

THE COUNTRY SIDE

Bass tourney pits villagers against friends



By HARRY KILFOYLE
Whig-Standard Staff Writer

CHAFFEYS LOCKS

Normally this tiny tourist hamlet would be on the verge of hibernation for the winter.

But underneath its tranquil veneer is an issue that has set neighbor against neighbor, businessman against businessman and fishing guide against fishing guide. It won't get any better unless organizers cancel a three-day Canadian Open Bass tournament here in July.

The raw nerve ends of this intense feeling were exposed at a public meeting sponsored by the Chaffeys Locks Improvement Committee (CLIC) here last Friday attended by more than 40 residents. Neither side emerged with a clean cut decision following three hours of verbal jousting but any opposition puts the tournament in jeopardy.

The crucial issue is that villagers have nurtured a valuable resource, don't want either to lose it or give up any control to outsiders.

Opinicon area resident Don Warren summed up this frustration when he jumped to his feet near the end of the meeting and shouted at tournament organizer Brian Evoy of Don Mills "I have had enough of your big city talk tonight and I am sick of it."

Evoy had just finished telling the residents that a great deal of publicity and extra business would be generated because of the tournament. Then, apparently sensing the futility of it all, he concluded that if they didn't need the business, they didn't need the tournament.

Complaints about traffic

Organizer Brian Evoy admits there have been no Canadian studies but one in Pennsylvania estimates the delayed mortality at about 10 per cent. He says the holding tanks must be aerated, light proof to reduce fish stress and says 10-year studies of fishing tournaments reveals that 95 per cent of the fish survive in holding tanks.

□ The fish, territorial by nature, will be displaced from their natural habitat, and will never return.

Evoy doesn't deny this and would consider a transportation system to take the fish back to the lake in which they were caught.

□ Residents expressed concern over 200 fishermen, their boats and their families converging on Chaffeys Locks on one of the busiest weekends in July. Residents wondered about toilet facilities — the village has only one public washroom and needs garbage containers.

Civitan president Paul McNamara promised residents that the unloading of boats would be orderly, and that garbage containers and chemical toilets were a priority.

□ Area Rideau lakes were either under stress or were just stabilizing, the opposition charged. Some 200 professional fishermen could remove as many as 3,600 bass aided by fish detection gear during the three days of fishing.

Wildlife Supervisor Lindsay Penny, a biologist, replied that there was a good bass population and they were not under stress. Evoy noted that the average catch in two previous Canadian tournaments was less than three fish per fisherman.

□ There were complaints that the huge bass boats would cause traffic problems and professional fishermen were pictured as out for the dollar and a wild and woolly bunch.

Biologist Penny, who has spent two years observing other fishing tournaments in the St. Lawrence, said the tournament fisherman was respectful of the fishing laws. "They are not a black bunch or I would have heard about it."

Half residents signed petition

The opposition at the meeting — about half the residents signed a petition opposing the tournament — has forced the local sponsors, the Rideau Lakes Civitan Club, to question the tournament. They have a legal right to hold the tournament, but for a high profile, civic-minded group like Civitan, the residents' feelings are the most important factor. Their executive will meet to decide the tournament's fate.

The villager who planted the idea of the tournament last summer didn't attend the public meeting. Chuck Brown of Brown's Marina is not one to duck a fight, but with feeling running so high, he saw little point in attending and stirring up more personal resentment against him and his business.

He convinced Brian Evoy of the Canadian Anglers Sports Tournament (C.A.S.T.) and the area Civitans to sponsor the tournament, which is offering \$15,000 in cash prizes.

Brown remains "bitterly disappointed" over the opposition. He admits he has lost friends, business and the respect of some members of the resort owners over his initial involvement.

But so have other villagers who oppose the tournament. Guide Don Franklin says he has been given the cold shoulder and has met villagers who have refused to talk to him. He and one of his best friends, another guide who backs the tournament, still speak to each other but avoid the subject. Another supporter and friend of Franklin "turns red but doesn't swear" when the subject is broached.

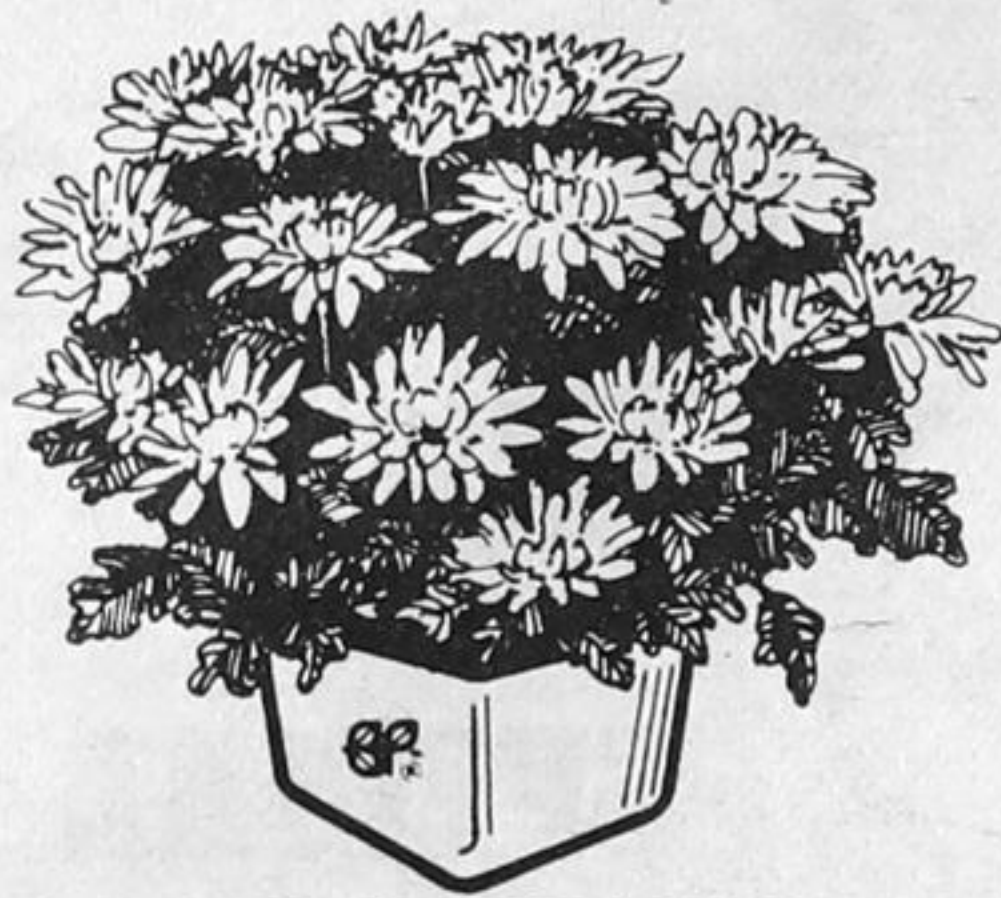
There is no neutral ground. One neutral villager was offered business from people who didn't give him business previously. Nothing big or substantial, but "it makes you wonder," he told another villager.

The tournament could attract 200 fishermen who will fish three days in pairs out of 100 boats equipped with aerated holding tanks. Winners are determined by total weight of the three daily catches — not to exceed a daily limit of six bass — and prizes are also given for the biggest fish of the tournament. The fish are held alive in the boat's holding tanks, taken to the weigh-in and then released.

The meeting last Friday typifies the divisive debate. Here are some examples of the main counter arguments:

□ Those opposed say there are no definitive studies to determine the rate of fish kill even in a live tournament. They say that severe stress will be placed on the fish in the holding tanks leading to a total breakdown of the defence mechanisms, including loss of mucus and exhaustion, and the fish could die when released.

Reprinted from Wednesday Nov. 19th edition by kind permission of the Kingston Whig-Standard.



CHRYSANTHEMUMS

OPEN

DAILY HOURS

9:00 AM - 6:00 PM

6 DAYS A WEEK

SUNDAY

1:00 - 6:00 PM

Come in and have a cup of coffee and buy a plant for Christmas.



POINSETTIAS

Featuring

POTTED MUMS,
POINTSETTIAS,
CYCLAMEN,
COMBINATION POTS,
and more.

 member of
bedding
plants, inc.

NIBLOCK'S GARDEN CENTRE

R.R. 2, Lyndhurst, Ont.

387-3386



Have a Merry Christmas
& a Happy New Year.