

THE MISSISSAUGA Times

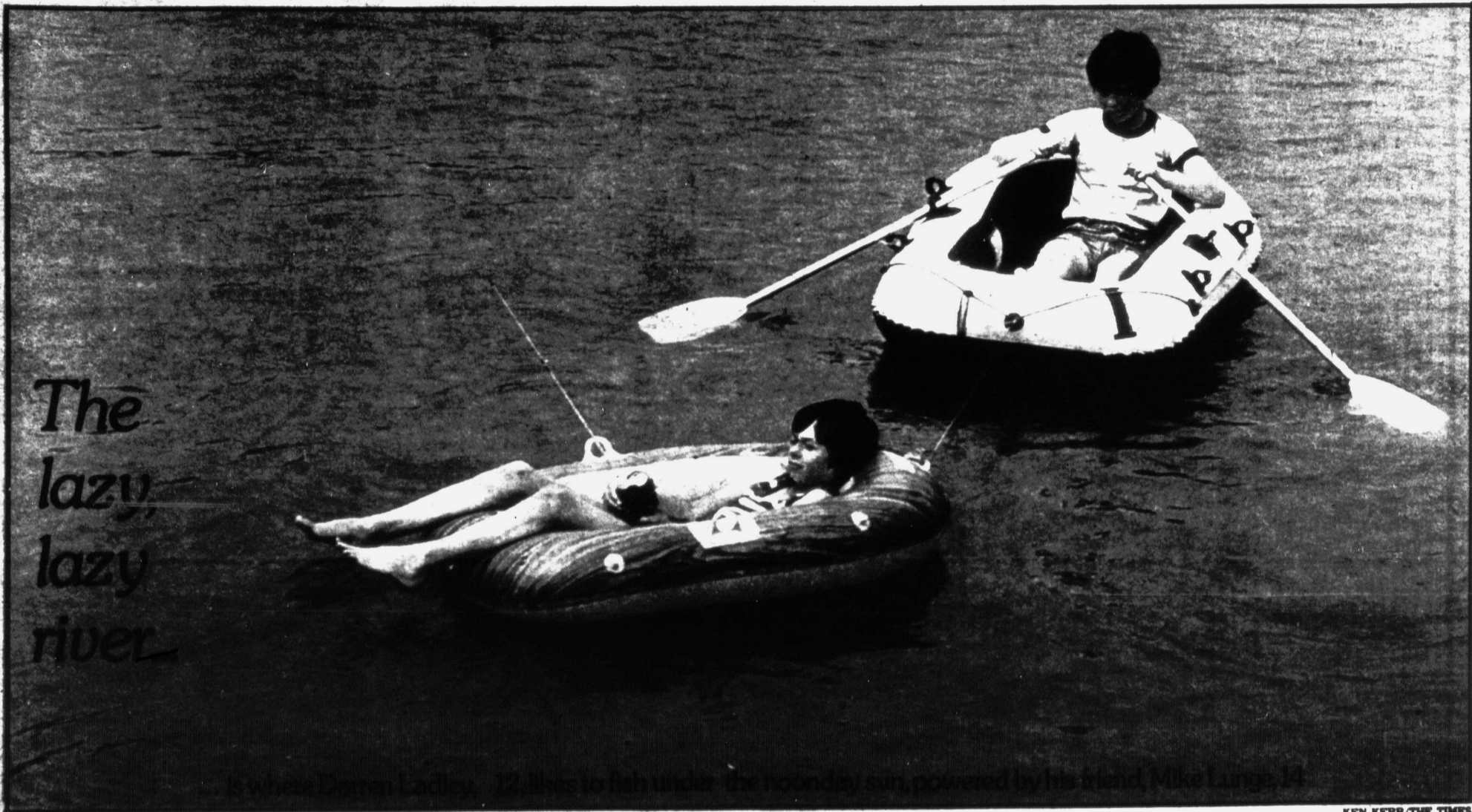
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The lazy, lazy river

KEN KERR/THE TIMES

It's barely the Crofton anymore

They say it started about a year ago; the crumbling of one of Mississauga's greatest institutions.

Some say it was the jukebox, which arrived a year ago. Most say it was the arrival of women, who also made their first appearance then.

Whatever started it, most will agree it was finalized on Monday at high noon in smoky darkness when the Crofton Rod and Gun Club changed for good.

The club that didn't allow women through its doors until last year is now featuring them — naked. Yes, the Crofton Rod and Gun Club, the country club of the jockstrap set, is now a strip joint — at least from noon to 4 p.m. each day.

While the average Mississaugan couldn't see the significance of a beer joint becoming a strip joint, the jock cognoscenti of Mississauga do. And they're shocked about the death of one of their traditions.

The Crofton is a Mississauga institution, like QEW traffic jams and drive-ins. Situated in what they tell us is the heart of Mississauga, just across the street from the trailer park, The Crofton has served as Mecca to Mississauga's sporting types for years.

The Crofton has long been the unofficial, and in some cases official, headquarters of most industrial sports leagues in Mississauga. And although it still sells fishing and hunting licences its only other rod and gun connections are its patrons fishing for pickled eggs and hunting for suckers at the pool table.

The name of the game here is not fishing, hunting, softball, hockey or even touch football. It's beer, at 85 cents a bottle.

No one can remember the last time a new bottle of scotch or vodka was opened at the bar. After all, you don't talk about last night's game over a martini.

The Crofton is the place where part-time athletes sit among the oldtimers in fluorescent-lit simplicity, order beer by the pitcher, play pool and

THE CITY

Chris Zelkovich



shuffleboard and do whatever it is Joe and the boys have been doing for the last 10 years.

But that changed on Monday when a young woman with platinum blonde

hair and a G-string mounted an unfinished plywood stage and, to the disco beat of Rod Stewart, took off her clothes. It was an historic occasion, for which a commemorative coin may be minted, and almost 40 men were on hand to witness it.

And that tells you why women are baring themselves at the Crofton. There are normally only 20 men there at lunchtime.

"We just want to try something new," says Crofton manager Jim Wagner. "It's an experiment to see if we can increase business. Maybe this will give us a little more exposure." (Honest, that's what he said.)

"We're just keeping up with the changing times."

So while Crofton kept abreast of the times a nearly-naked woman gyrated before men drinking gallons of beer. Some even ate the sandwiches that Wagner says have "at least four ounces of meat." But even he would

admit that the only ounces his customers think about are the eight ounces in the brown bottles.

Occasional patrons walking into the Crofton on Monday, their eyes having adjusted to the darkness, wouldn't have noticed much change. Outside of the plywood stage and red spotlights suspended from the ceiling it was the same old Crofton. The men watching her were the same drinkers that have haunted the Crofton by night for years. And even the stripper couldn't avoid seeing her undulating reflection in a trophy case that proudly displayed the 1963 industrial hockey league champions.

But the regulars, who have witnessed the membership fee rise from \$2 to \$5, the arrival of women and the jukebox, see the strippers as an irreversible trend.

"Next thing you know," grumbled one member of the Crofton establishment, "they'll be bringing in a wine list."

In the news: garbagemen, candidates, a junk dealer, Erin Mills

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