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NATIONAL POST

Man's conviction for spitting in the shower upheld but fine watered down to reprimand

WATER WORKS

An indignant Winnipeg man appealed a $75 fine he received for spitting in the shower at a public swimming pool. He was fined last January after being convicted in provincial bylaw court on one count of creating an unsanitary condition. Crown lawyer Michael Jack said the man was showering when he was spotted spitting by an off-duty public health inspector. The inspector followed the man outside and issued a verbal warning but charged him when an argument ensued. The case went to trial and the man was found guilty. He appealed Tuesday, but was unsuccessful in having his conviction overturned. He caught a break, however, when Justice Kenneth Hanssen agreed to replace the fine with a reprimand. "This seems to be something that just escalated out of proportion," Judge Hanssen said. "If clearer heads had prevailed, we might not have to be here." *The Canadian Press*

Police drive out Halifax Hells Angels

CHAPTER PULLED

HALIFAX • The Halifax Hells Angels drove off into the sunset last summer and they didn't come back.

"There is no existing club in Nova Scotia," said Constable Steve Waterfield of the Halifax Regional Police.

The only chapter east of Quebec suffered "death by a thousand cuts" following a series of police operations, a recent murder conviction and the seizure of its clubhouse, Const. Waterfield said.

Biker experts with the regional police/RCMP metro integrated intelligence unit say the club had its charter pulled by the national association and was forced to dissolve last August.

"It doesn't happen too many places around the world that a Halifax chapter president Michael McCrea, a prominent gang member who celebrated his 15th anniversary with hundreds of bikers in Halifax on Mother's Day weekend in 2001, has also retired.

The rest of the chapter's bikers are in jail: Clay Gordon McCrea, Arthur Blaine Harris and Jeffrey Albert Lynde for drug convictions, and Neil William Smith for first-degree murder.

Any biker who goes to jail turns his patches in to the club until he gets out, Const. Waterfield said.

No one from the club could be reached and the Angels' world site no longer lists Halifax as one of its chapters.

All Angels chapters need six members on the street to keep afloat. With such a small club, one or two members in jail put the entire Halifax chapter at risk.

"Halifax probably had the best experience where police forces from different agencies were able to put aside their petty rivalries and work together," said Julian Sher, co-author of books on the gang.

"It's really an important symbol for the east of the country."

Meanwhile, a number of high-level drug traffickers affiliated with the Hells Angels and believed to be responsible for much of the trade in cocaine, ecstasy and marijuana in eastern Ontario have been sent to prison for terms of up to four years.

To April, 2003, a joint forces drug investigation by city police and provincial police resulted in the arrests of several suspects in the Quinte region.

The group called themselves the Road Warriors and were affiliated with the Hells Angels in Quebec and Toronto, police said. Citing security concerns, police did not release news of the original arrests.

The Canadian Press

AGENCIES PUT ASIDE PETTY RIVALRIES AND WORKED TOGETHER

Hells Angels chapter closes because of enforcement activity," RCMP Constable Bruce MacDonald said.

"There are situations in various parts of the world where Hells Angels chapters have closed because of internal politics but not a lot have closed because of police activity."

Most of the bikers were given the option of retiring or joining another chapter, the officers said.

Police say Michael Christiansen left Nova Scotia to join former fellow 13th Tribe member David Giles at the Angels' chapter in east-end Vancouver.

Mr. Christiansen was allowed to join after the entire club voted him in, the officers said.

Club called a 'scapegoat' for police

BIKERS

Continued from Page A1

"Once again, the Hells Angels are battening down the hatches. In light of the current crisis, and the police's need to deflect public attention, we know the showcase raids are about to begin," he said.

Toronto police declined to comment on the statement.

Guy Ouellette, a leading motorcycle gang specialist who recently retired from the Quebec provincial police, said the Hells Angels' statement seems part of a strategy to sway public opinion.

"It's a good move, a smart move," Mr. Ouellette said.

"They try to sanitize their image. It's a strategic answer to something they think is going to happen. Hemay have already heard that something is coming down."

Toronto has the highest concentration of Hells Angels in the world; the six chapters in the city are some of the largest in the gang, which spans 27 countries.

The corruption scandal in the Toronto police involves allegations of extortion of downtown bars in the city's entertainment district and bribes paid to police officers to warn bars of impending liquor licence inspections.

This is in the same area where officers warned bar owners in 2002 of a large convention of Hells Angels to be held nearby and asked them to post signs saying: "No Gang Colours / No Gang Clothing."

National Post

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BRENDAN MCDERMID / GETTY IMAGES

Calgary student Meghan Bridges, above right, looks at photographs of contemporary crimes against humanity prior to an address by Congressman and Holocaust survivor Tom Lantos yesterday at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. Below right, Sarah Novick, leader of the Canadian group taking part in the Aspen Foundation Human Rights and Holocaust Studies Program, listens during his address.

Students hear call to action on human rights

BRENDAN MCDERMID / GETTY IMAGES

LESSONS OF THE PAST

U.S. Holocaust survivor pleads for vigilance

BY SHELDON ALBERTS

WASHINGTON • Six decades ago, Rachelle Pullmer's grandmother endured the horrors of the Nazi concentration camps at Auschwitz in Poland.

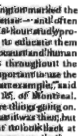
Ms. Pullmer was always deeply affected by the stories of death and survival that marked her family three generations earlier, but the 16-year-old Vancouver student only fully realized the enormity of human suffering this week when she visited the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

"This has been a big part of my life and it has been very difficult, because my grandmother is a Holocaust survivor," said Ms. Pullmer, one of about 400 Canadian students who visited the Washington museum yesterday as part of the Aspen Foundation Human Rights and Holocaust Studies Program.

"It was incredibly moving for me just to walk around the museum and think that my grandma went through this," she said. "It makes me realize how important it is to educate everyone about the Holocaust and to keep telling other generations."

Her sentiment was echoed by several fellow students whose visit to Washington marked the end of an intense — and often emotional — 18-hour study program design to educate them about the Holocaust and human rights issues throughout the world. "It is important to use the Holocaust as an example," said Kenny Sues, 18, of Montreal. "Today there are things going on. It's not as bad as it was then, but it is important to look back at that and make sure we don't repeat the same mistake."

Mr. Sues was shaken by a museum exhibit that included pics of abused victims from Holocaust victims before they were sent to Nazi concentration camps and gas chambers.



Lantos

"I had past lessons about the Holocaust, but I never really saw it with my own eyes," he said.

The Holocaust program's goal is to underscore the importance of tolerance and to motivate Canadian youth to stand up against racism when they see it happening, close to home, or thousands of kilometres away.

"Before coming here, I knew what the Holocaust was, but I didn't know the extremity of it all," said Calgarian Meghan Bridges, a student at Strathcona-Tweedsmuir school in Okotoks, Alta. "Six million Jews — it's just a number until you put a face to the number. You take it into your own life and think, what if all my family died and I was the only one left?"

She said the educational program "has given me a lot of strength to stand up for what I believe in."

Against the backdrop of the museum's exhibits, the students heard a personal call to action yesterday from Congressman Tom Lantos, the only Holocaust survivor elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.

"The message is simple. None of us has the luxury of being mere spectators," Mr. Lantos said. "Living in this day and age, where each of us is empowered immeasurably ... we have a moral obligation to act."

Mr. Lantos said the lessons of the Holocaust — especially the need to sound alarms when human rights abuses are discovered — can be applied to more recent tragedies. He cited genocide five years ago of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo and the current human tragedy in Sudan.

"We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, and our lives cannot be just private lives," Mr. Lantos said.

"We must seek out problems, try to alleviate them, deal with human suffering. Those are ultimate rewards of a long and complicated life."

More than 3,000 students have participated in the Aspen Foundation's Holocaust program since its inception in 1997.

This year's graduates hail from 11 different provinces, while many of the students are Jewish, the group includes teenagers from a variety of religious and ethnic backgrounds.

"To see so many people who aren't Jewish come here and seeing this, and understanding about the Holocaust, it gives me a lot of joy," said Ari Silbert, 18, of Halifax.

"I thought it would be only Jewish kids here, and I was surprised to see other kids," said Margot Kalish, a 16-year-old Montreal er. "They always say, if you don't learn about the mistakes of the past, you are doomed to repeat them. I know the trip isn't just about educating the Jews about what happened."

On their tour through the Holocaust Museum, the students saw more than 500 artifacts, harrowing documentary films from concentration camps and heard eyewitness accounts from survivors.

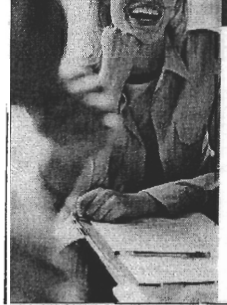
"It has a pretty big impact on your life," said Matthew Karpman, a 15-year-old junior high student from Edmonton.

"You feel how lucky we are and you understand that people were really misfortunate. You don't realize that until you come here and see all the hardships that they went through and then you realize how lucky we are in Canada."

Daniel Friedman of Ottawa called the visit "an epiphany."

The program culminates with students signing a memorandum for personal responsibility, written by the late Israel Asper, whose family owns CanWest Global Communications Corp.

CanWest News Service



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