



Teachers 'broke trust,'
says Catholic board

Page B3

Shania ticket sales help feed
hungry schoolchildren

Page B15



CITY

EDITOR: DONALD CAMPBELL 235-7486

CALGARY HERALD

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31, 1999

Volunteer finds 'pay' just right

Former Second World War army lieutenant Bill Birks is still on patrol.

Sometimes, it's the dawn patrol at Calgary International Airport.

Sometimes, it's the nightly anti-crime patrol.

Sometimes, it's as marshal for charity car rallies, bike races, or runs.

Four and five days a week, the man who will become an octogenarian in August is doing something for Calgary, Calgarians and their visitors.

"Why me?" is his question when I reach him about a get-together.

The painfully modest 79-year-old can't figure out why I've been pointed especially in his direction in a city famous for volunteerism and for the thousands involved.

"There are so many wonderful volunteers out there doing wonderful jobs..." he says.

Perhaps it's his age, I mutter, as we hook up at the airport.

But it's more than that, I've been told. He's the epitome of volunteerism.

Night or day, he wants to help.

"As a volunteer you get paid at the end of every shift... and there's no tax! You're paid in terms of satisfaction," says the former draftsman.

The man who gave up smoking 17 years ago but offers, anyway, to chat in the smoking lounge to accommodate a new friend — that's the kind of man he is — is wearing his airport hat.

It's a white one because today he's doing his White Hatter welcome party job for the thousands who come and go through the terminal building.

"I like the airport," says the scarlet-vested Birks. "It's full of stories. I like it so much when you see families arriving to be reunited with those waiting for them."

"But it's so sad to see some of the partings. There's a story behind every one of them," says the kindly man who once led post-D-Day supply convoys through northwestern Europe "trying to catch up with the army."

Married for 58 years to Phyllis, he's been on duty since 7 a.m. making people feel welcome and is looking forward to more of the same.

No relation to the Birks jewelry chain — "they just won't admit it" — he loves his airport stints.

But you are just as likely to spot him on duty at the Stampede parade, at car rallies, at the Block Watch office, or on duty with the Calgary Police Service volunteer group's Radio Watch.

Sometimes he's in the downtown police headquarters co-ordinating the program by radio in his office "four floors beneath Chief Silverberg."

Or, and this he really loves, he's out on patrol in a two-man car keeping his eyes open for crime as it happens, and "homing" police in on the scene.

He says: "I sometimes work with a young guy in his 20s who works all day and then goes straight on duty for Radio Watch. Sometimes it's 25 hours between sleeps for him. I really admire the volunteers who work AND volunteer."

The twinkle in his eye tells me he and his Radio Watch buddies have had some excitement on the street. "But I can't tell you anything about that," he says, explaining a life of being extra eyes for a stretched police force is a matter of security.

The conversation, a delight, must end. There's volunteering to be done.

"Calgary's been great to me," he says over his shoulder. "All I'm doing is giving something back."

CONTACT JOHN GRADON AT 235 7569 OR E-MAIL HIM AT GRADONJ@THEHERALD.SOUTHAM.CA



JOHN GRADON
ON ASSIGNMENT

HEALTH SYSTEM

Consultants blast CRHA management style

ROBERT WALKER
CALGARY HERALD

City health leaders will do a better job in future of telling the public, staff, and doctors what they're doing, says the chairman of the Calgary Regional Health Authority.

Dr. John Morgan's promise Tuesday followed the release of a consultants' report that is harshly critical of CRHA leadership.

The consultants say the CRHA must stop blaming its problems on lack of funding and focus on what is within its control.

And they say senior management at the CRHA needs to give its 15,000 employees general direction, and stop trying to "micro-manage" every decision within the organization.

The 14-page report by Watson Wyatt Worldwide was prepared after interviews with more than 500 CRHA staff over the past month or so.

"It is pretty direct and hard-hitting," CRHA chief executive Paul Rushforth told reporters Tuesday after the report was released.

"For the questions we asked them to answer, I think we got a poor mark. But the board wanted to know, and management was curious as to what are some of the issues we need to focus on. The recommendations were pretty blunt."

The troubled CRHA faced a deficit of more than \$50 million in the middle of last year. Further injections of government cash helped pare down the deficit to \$20 million.

Then in February new Alberta Health numbers showed the CRHA's budget for administration rose from 3.2 per cent to 3.5 per cent in 1997/98, while Edmonton's fell from 3.4 per cent to 3.2 per cent over the same period.

SEE CRHA, PAGE B2

DOWNTOWN

Merchants assail tax hike

RON COLLINS
and MARIO TONEGUZZI
CALGARY HERALD

More downtown business operators — some faced with tax hikes of more than 100 per cent — lashed out at the city Tuesday questioning the fairness of the massive increases.

In suburban shopping centres, however, cooler heads prevailed. Most merchants were smiling, relieved to see their taxes will fall.

"Our business taxes have gone up 178 per cent!" said a shocked Michele Maskell, general manager of the downtown Westin Hotel.

"We had no forewarning of this, that's what's driving us crazy because we weren't able to budget for it. At least with the property tax we knew there were going to be increases in the downtown core so we were somewhat prepared for that, but this is just totally out of the blue," Maskell said of the business tax bills, which began arriving in the mail Monday.

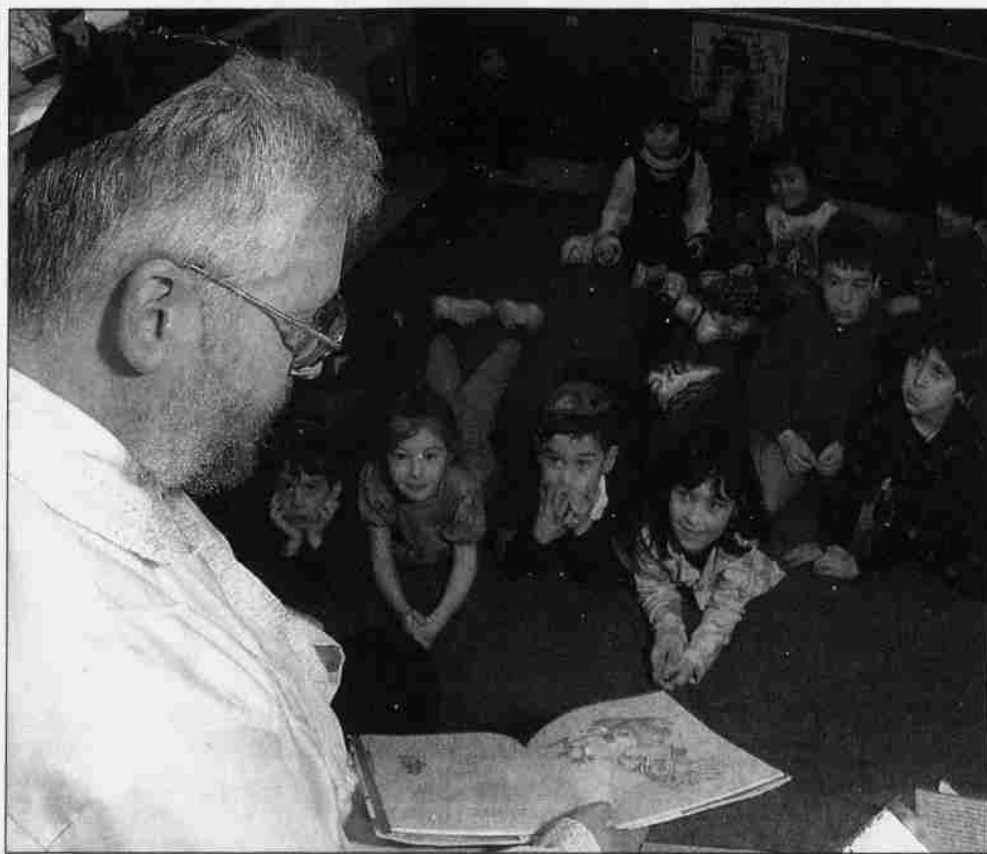
Although there's no increase in the business tax rate, many downtown firms are being hit with hikes as a result of an increase in property assessments under the new market value assessment.

Business tax is based on the net rental value of a business's floor space.

Across the city, 61 per cent of the 21,000 businesses will actually see their business tax fall. Most of the remaining 39 per cent are downtown.

SEE TAX, PAGE B2

PASSOVER



Chris Wood, Calgary Herald

Eliezer Segal reads his special Passover haggadah to a kindergarten class at Akiva Academy.

Uncle Eli aims religious book at children

GORDON LEGGE
CALGARY HERALD

A whimsical 64-page illustrated volume by Calgary professor Eliezer Segal has become a Haggadah best seller.

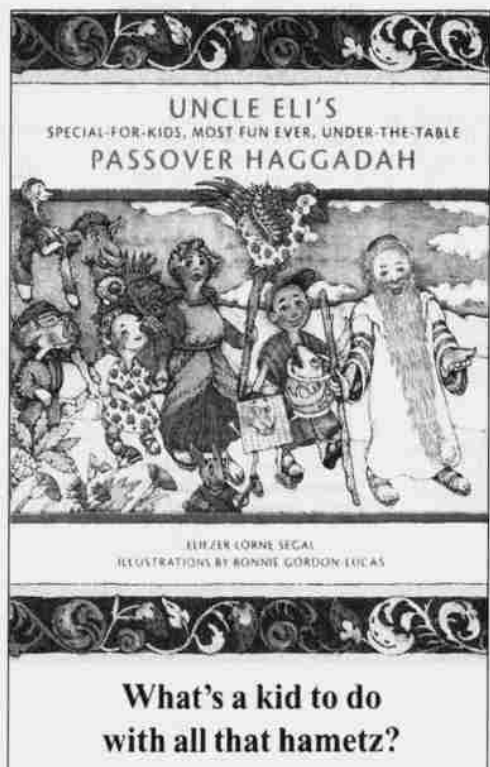
Uncle Eli's Special-for-Kids, Most Fun Ever, Under-the-Table Passover Haggadah is a parody of Dr. Seuss-style verse.

The book by the head of the University of Calgary's Jewish studies department will be showing up at thousands of Seder tables around Calgary, across the continent, and even in Israel this evening as the eight-day Jewish festival of Passover begins at sundown today.

There are more than 7,000 people in Calgary's Jewish community and more people than ever are celebrating Passover this year, reflecting a worldwide trend where more Jews than ever in modern times are marking the occasion.

"No question, there's definitely a growing interest," says Rabbi Menachem Matusof, director of Chabad Lubavitch of Alberta, an Orthodox Jewish organization that promotes Jewish awareness and education.

For instance, Matusof says when he arrived in



What's a kid to do
with all that hametz?

Calgary 11 years ago, he distributed about 13 kilograms of Shmura, a special hand-made, hand-baked matzah (unleavened bread) made in New York for Passover.

This year he'll distribute about 75 kilograms. "That just shows the growth," he says.

SEE BOOK, PAGE B2

TRIBAL ADMINISTRATION

Stoneys balance books

MARK LOWEY
CALGARY HERALD

A government-hired management firm will stay in control of most Stoney First Nation spending for several more months, even though the tribe has balanced its budget.

Stoney leaders had hoped to regain financial management of their reserve, 60 kilometres west of Calgary, by April 1. But the federal Indian Affairs Department wants the 3,300-member tribe to

do more work on its financial administration and employee hiring, firing and salary policies, said tribal administrator Rick Butler.

"Once those key policies are in place, more and more control comes back to the Stoneys," Butler said Tuesday.

The Stoney tribal council surrendered control of spending in mid-1997, after posting a \$5.6-million deficit against \$50 million in revenues.

SEE STONEYS, PAGE B2

This Spring Capture
the spirit of Fashion with

Spring **FLAIR**
on Tuesday, April 6

ENTER TO WIN
ONE OF 3
\$1000
SHOPPING SPREES AT
SEARS
CHINOOK CENTRE • NORTH HILL • MARLBOROUGH MALL
CALGARY HERALD