

Local Buddhists say symbol is not actually a swastika

By Stephanie Thiessen
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Milton resident Delta Hillyard wants people to know a backward swastika has a completely different meaning from the racist, hurtful one generally associated with the symbol.

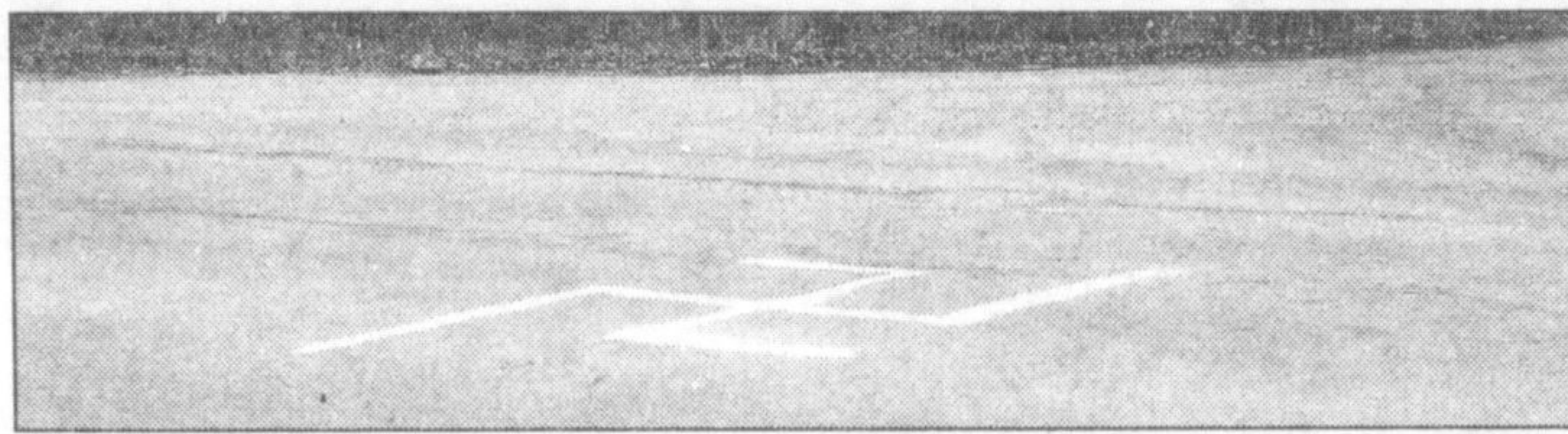
She's angry with a story The Champion ran Tuesday about several swastikas painted by vandals on roadways.

Hillyard, who's a Buddhist, said the symbol shown in a photo accompanying the story is a backward swastika and a Buddhist symbol — she doesn't call it a swastika — rather than the racial motif adopted by Adolph Hitler.

"That symbol that was shown in the newspaper doesn't mean anything racial and isn't a negative symbol," Hillyard said, explaining ever since Hitler's reign of terror, Buddhists have drawn the symbol with its right angles bent in a left-facing direction to differentiate it from the right-facing swastika.

The article described two cases of graffiti in nearby rural Milton locations.

In the first case discovered Christmas day, a large, white equilateral cross was painted on



Local Buddhists want people to know this symbol, recently spray-painted on local roads, has a meaning different from the racist one it's known for.

the road in the middle of No. 15 Sideroad and Nassagaweya/Esquesing Townline.

One kilometre south, two signs and several boulders were also defaced with the same symbols and profanity.

In the second incident, a swastika was spray-painted along with 'KKK' on the road at the intersection of No. 25 Sideroad and Nassagaweya/Esquesing Townline.

The Champion quoted Det. Sgt. Peter Hodgson saying the symbol is "extremely offensive."

But Hillyard said she has a problem with that comment when paired with the photo that ran with the story.

She said several of her Buddhist friends were also offended.

The equilateral cross has been used as a sacred symbol for thousands of years in religions

including Buddhism and Hinduism.

She agreed the graffiti was likely done by racist vandals who didn't know the symbol they drew was actually a religious one, and said she wishes people were more educated about it.

Halton Regional Police Det. Sgt. Peter Hodgson said he's aware the symbol had a different meaning before it was taken over by Hitler.

But he said he's confident the vandals who defaced the road intended it as racist graffiti.

"When you see a swastika drawn in the middle of an intersection and on a boulder, and in the second instance has 'KKK' beside it, it's certainly not referring to the Hindu use, but to the quite despicable use by Nazis," he said.

Stephanie Thiessen can be reached at sthiessen@miltoncanadianchampion.com.

FUTURE SHOP

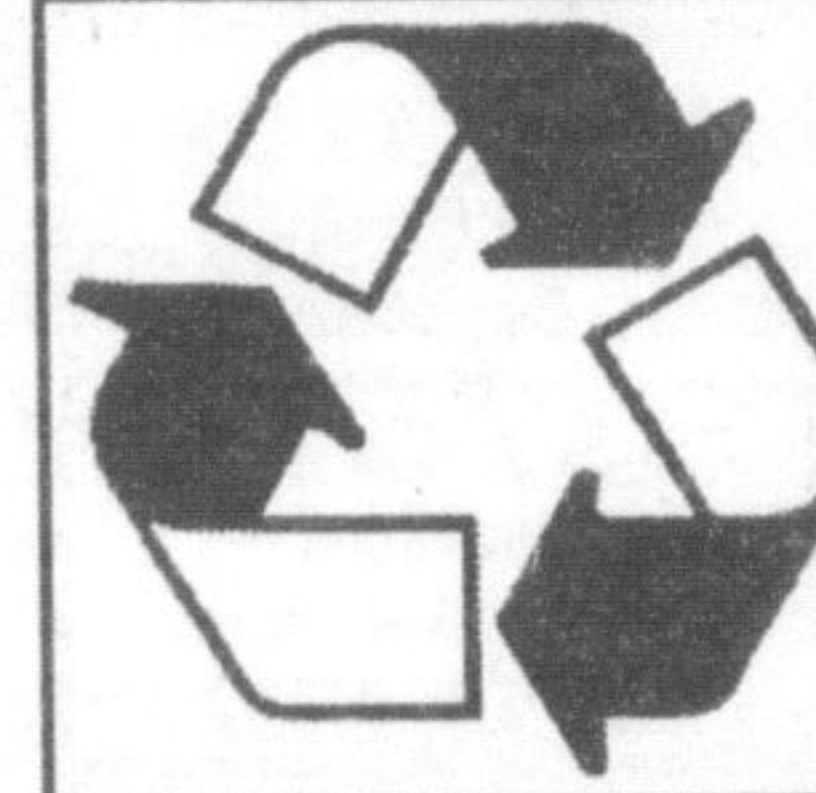
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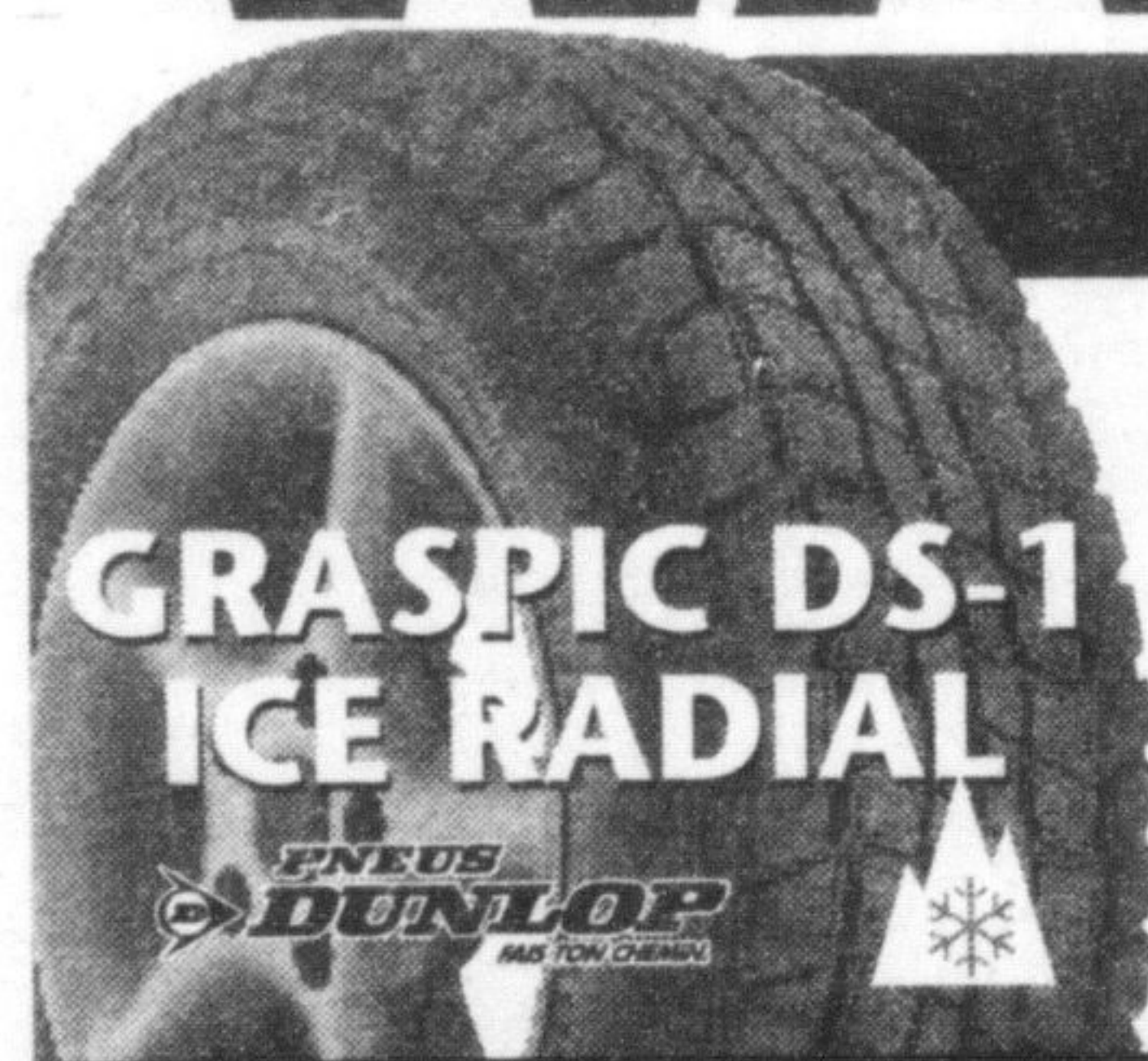
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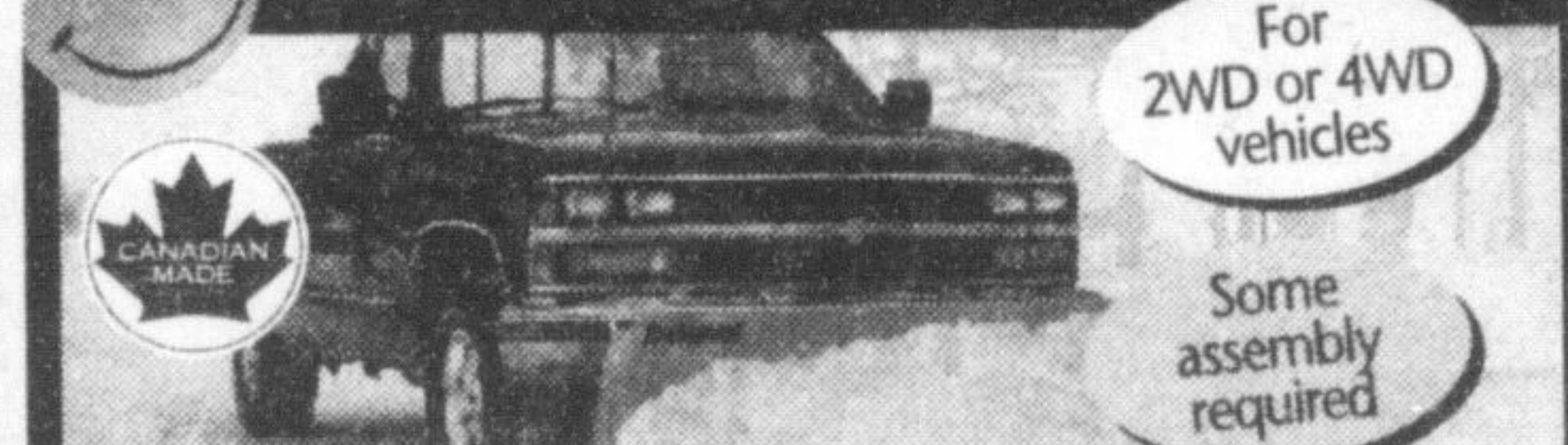
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