

## Continental fire

# PORA SAYS IT WAS SET

By Jane Camm

A pile of hay can be worth its weight in gold.

So thought Nick Pora, owner of Continental Mushroom Farm in Metcalfe, as he looked on helplessly Jan. 3 while a \$100,000 heap of hay went up in smoke.

The huge mound containing 85,000 bails, caught fire that early Thursday morning and was still smouldering several days later, a clear reminder of money lost.

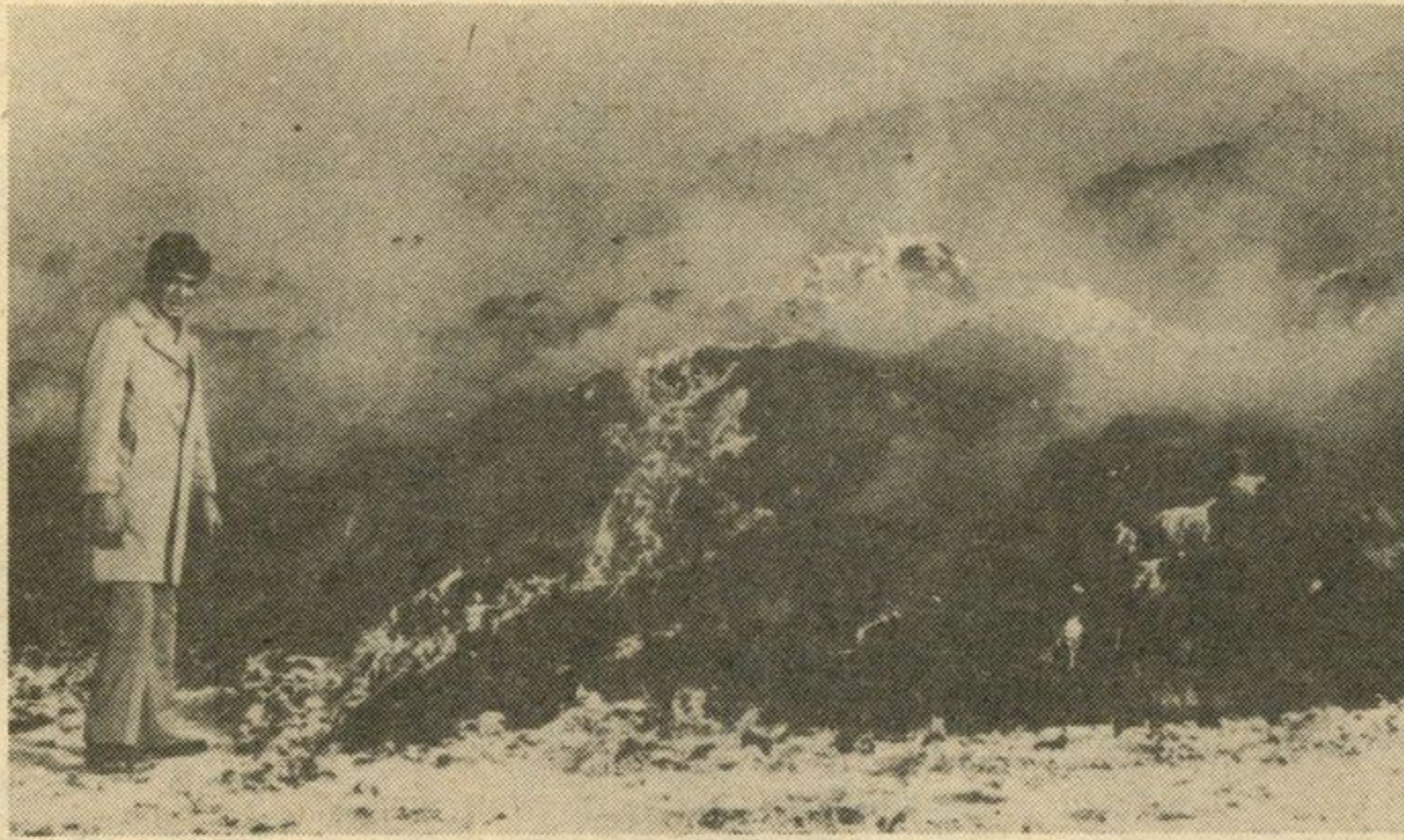
Fire officials at the scene attributed the blaze to spontaneous combustion but the owner is doubtful.

The fire started at the corner of the heap, facing away from the wind. Mr. Pora said this indicated the blaze was accidentally or deliberately set.

The fire quickly spread but was contained to one pile. Buildings were safely out of reach.

The company is insured but fluctuation in the market value of hay will result in a \$30,000 loss for Continental Mushroom.

The multi-million dollar outfit will absorb the loss without much



Nick Pora and smouldering hay heap (Estelle Yaternick Photo).

difficulty but Mr. Pora said the firm is fortunate.

"We were lucky we didn't put all our eggs in one basket. We have lost money but it doesn't affect us at all."

The destroyed hay didn't slow down production. Work continues normally and Mr. Pora said the only difficulty he foresees is keeping up with insatiable market demands.

The factory supplies Ottawa and Montreal with about three million pounds of mushrooms a

year but it is not nearly enough.

Pora said he plans to expand by 25 per cent in the next year, stepping up production to four million pounds.

The \$30,000 loss will not hinder plans but Mr. Pora hopes the upcoming Federal election will give birth to a government sympathetic to money borrowers.

Local farmers provide the required 300,000 bails of hay needed annually to cultivate mushrooms. The piles must be very large to protect them from wet weather conditions. Unfortunately, said Mr. Pora, this gives pranksters quite a temptation.

## Embrun sewers, water estimated at \$12 million.

Russell Township is now awaiting approval from the Ontario Municipal Board for the \$12 million Embrun sewer and water works installation expected to begin this summer.

Provincial grants will pay for about \$9.5 million of the combined project, leaving \$2.5 million to be assessed to Embrun taxpayers. The combined cost to the municipality, including operation and contingency reserves, is estimated at more than \$400,000 a year over 20 years.

The cost breakdown to homeowners and certain special users is now being calculated and will be released soon.

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# TREE PROTECTION LEGISLATION

- Tree Removal or Trimming within township road allowances requires approval in writing from the township.
- Tree Removal or Trimming along the Russell-Embrun ski trail (former New York Central Railway) is prohibited.
- Tree Removal or Trimming in township parks and nurseries is prohibited

**OFFENDERS WILL BE PROSECUTED**

By order Russell Township

# Castor Chatter



Five months after Dick Sherwood's resignation as scoutmaster, the Russell Village scout troop is in limbo and showing no signs of coming back to life. Dick gave up his scouting duties after eight years and was hoping another local man would step in to take his place. But so far, he has encountered nothing but resistance in trying to find a replacement. Apparently, some men don't think it's very "macho" to lead a group of scouts; Dick has been told by some men that they won't get involved because Scouts are a "sissy outfit". Others beg off with "I don't have the time" or "I don't know anything about it". But the former leader says Scout headquarters can train a man with "two left hands and 11 thumbs" to do the job. Dick is now caretaker of the defunct scout pack's equipment; if the pack doesn't reform within a year, the equipment will be sold. Dick says he won't resume the scoutmaster duties because new blood is needed and because I'm too old to sleep overnight in the snow".

Sometimes, a telephone conversation with a fireman can be cut short. Castor Review editor Mark Van Dusen was speaking to Greely fireman John Smiley over the blower recently when John had to suddenly make his apologies and hang up. A call had come in on another line and John had a "hot spot" to see to.

Old storekeepers never retire — they just take a break for a year then get right back into the business. Before Mike and Said Gebara took over the Metcalfe General Store, it was operated by Don and Betty McLaurin who tired of the business. But they tired pretty fast of retirement too, and now they're back behind the counter, this time in the Morewood General Store. They've increased the stock and business is building.

It sounds a little pretentious, but both Osgoode and Russell township councils have applied to the provincial government to change their status from rural to urban municipalities. Skyscrapers won't suddenly appear along the Castor when the new designations become effective; it's just a formality to facilitate the grant process.

And some local residents may have a little more money to salt away if Russell Township reaches a wage hike agreement with 21 non-unionized staff. A hike of eight per cent this year has been offered to the employees who now earn between \$9,500 and \$18,000.

Embrun residents will have the widest choice of banking institutions in the Castor area after Feb. 4 when the new Imperial Bank of Commerce opens in the village's industrial park. It joins the Royal Bank and the Caisse Populaire St. Jacques to become the third institution serving the financial needs of that community.

## Township axes tree-snatchers

The popularity of wood heat has forced Russell Township council to pass legislation protecting public trees.

From now on, it is against the law to cut or trim trees along roads and in nurseries and parks belonging to the township. The same applies to the Russell-Embrun ski trail which follows part of the former New York Central rail line. The township recently purchased that part of the line which lies within municipal boundaries.

The advertisement, left, gives formal notice of the new legislation. Offenders will be prosecuted.

Township Roads Superintendent Lucien Millaire said that trees have been disappearing at an increasing rate from public property since people started looking to wood as an alternative heating source to gas, oil and electricity.

"People have been cutting down eight-inch trees along the road in some places," he said, adding that the effect of uncontrolled chopping "looks like hell."

He said such cutting was an invasion of the rights of property owners along township roads. "By law, a property owner has a right to the benefits of a tree even if the tree is on township property." Benefits include esthetics, wind shielding and shade.

"People have been cutting

beautiful healthy trees along the fences. They seem to think that because a tree is on township property it's anyone's to cut. It's gone that far."

The ski trail has also been hard hit, forcing township work crews to carry out a cleanup of dead trees. Mr. Millaire said illegal cutters are attracted by the large amount of dead wood along the trail but often end up chopping down healthy trees. Township is removing the attraction.

As a concession to scavengers, he said wood cut up as part of the cleanup operation will be left along the trail for a couple of days but "if it doesn't disappear by them, it will be carted to the dump and burned."

Illegal cutting for firewood is not the problem at the township's tree plantation near the fitness trail now under construction just east of the Russell dam. There, whole young trees have been uprooted.

"In the past three years, five to 10 per cent of the trees that were originally planted have been removed. The trees are only two to three feet tall, too young for firewood and too small for Christmas trees. We suspect that people are planting them on their front lawns," he said. The trees are intended for the beautification of municipal parks.

"Our trees are there for everyone's use, not for individual benefit."