

# Health detectives search for causes of water bacteria

By NORMAN NELSON

A \$38,000 study being carried at the Kelso Reservoir will hopefully result in area beaches being closed less often.

The Halton Region health department checks swimming facilities on a regular basis and when bacteria counts get too high, it closes the beaches.

Last summer for instance, Kelso was closed for almost four weeks. It has not been closed this year.

While determining the level of bacteria in water is quite simple, it's considerably more difficult to find out where it comes from.

"Birds, people, cattle, storm water effluent and a host of other factors have all been pointed to as possible culprits," said Robert Hart, an environmental health educator with the regional health department.

"The problem arises in trying to determine how great a role in beach pollution each of these factors play."

In an attempt to answer this question, the health department and the Halton Region Conservation Authority (which operates Kelso) are conducting the joint study designed to locate the source of bacteria.

"The reservoir is a good site to conduct such a study because it is a far more closed system than Lake Ontario and therefore allows different possible sources to be looked at more individually," he said.

"Hopefully, the results of this study will provide a basis for actually controlling, rather than just monitoring, (bacteria) levels in bathing water."

The study, funded by the Ministry of Environment, includes comprehensive testing of both the reservoir and about 28 square miles of upstream land containing numerous feeder streams.

Data will be collected until mid August and a report should be ready by mid September.

One measure designed to reduce bacteria levels at Kelso is already in place — bird netting.

Others that may be implemented are difficult to predict before the study's findings are available, said Mr. Hart.

For instance, he said the testing may point to a faulty septic system upstream that could be fixed, or perhaps "ponding" at Kelso that could be eliminated by "adjusting current flow."

The health department's regular beach sampling program is carried out twice weekly in the summer.

Testing is also done at 10 Lake Ontario locations in Burlington and Oakville.

Non-lake checkpoints include Kelso, Fairy Lake, Smallwood Acres and spot checks of the Credit River at "various swimming locations."

All sites have permanent signs advising swimmers that on occasion the water may be unsafe for swimming. As well, a new hotline number (338-7100, or 878-8113 afterhours), updated every Friday afternoon, lists any beaches considered unsafe for swimming.

Samples are tested for the presence of a bacteria called fecal coliform which live in the intestinal tracts of warm-blooded animals.

While these bacteria are not thought to cause disease themselves, their presence in water beyond certain levels means that other disease-causing organisms, not as easily detectable, could be along for the ride.

Water with fecal coliform levels greater than 200 bacteria per 100 ml. of water is considered unsafe for swimming.

At or above this level, it's believed that bathers are at risk of acquiring skin and ear infections, and possibly stomach upsets if they inadvertently swallow a few mouthfuls of water.

## It's deja vue for craftsman restoring antique fire truck

By KAREN SMITH

Ries Boers and the Milton Fire Department's 1922 fire truck are getting reacquainted after 23 years.

The owner of Bill's Auto Body has once again taken on the task of restoring Milton's first motorized fire truck — a job Mr. Boers initially performed in 1967 when he was an apprentice at the shop.

Firefighter Dave Krantz approached Mr. Boers to request his assistance with the International truck.

"I was quite surprised when Dave called me," Mr. Boers recalls. "I knew right away what I was up against."

The body of the truck is rusted and virtually falling apart. It will need to be sandblasted and rebuilt.

Three years ago, Mr. Boers purchased Bill's Auto Body from the original owner. The business was moved from Main Street to its current location on Nipissing Rd.

This time, a different apprentice will do most of the work. Bill's Auto Body employee Curt Ackermann of Milton has been assigned the job. He will do his best to keep the truck looking just like the original. Curt will probably spend more than 200 hours on the project.

"Our goal is to keep it as close to the original as possible," says Mr. Boers. "Actually, if it changes, we failed."

The Milton Fire Department has a goal of its own. It is hoping to raise \$10,000 to restore the 1922 fire truck and other vehicles, said Mr. Krantz.

The department is holding a fund-raising draw for a trip for two to Las Vegas courtesy of Canadian, Uniglobe and Can Travel. Second prize is a swivel rocker recliner by Palliser, courtesy of Peoples Furniture, and third prize is a propane barbecue donated by Consumers Distributing.

Tickets, which cost \$2 each or

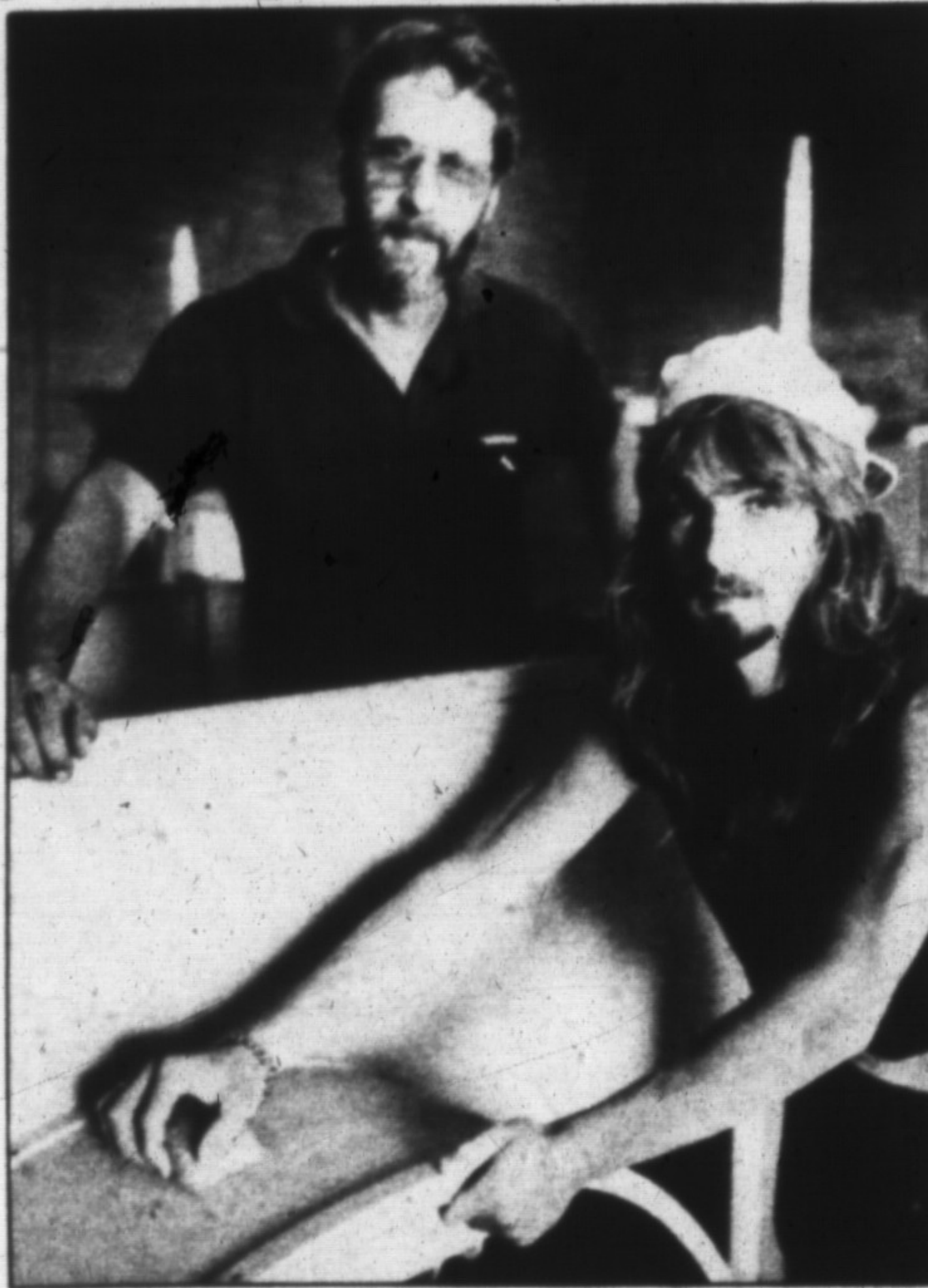


Photo by JOHN WARREN

Ries Boers, owner of Bill's Auto Body on Nipissing Road, consults with employee Curt Ackermann, an apprentice at the garage. Mr. Boers and Curt are restoring the body of the Milton Fire Department's 1922 antique fire truck.

three for \$5, can be purchased at Milton fire stations, Milton Mall and the Farmers' Market. They will also be sold door to door.

Several area businesses have already donated their services to the cause. They include Minute Muffler, Solex Industrial Handling Equipment Ltd., Halton Automotive Industrial Supply

Ltd., and Micro-Tech Machine.

A team of eight firefighters are also helping out with small jobs, says Mr. Krantz, who hopes the restoration will be completed in time for the Milton Santa Claus Parade in November.

The department's next project will be restoring its second motorized fire truck — a 1946 Fargo.

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