

LOCAL

Convicted murderer dies in crash

An elderly Hamilton man on parole for the murder of an area teenager has died in a head-on collision.

Norman Clairmont, 76, was killed shortly after 5 p.m. on Friday on Highway 54, between York and Caledonia, near Abbey Road.

A man who identified himself as Clairmont's brother said yesterday he believes Clairmont had a heart attack while driving. Clairmont was on his way back from Selkirk, where his wife of nearly 60 years had been living after surgery, when his pickup collided with a van. He was taken to hospital where he was pronounced dead. The 51-year-old van driver also sustained serious injuries and was taken to hospital.

Clairmont made headlines after being convicted in 1978 of the first-degree murder of 19-year-old Bonnie Potts, who was beaten, raped and strangled in a Flamborough trailer park. He was paroled in 1993.

His brother said yesterday the matter should be laid to rest because Clairmont was innocent. In 2005, Clairmont was charged with sexually assaulting a young girl, but those charges were dropped because the Crown said there was no reasonable prospect of a conviction.

The Hamilton Spectator

MP demands envoy for jailed man

OTTAWA ♦ A Hamilton MP has called on the federal government to appoint a special diplomatic envoy to deal with the imprisonment of a Burlington man in a Chinese jail.

Hamilton East-Stoney Creek New Democrat Wayne Marston made the appeal in the case of Huseyin Celil, whose imprisonment was raised last month during a meeting between Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Chinese President Hu Jintao.

"The Chinese government is holding him against our country's will," said the NDP's human rights critic. "It does not get more serious than this. ... Huseyin Celil will never come home to his wife and children if this government doesn't do more than talk about human rights."

Celil, 37, was extradited to China in June after being arrested in Uzbekistan in March while on a family trip. The father of six, who came to Canada in 2001 as a refugee, is accused of being a terrorist, but that is refuted by friends and family.

Canada has been denied access to him because China does not recognize his Canadian citizenship.

The Hamilton Spectator

Three vying for Burlington's Tory nod

BURLINGTON ♦ Halton regional chairman Joyce Savoline and two other candidates will battle it out for the Tory nomination to replace Cam Jackson. The Tories want to be ready when a byelection is called to replace Jackson, Burlington's MPP for almost 22 years. Jackson resigned to run for mayor and will be sworn in today at council's inaugural meeting.

Kathy Reid, president of the Burlington PC Riding Association, expects a nomination meeting will be held before the end of December.

Savoline did not run in the Nov. 13 municipal election and is about to hand over the regional reins to Gary Carr. She's been chairman for 12 years and was a Burlington councillor prior to that.

One of Savoline's challengers is businesswoman Blair Lancaster, 52, a former Miss Canada who operates a spa and modelling agency. She ran last year for the federal Burlington Tory nomination but lost to Mike Wallace, then a councillor and now Burlington MP.

The third candidate is Brad Reaume, 46, senior adviser to Halton MPP Ted Chudleigh. Reaume has worked for Chudleigh for about eight years and before that was a newspaper reporter with Metroland.

Christine Cox

Faster, Santa, it's almost Christmas

RON ALBERTSON, THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

Some people just go, go, go. And Christmas can really get us on the run, forgetting the spirit of giving of oneself. For some, like Jim Hazell and his charge, he was on the run for a good cause Saturday as he took part in the Annual Santa Shuffle five-kilometre fun run and one-kilometre walk to raise money for the Salvation Army. It was Christmas-like weather so those getting in the spirit with a Santa suit would have been glad for the warmth. Everyone will need an extra layer this week as the temperature remains frigid.



KAZ NOVAK, THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

Neil Danne, his wife and two small sons lost everything in the Saturday fire and had no insurance.

Is Great Glasses obeying the law?

Yes, says the boss. No, says College of Opticians of Ontario

BY STEVE BUIST

The founder of the Great Glasses chain says his stores are complying with two court orders in the wake of a record \$1 million fine imposed for civil contempt.

Bruce Bergez, a Dundas optician, said Great Glasses stores are no longer filling prescriptions for eyeglasses based on eye tests conducted on a computerized machine. Bergez also said stores have posted notices that customers must have a proper prescription from an optometrist or physician.

Bergez, his wife Joanne, and three related corporations were fined \$1 million for blatantly violating a 2003 court order that required Bergez and the Great Glasses stores to comply with Ontario legislation that governs the prescribing and dispensing of eyeglasses and contact lenses.

Superior Court Justice David Crane also ruled that Bergez will be fined \$50,000 for each day from now on that Great Glasses stores aren't in compliance with the judgment.

"We are abiding by the order," said Bergez.

But the College of Opticians of Ontario disagrees with Bergez's claim that he is complying with the order.

The college believes that Bergez and the chain are in violation of the order because there isn't an optician on duty at each Great Glasses store to dispense eye glasses and contacts.

Bergez has taken the position that opticians in Ontario are allowed to delegate their authority to dispense to anyone, even if the optician isn't on site.

"It is not acceptable for delegation to occur without an optician present on site and able to intervene," said Cathi Mietkiewicz, president of the College of Opticians.

"The delegation policies that we have in place are enforceable and they are expected to be followed by the profession, and it is professional misconduct not to follow those policies," she added.

"In my view, he is not in compliance with the order."

Mietkiewicz said the college is prepared to go back before the judge to enforce compliance.

Bergez said there's nothing in the legislation that prevents an optician from delegating the authority to dispense.

"There is absolutely no limitation whatsoever under the eyes of the law (on the right to delegate)," said Bergez. "There are no limitations within the law telling you that you need to be on site."

"What they're trying to do is rewrite the legislation using policy statements and then forcing it on their members," he added.

Bergez has been suspended from practising as an optician since Nov. 16, until the college's discipline committee deals with allegations he committed professional misconduct.

Bergez said the Great Glasses chain has hired "a few opticians" in the wake of his suspension, and they are also delegating their authority to dispense.

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Dad and 'my boys' survive house fire

BY SHARON BOASE and DANA BORCEA

Members of a downtown Hamilton family have begun the painful process of rebuilding their lives after fire destroyed their home and virtually all their possessions Saturday.

Neil Danne and his wife, Vanessa Velke, and their two little boys are staying with friends two doors down from their Duke Street apartment until they can find a new home and a few things to put in it.

"What I'm living on right now is the fact that my boys got out alive," Danne said yesterday outside the scorched three-storey brick home where he and his family lived in a main floor apartment.

"Both my boys are here and that's what's important."

Like many tenants, Danne and his wife hadn't bothered to get insurance on their rented home. "Now I wish we had," he said yesterday.

A woman was in the process of moving into the third-floor apartment, while a man lives in the second-floor one. The second-floor tenant was the only one with insurance. Neither was at home when the 4:30 p.m. fire broke out.

Danne was in a back bedroom with two-year-old Finnigan when he smelled smoke. The boy suffers from epilepsy and Danne was trying to soothe him after his first seizure in a month — a record seizure-free period for the boy.

Danne ran into the living room and discovered the couch ablaze. A scented candle burning on the mantelpiece had either shattered its glass container or Sebastian, 3, had knocked it over while playing, he said.

At first, Danne thought he might be able to fight the flames himself but then saw a thick cloud of black smoke descending from the ceiling.

"I know enough about fires to know that's the stuff that kills you," he said.

He grabbed Finnigan and began hollering for Sebastian but couldn't find the boy. He frantically searched, at one point considering dashing out to leave Finnigan in the back yard and then return for Sebastian, when the boy came up the stairs from the basement.

"We ran for our lives out the back door," he said.

Standing on a neighbour's porch a few doors down, Danne said his wife arrived home from work, "just in time to see the front window blast out and the flames shoot about 20 feet in the air."

The first-floor apartment was destroyed, while the second- and third-floor ones were heavily smoke damaged. Firefighters estimate damages at \$90,000.

"At this time of year, when candles are prevalent, diligence is required," said district Fire Chief Patrick Gallacher, "especially when there are children involved. Children are drawn to candles and they do not go well together."

Friends and neighbours are launching a fundraising campaign for the family. To contribute, call 905-522-7401.

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