

stouffville comment

Stouffville team needs our help

This week, the Stouffville Merchants fastball team will be representing our town at the national finals in Newfoundland.

And there is a good chance the team could be dubbed the best in the country.

As representatives of the town, these young men will do their best to bring back the first-ever Canadian title for a Stouffville sports team.

It behooves us all to lend any support we can to this fine club.

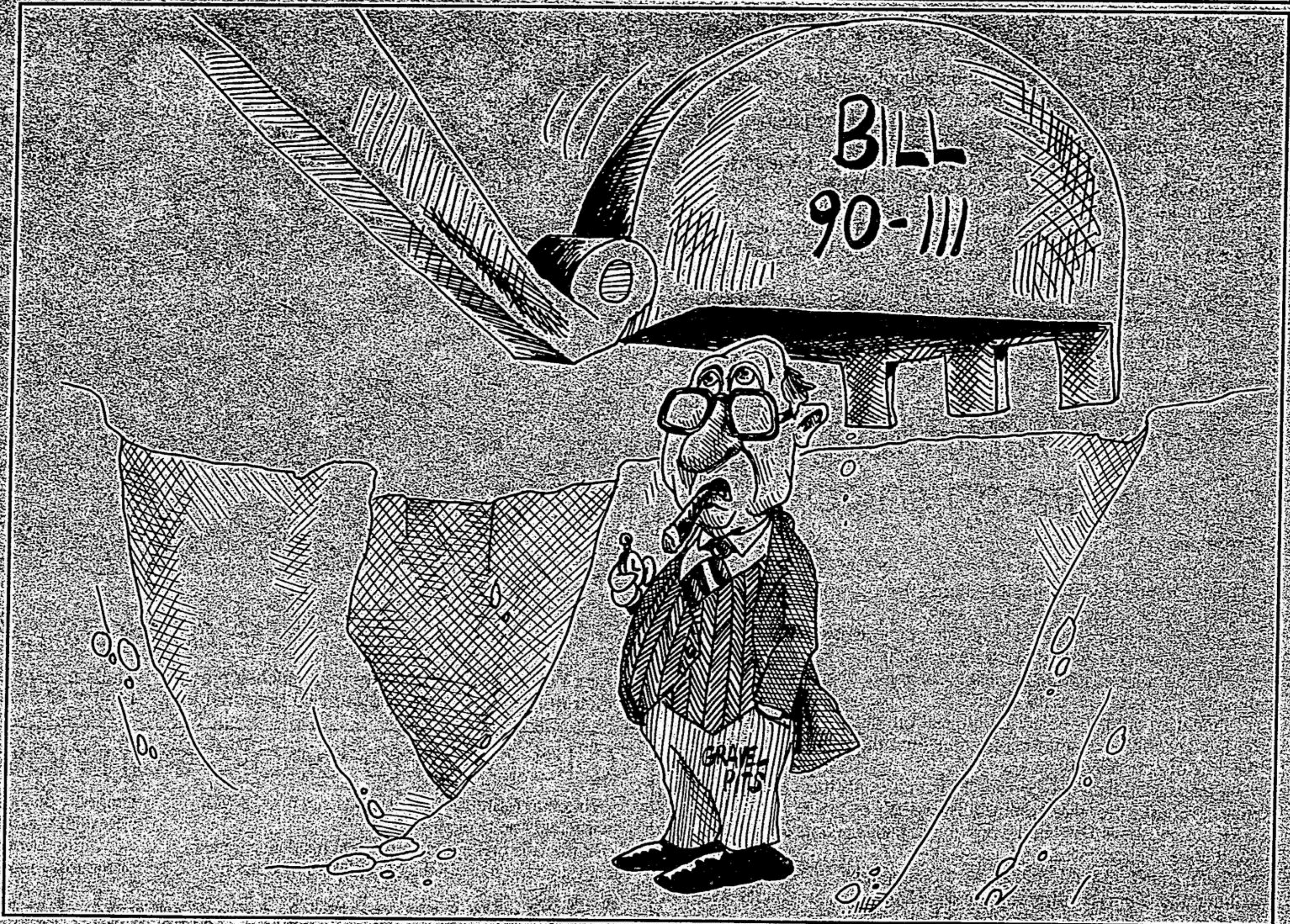
The team is doing its best to raise money for the trip, with car washes and the like, but more can be done to make the trip easier for them, so they can concentrate on the task at hand.

This sort of opportunity for Stouffville comes rarely.

We can all pitch in to lend the club a hand.

If you can be of any assistance at all, please contact the club. They boys are set to do us proud.

The least we can do is give them a helping hand.



Swimmers: what you don't know can hurt you

This past week I attended the provincial competition for lifeguards in Wasaga Beach. Being of the old guard myself, I often like to watch the best lifeguards in the province battle it out in a match of wits, strength and skill.

And if I gained one thing from the experience, aside from a sun-ravaged nose, was the re-affirmation that the best thing parents can do for their children is to have them made water wise. And it is never too early to start. I used to teach a class of tots, some as young as six months old. It is remarkable to see them take to the water.

Even if your children don't like swimming, a full regiment of lessons should be mandatory for them. We are surrounded by water, in ditches, creeks, rivers, and even whirlpool

tubs, and knowing how to swim makes the same sense as looking both ways before walking across the street.

August 3 was Drowning Prevention Day. Which is a mild way for the Royal Life Saving Society to say, "Learn how to swim."

But there are some lingering misconceptions about water that still crop up at events like the lifeguard competitions and the competitors complain bitterly about them. Parents put their children in the full care of the guards, using them as babysitters. As one who has felt the effects of eight hours in the sun, let me tell you that a lifeguard's senses become overwhelmed and if you think he or she has a keen eye fixed on your offspring all the time, you could be making a deadly mistake.



"I know how to swim real good," is another common phrase they still complain about. Many people believe that a few lessons, the rudiments of a front crawl and an ability to float are all you need. Not so. If you put your children in swimming lessons, force them to finish the entire program. Right up to the Bronze Medallion level or beyond. Not only will the

child have a complete grasp of all swimming styles, they will have the basics of self-preservation instilled and a good grounding in lifesaving as well.

But don't kid them. It is going to take years to do it right. But again it is worth it.

Not only that, but they could wind up with a great summer job after all that training.

The guards also said they still see small children in boats with no sign of a lifejacket. Even if they are a junior Mark Spitz, they (and you) should be wearing them. If you don't think it is necessary, just ask the corpse I pulled from the water in 1984 after he fell out of his canoe. A lifejacket was

floating nearby when we found him.

But probably the biggest concern of the guards I spoke with was the lack of knowledge there is with regard to diving. There are dozens of accidents each year involving people diving into shallow or unknown water.

I have a friend from high school who can attest to the perils involved in this activity. He has spent the last two years recuperating in the Lindhurst Centre in Toronto with a severed spinal cord.

When last I spoke with him, he said he would learn how to swim properly if given the chance again.

"It's not true, you know," he said. "What you don't know CAN hurt you."

Houseboat was not a home

Summer is, when everyone can relax, take some well-earned holidays and re-kindle close relationships with their nearest and dearest. Right? Wrong.

While cottage life can be idyllic, holidays that throw you into constant proximity with your family, can play havoc with your sanity. Several years ago, we took the ill-advised step of booking a houseboat vacation with my in-laws. We arrived on the dock at the appointed hour to survey a fleet of vessels scarcely smaller than the QE2, crammed together like sardines.

Backing out, I reflected, was going to be an adventure in itself. Our floating abode was the Terra Nova, which turned out to be a distressingly prophetic description of the ensuing trip. Blithely throwing my feminist principals out of the porthole, I willingly ceded the role of captain to my spouse.

After an alarmingly brief driving lesson, our instructor jumped ship and



left us to it. Things were fine, however, until we encountered a lock. Watched by a small group of fascinated locals, our fearless leader secured the front of the houseboat, but a persistent tailwind kept the Terra Nova straddled across the lock, denying access in either direction to other traffic. The growing audience warmed to its task of shouting advice, encouragement and the occasional insult, while my husband fought to gain control of the boat. He was not helped in this by his willing but incompetent crew, whose efforts at assistance tended to make things worse rather than better.

My mother-in-law spent the entire holiday convinced we were going to

capsize. One afternoon, as we carried out docking manoeuvres, she noticed we were getting perilously close to a shiny, superbly maintained yacht which rejoiced in the name of 'Perfect Too'.

Brandishing the boat hook menacingly in the direction of its unblemished fibreglass hull, she caught the eye of the horrified owner. "Get that thing away," he roared, ignoring the social niceties essential to civilized society. "Don't you speak to me like that, young man," retorted, ma-in-law loftily, as the apoplectic yachtsman unceremoniously shoved the boat hook aside.

Our gratitude at returning physically unscathed from our watery adventure overcame the tension and hostility that had been building up over the seemingly endless four day/break. It was we all agreed, an interesting experience. Now I know what people mean when they say absence makes the heart grow fonder.

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