipment, especially for team sports is made from synthetics such as rayon or nylon, which is made from oil or oil by-products. This has had a great effect on prices, especially clothing."

"Quantity buying with Corbett Sports and with a national buying group which we belong to helps us hold the line as much as possible."

The newest addition to his store is a selection of Team Canada sweaters, and he is awaiting a shipment of cross-country ski equipment which he thinks will be in demand when the Parks and Recreation Department starts a cross-country ski school this year. Now if only he can find some room...

Consider Main St. facelift

The September 13 Chamber of Commerce dinner meeting will feature a special presentation by Doug Flowers. Mr. Flowers represents a firm known as "Anthragram" and he was involved in a recent facelifting project in Streetsville.

Both the Chamber of Commerce and the Milton Downtown Group have been considering improvements to the downtown core for some time.

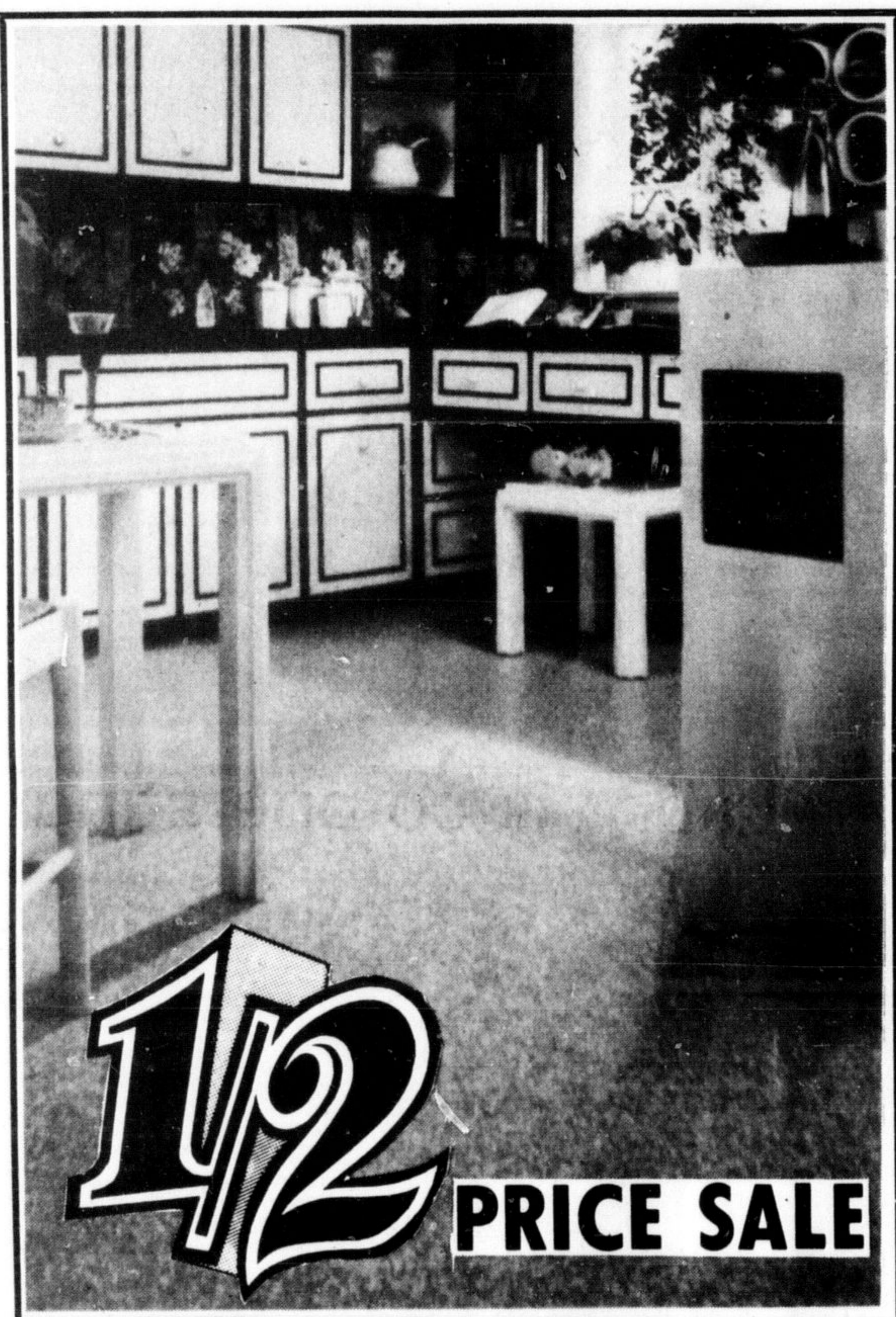
Efforts several years ago to get the Norwich Plan activated in the town were unsuccessful.

The meeting is open to the public but geared directly to downtown landowners and retail business operators.

Wants one AMO rep

Milton Council will ask that one Milton councillor be appointed to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario Board of Directors.

The suggestion was made by Councillor Brad Clements, who noted there are no councillors from Halton on the board.



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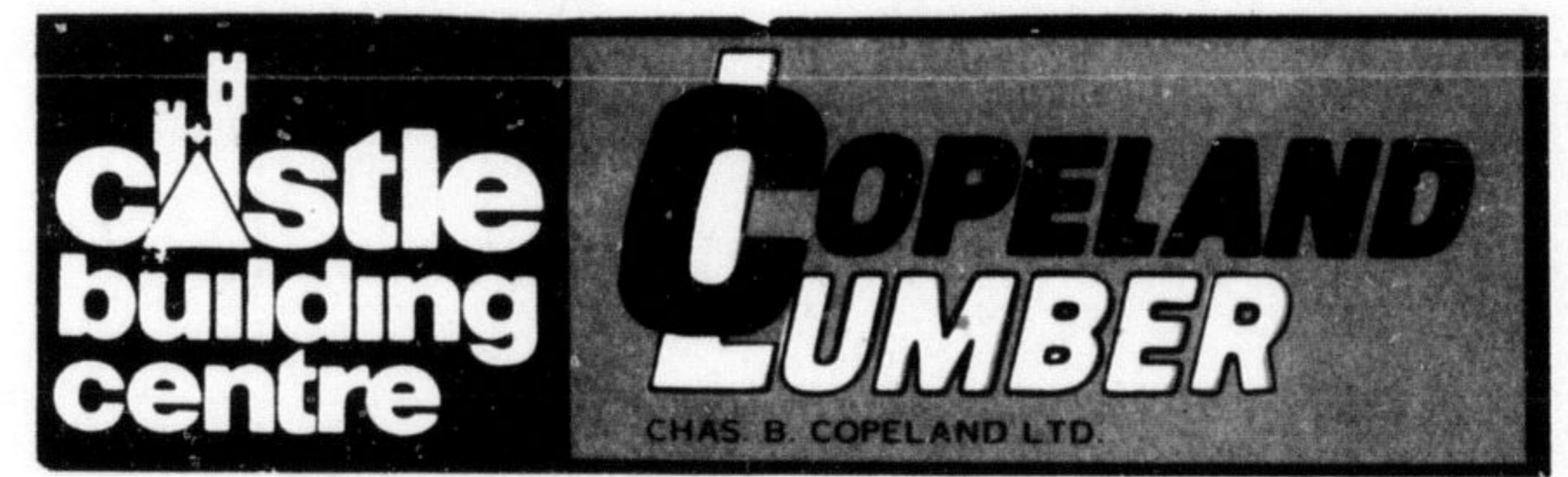
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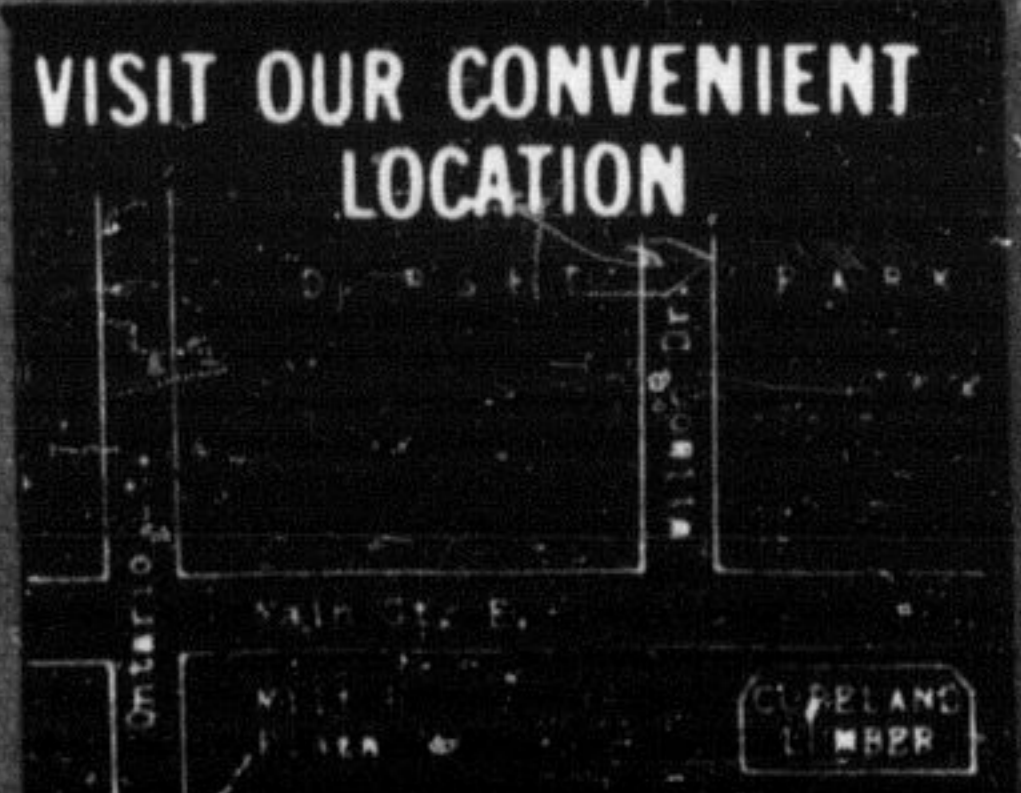
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