



Photos by GRAHAM PAINE

## Right on course

A bike rodeo was part of the fun at E.W. Foster School's Mayfest Saturday. In the morning, seven-year-old Bradley Cooper (above) and eight-year-old Darren Yorke (below) practiced their cycling skills on the obstacle course.



# OUR READERS WRITE

## THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

• from LETTERS on page 7  
it's become clear just how big that vacuum is.

Bill Johnson was a real person to those of us privileged to know him, all the more so because he played out the latter stages of his life in an increasingly plastic world.

A fine man, fiery, opinionated, right half the time and wrong much of the rest, professing cynicism and practising sentiment, sometimes obnoxious, sometimes dismissive, often intuitively right when 'clever' people were wrong. Often exasperated, often exasperating. Tilting at real targets and windmills with equal abandon. Quick to admonish, quick to forgive and forget.

Bill wanted to set the world to rights and, like the rest of us, lacked the tools. However, unlike most of us, he sallied forth and gave it his best shot. If Bill was your friend, you had a friend. If he didn't like you, he didn't pretend.

Bill was the antithesis of the blow-dried, carefully rehearsed types we

increasingly see in politics and elsewhere these days. Not for him the carefully modulated tones, the bland, calculated meaningless statements, the carefully packaged image. With Bill what you saw was what you got, and it was very, very human.

We needed Bill and we need more like him. The yeast in the mix. A world of Bill Johnsons would probably be mayhem. A world without some, unbearably flat.

The real affection and emotion expressed when Bill retired from politics, and latterly when he moved west, were very powerful. To those who were around him at those times it was striking how many people of real substance were his friends. Quiet thanks and appreciation from constituents who knew him or liked what he stood for, more visible appreciation from the more substantial public figures of all political stripes.

Bill and I disagreed, mostly amicably, about lots of things, actually about most things, now that I come to think of it. Many's the night

we sat in front of the fire hollering our arguments at each other until the wee hours. They're treasured moments now.

One conviction we did share was real doubt as to the existence of an afterlife. If we're both wrong, one of the first things I plan to do if admitted is to stroll over to the bar, watch that unforgettable face light up, and have a beer with my friend, Bill Johnson.

Alec Kitson  
Campbellville

### Letters Welcomed

The Canadian Champion welcomes letters to the editor. We reserve the right to edit, revise, and reject letters.

Letters must be signed and the address and the telephone number of the writer included. Mail letters to: The Canadian Champion, Box -248, Milton, Ont. L9T 4N9 or leave them at our office, 191 Main Street.

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