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A Metroland Community Newspaper

Vol. 143 No. 22

Friday, June 7, 2002

32 Pages

\$1.00 (GST included)

Alleging bullying by youths, family sues school board

By **TIM WHITNELL**
Special to The Champion

A Burlington high school student — tired of being the victim of constant bullying, occasional threats and periodic vandalism — has filed a lawsuit against the Halton District School Board and nine individuals, including three fellow students.

The civil suit stems from what 17-year-old, grade 12 student David Knight claims has been years of torment from a small group of youths dating back to his days as a grade 7 and 8 pupil at Kilbride Public School and continuing through this year at Lester B. Pearson High School.

The suit also alleges David's 16-year-old sister, Katie, was taken out of Pearson last October by her parents due to harassment she had been facing.

Family seeking financial compensation for damages

In a statement of claim filed May 23 with the Ontario Superior Court of Justice in Hamilton, the siblings and their parents, Michael and Nancy Knight, are asking for, among 10 separate demands, \$500,000 in general damages from the school board and six of its current and former principals and vice-principals at Pearson.

As well, the family is asking for damage amounts ranging from \$1,000 to \$15,000 from the three minors, all grade 12 students at Pearson, named as defendants in the suit. Two of the student defendants live in north Burlington while the other lives near Pearson.

One of the minors named said he would speak after the initial story came out, while the father of a second refused to discuss the issue when reached for comment, and the mother of the other youth named said her family wouldn't comment.

Aside from general damages, the Knights, who live in Kilbride, are also seeking unspecified special monetary damages from the school board and the board

employees named in the claim.

The family's Hamilton-based lawyer Joanna Birenbaum said the case is unusual but doesn't know if it's precedent-setting. She does know what the desired result is.

"The Knight family hopes it will bring to light the systemic problem of bullying in schools," she said.

Among the non-monetary claims being made by the family is for a permanent order against the three minor defendants restraining them from coming within 50 feet of the plaintiffs or from making false and harassing statements about them. They also want the three to be prevented from attending any school within the Halton District School Board.

As for the school board, the Knights are seeking an order requiring it to hire additional staff to monitor the hallways and cafeteria at Pearson until the end of this school year. They also want the board to write an open letter stating David would likely have achieved grades averaging 80

• see **FAMILY** on page 12

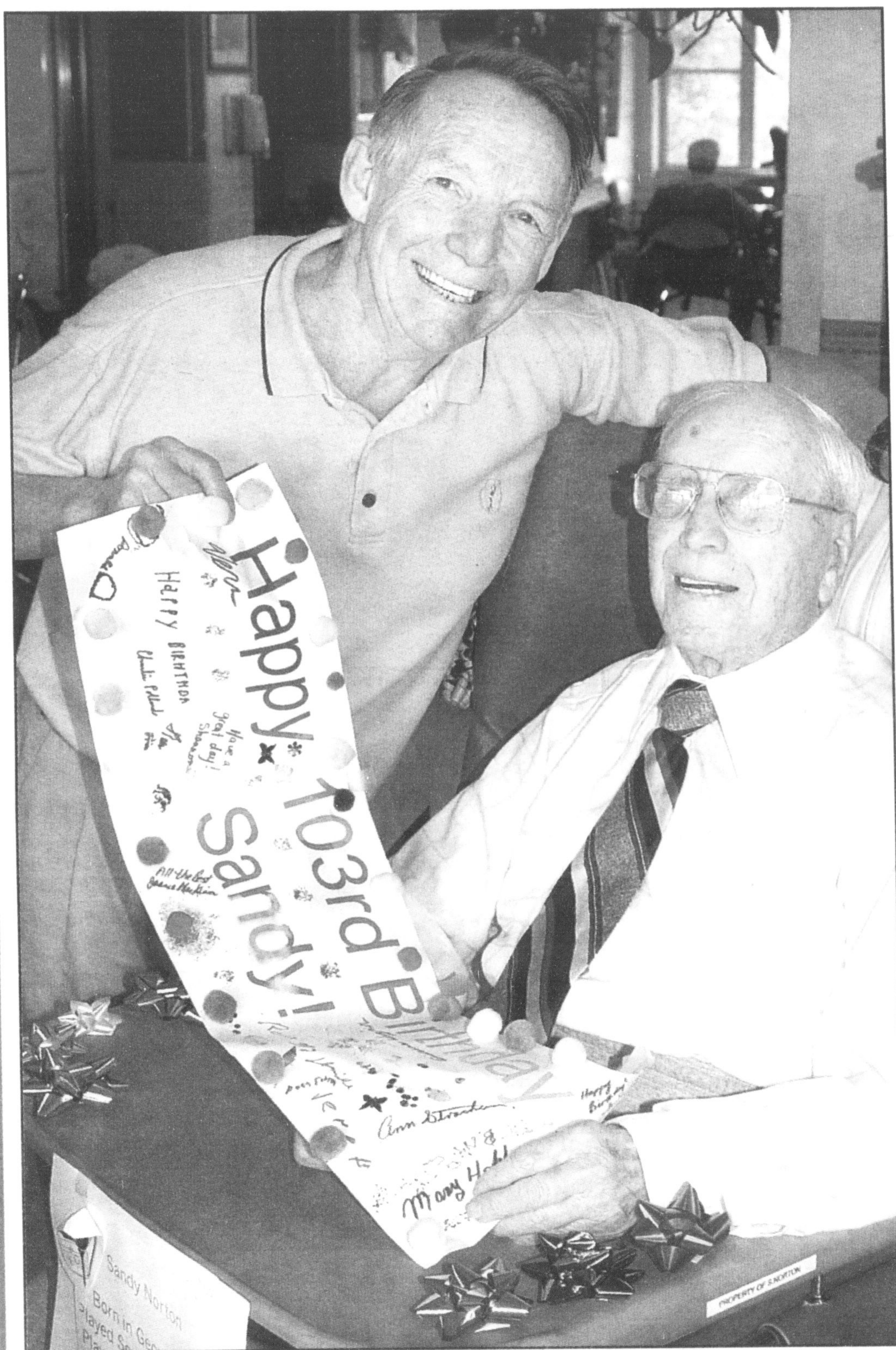


Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Young at heart

Sandy Norton, who turned 103 Wednesday, gets a little help from nephew Ross Norton in looking over his party trimmings. Mr. Norton was born in Georgetown and currently resides at Allendale.

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