



# OPINION

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

Box 248, 191 Main St. E.,  
Milton, Ont. L9T 4N9

(905) 878-2341

Editorial Fax: 878-4943

Advertising Fax: 876-2364

Classified: 875-3300

**Ian Oliver** *Publisher*Neil Oliver *Associate Publisher*Bill Begin *General Manager*Rob Kelly *Editor*Karen Cross *Circulation Manager*Teri Casas *Office Manager*Tim Coles *Production Manager*

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## Small turnout for drug abuse talk disappointing

We were disappointed to see only a handful of people attend the Milton District High School Community Council's Parent Drug Awareness Session Monday night.

It would be easy to make excuses, such as parents didn't know about the event, or there was another snowstorm.

However, the fact is the session was promoted through flyers sent to homes by the school and it received front-page coverage in this newspaper. Notice of the event was also featured in plain view on the sign in front of the Williams Avenue school. The rainy weather wasn't ideal, but certainly wasn't a major road block for local travel.

The turnout of less than 10 people was regrettable because valuable information for parents about how to deal with the pressing issue of youth drug abuse, particularly alcohol, was presented by a public health nurse. An account of the meeting is published elsewhere in today's edition.

Many parents may not have attended because they're confident such a problem doesn't and won't exist in their family. Unfortunately, they could easily be wrong.

Hats off to those parents who did take the time to come out. Hopefully, a similar event in the future will receive a better response.

## Lingering memories of a garden -- thorns and all

I'm a sentimental guy, but I'm not quite sure what I will be thinking when the last NHL game is played at Maple Leaf Gardens February 13.

Every palace has its rats, but the ones in that building were just too large. I'm talking, of course, about those involved in the sexual abuse of boys.

Before that, I was absolutely in love with Maple Leaf Gardens. I spent six consecutive years there working for the Toronto Sun, as well as other publications.

When I lugged my computer up to the press box before games, I always stopped half way and went through one of the entrances to the seating area. It took my breath away every time.

My contention was always that it would be a crime to stop playing NHL games there, but I changed my mind when I actually had to sit in the regular seats a couple years ago.

I had been invited to take part in a media on-ice competition for charity and was given a couple of golds. It was almost impossible to enjoy the game, being so cramped and uncomfortable.

The media competition was another story. Here I was in front of 16,000 people and surprisingly wasn't even nervous. I was up against Gene Principe, who used to work for Global TV. The idea was to get as many of the pucks in the net from the blueline as possible in the allotted time.

Gene told me he had never really played hockey, which made me feel rather confident. I was hoping though, that I wouldn't embarrass him. We had been in a football media competition earlier that year, and I had won it for our team when I threw a perfect spiral through the hoop on the last toss.

When they said go, I whacked my pucks at the net as quickly as possible. Having played hockey since I was about four, I knew what I was doing. When the buzzer went, I glanced over at Gene, who had a sheepish look on his face. I went over to console him, and learned on the way that it hadn't even been close — he'd smoked me.

Turns out I forgot to look where I was shooting, and almost hit the mascot with one puck. To make matters worse, as I was leaving the ice, I almost fell. I did one of those fake smiles, and could clearly hear the crowd go, "Oooooohhhhhh."

During many of the years I was working there, the Leafs weren't just bad, they were terribly boring. Sometimes, I'd look down press row just to see if anyone was watching the game, and often they weren't. When a goal was scored, everybody would rush to the television monitors to see how it happened.

One night, a sportswriter from another newspaper sitting beside me was looking up toward the heavens for much of the game. That wasn't



## OUR READERS WRITE

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

### Community support after break-in appreciated

Dear Editor:

On behalf of our clients, volunteers and staff of the Halton/Peel district office of the Canadian National Institute of the Blind (CNIB), I would like to extend my appreciation for the overwhelming support we received following the theft of money and equipment from our Mississauga office.

More than \$20,000 worth of equipment was stolen or damaged when our office was broken into on September 30.

Much of this equipment was used by our visually impaired staff and volunteers.

We received many donations from members of the community that helped us continue to provide programs and services to our clients immediately following the theft.

Thank you for your support and generous contributions to the Halton/Peel district office of the CNIB.

**Roxanna Spruyt-Rocks**  
CNIB Halton/Peel district manager



### On the loose

with MURRY TOWNSEND

an unusual sight in those days so I didn't think too much of it. Finally, he pointed to some type of insulation-looking stuff in the walls going up to the roof. "Does that look like asbestos to you?" he asked. It surely did.

I suggested taking a sample, knowing an adventure when I see one. "I know how to get up there, you know," I told him.

I loved exploring the Gardens late after games when nobody was around, and knew how to get to quite a few places. When all was quiet, I guided him to the secret passageway that led up the secret ladder. He got his sample, had it tested, and of course, it wasn't asbestos.

Knowing the ins and outs of the Gardens was not only fun, it saved me once during the Canada Cup. Many of the regulars got stiffed out of their usual spots because of the media crush. I needed electricity and the auxiliary press box didn't

have it.

I found my way through a maze of doors and landed in a little cubby-hole I knew of that was just perfect. I had it all to myself, as well as a great view -- at least until a couple Canadian players sitting out the game found it and asked if they could join me. There was enough space for one, but the three of us squeezed in there, anyway. Me, watching one of the best games I'd ever seen, and the other two constantly scoping the crowd for girls.

One time, in the regular press box, I sat two seats away from an NHL general manager who was apparently scouting the game. He scribbled on the back of his press notes all night, barely glancing at the play. When he left, he forgot his notes, and I slid over ever so slyly to check them out. This guy was supposed to be a genius, so I knew I was in for some good trade scoops. All he had done was doodled. Not a single word on any of the pages.

I have a ton of other memories of the Gardens, but not much space left. I'll never forget the feeling of actually playing there, and yes, fantasizing that I was with the Maple Leafs at the time. I won't forget some great interviews, either: Al Iafrate on the Leafs' bench, talking about his life, which would soon take a sad turn; Darryl Sittler, when I did a story remembering the night he scored those 10 points.

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