



# NEWSLETTER

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JANUARY, 2008

# HAPPY NEW YEAR & WELCOME TO 2008!

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It was a warm sunny day in April of 1958 as I walked down the hallway of Westdale Secondary School towards my locker. It had been a good morning and I had walked home and back to school with Ron Dean - along Longwood Road, which turns into Aberdeen Avenue, then up Dundurn Street and down Orchard Hill to Mountain Avenue, for lunch at 11:45 am. Ron left me at his place on Dundurn.

An hour later, we retraced our steps back to school for afternoon classes. We were short on time, so I went directly to my 1:30 class, and this left me with having to make this jaunt to my locker just before the next class at 2:15. As I neared the locker a home room classmate sauntered up to me and asked "Do you want to go out for a smoke?"

"Yeah" I replied. We spilled out the side door of Paradise Road, as if we were invisible and bullet proof to all peering eyes of the schools many windows. Strolling down the sidewalk making a right turn at Olmstead Street which is a dead end, we were oblivious to the world around us. We sat down on the make shift bench someone had created.

"Light?"

"Thanks Ian"

Now fast forward almost 50 years later to Boxing Day, 2007 and while surfing the net on a different subject, up pops a page. It reads

*" From an early age Ian heard the beat of a different drummer and was always a step or two out of sync with his peers. Being the third of five children, the novelty of new babies in the family had worn off and he was left to his own devices, thereby developing an independent streak very much obvious to this day.*

*A true Gemini, Ian's always looking for new challenges or exciting pastimes but once the newness wears off, he moves on to something fresh. At seventeen he started training to become a pilot. Receiving his private license shortly after his nineteenth birthday, he discovered the world was full of World War Two pilots and no work was available for rookies. Losing interest, he left for a walk about in Europe, flying only once in the next two years, at Biggin Hill, in an antique Tiger Moth. He said it made him feel like the Red Baron.*

*Returning to Canada after eighteen months of wandering through the British Isles, France, and Italy, he was preparing to visit Australia when he met Sharon. Smitten, he decided she would be his wife, proposing within weeks. She quite sensibly turned him down. Several months of courting and a dozen more proposals finally wore her down and she gave in. Their honeymoon was an eight thousand mile drive to Acapulco Mexico and back in a 1963 Studebaker Lark.*

*Their next forty years have been filled with travel, adventure, successes, and a few failures. Whether it's walking on the Great Wall of China or driving over a mountain pass in the Swiss Alps during a raging blizzard, Ian believes you keep doing 'till you drop. Just recently he journeyed to the Mayan ruins at Chichen Itza to view the thousand year old Fall Equinox sunlight and shadow show on the great pyramid. Between jaunts to the Grand Casino of Monaco, Corcovado in Brazil and the opera house in Sydney Australia Ian has found time to father two children, get elected to Hamilton Ontario's city council five times and write columns for local newspapers. His political interests have involved him in elections in the Caribbean and Florida, the latter earning him an invite to the inauguration of a U.S. President.*

*Necessary Larceny, Ian's first novel, was written while running an automotive import and export business based in Mississauga. His travel takes him to all the places he writes about and the sequel, well underway, does the same.*

*Now living with wife Sharon in Mississauga, he complains his grandchildren are growing too fast and the printed word is growing too small. Other than these minor irritants, he feels life is good."*

After spending a year with Ian in this grade 10 homeroom class, I came to know his appetite and craving to learn about history, as well as other deficiencies (as some would call it - namely educators) such as the attention span above. Although I have not read the book yet, but knowing Ian's ability to convey his thoughts to paper will give you an entertaining ride from start to finish. You will not put the book down as you get an insiders look at the entrepreneurs mind and how it works - only put in story form. I am getting the book ASAP.

So all of you hundreds of people who have emailed me with accolades about this newsletter and how much you have enjoyed my editorials and articles over the years, Ian will not disappoint you. The book "Necessary Larceny" by G. Ian Stout is available at Chapters, Indigo, or local independent book store. You can also get it at Amazon.

Buy the book, or go to his website at [www.writerstout.com](http://www.writerstout.com) or better still do both.

And to all the Hamilton Mafia, who meet at Mission Springs in Mission, 3 or 4 times a year, he is one of you!

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### **FOUNDATION CRACKS**

This part of the newsletter is about getting to the underlying cause (or causes) of foundation cracks (and related defects) which otherwise would remain the subject of speculation and ongoing concern. You want answers so what do you do? Unless you are one, it is time to hire a qualified foundation expert.

A qualified foundation expert will work closely with foundation engineers. He will be prepared to conduct a thorough foundation and structural inspection and issue a written report. The report, often called a "distress analysis", should itemize all structural defects observed on the property to include foundation cracks. The report should also include observations about the property which may include comments about the geology, soils, drainage, slopes, retaining walls, foundation walls, sub floor, floor slab, general construction methods, and construction materials.

The report will also provide and interpret the results of a floor-level survey for the building. If the floor level is off, the survey will illustrate the configuration of the floor and can be used, along with all other data (such as foundation cracks), to draw conclusions. He will be prepared to determine, within the limits of the inspection, what has caused foundation cracks and other distress. If the cause of the foundation cracks and other distress can be attributed to common construction errors, isolated forces or normal structural adjustments which have been resolved, then the report will state so. Cosmetic repairs, such as patching of foundation cracks or concrete resurfacing, may be recommended.

This report will supplement a separate geo technical report that will state whether any foundation movement is "active" or has the potential to become active in the future. Knowing how to read foundation cracks is important in this regard. Should active movement be detected, the problem is more serious and appropriate foundation repairs should be recommended. The geo technical report might include one or some combination of the following: soil stabilization, soil re-compaction, slope stabilization, soil replacement, drainage correction, foundation underpinning, foundation replacement, and/or substructure repairs.

Finally, your foundation repair specialist should provide you with an estimate of foundation repair costs. This may come in the form of a lump sum number, an itemized list or a detailed design-build proposal. Be aware that a foundation repair contractor will give you an estimate or bid while an engineer report will often include the suggestion that you go elsewhere for an estimate.

The ideal situation would be that the foundation repair contractor, the geo technical engineer and a structural engineer give you three separate reports, each on entirely separate and different than the other. The combination of the three reports is accompanied by a design-build proposal for your review and acceptance. All three reports will have a fee attached to them but they are necessary in order to provide a remedial solution for the foundation failure.

Please remember, most of the time, foundation cracks do not suggest the need for expensive foundation repair work. Concrete cracks or cracks in masonry, brickwork, stucco, plaster or drywall are not uncommon in structures and often are often tolerated by property owners without consequence. Such defects will usually prove to be the result of minor errors in design, construction methods, or the result of normal expansion and contraction of materials. A property owner is not concerned with an isolated foundation crack which has not changed since the property was purchased 20 years ago.

So why do so many property owners need to consult a foundation repair expert? Because you need the experienced expert to distinguish between what is minor and what is a significant problem. Nobody else wants the liability of perhaps making the wrong call about a foundation crack.

Consider the following commonplace event:

One day the property owner decides to list the property with a real estate broker. An offer is accepted and people start swarming around the property - the buyer's agent, bank appraisers, and property inspectors. Unless the owner has piled a heavy stack of bricks in front of the foundation cracks (this happens), the various professionals observe the foundation cracks and note them in their reports.

A report might say something like this: "Vertical foundation cracks in the concrete foundation wall were observed just south of the crawl space access - consult a qualified foundation specialist." It is usually the real estate broker who will convince the buyer (or seller) to bring in the foundation repair expert. Here's a bit of background on the subject:

British Columbia and other provinces now have "full disclosure" laws which arose after sellers and Realtors started getting sued over undisclosed defects. The courts ruled that the real estate broker has the responsibility to point out any "red flags". To be clear, foundation cracks are considered to be red flags. The legislatures took the concept of "buyer beware" and threw it out the window. The brokers are now protected because of laws requiring the seller to "tell all" in a multi-page disclosure which is built into the sales agreement. Further protection is afforded when the buyer hires a professional to inspect the property and issue a written report, itemizing all the problems which are discovered.

But even the professional home inspector is not usually willing to go out on a limb concerning foundation cracks and other foundation problems. That is unless that inspector is also an experienced foundation repair contractor.

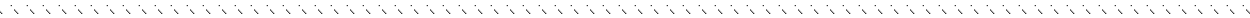
To be complete, it is important to make this point of process. A soils investigation is one phase of a collaborative study which is done for remedial work for failing foundations. Typically, an engineering

firm will perform a soils investigation and make recommendations for foundation design for a proposed structure. A geologist or soils engineer, working as an employee or partner in the firm will conduct the site exploration phase. Often this process will require exploratory pits, machine borings, or both to obtain soil samples which are tested in the laboratory. The regional and site geology (seismicity, slope stability, hydrology) together with the specific characteristics of the foundation soils (density, cohesion, shear strength) are calculated and recorded.

Based upon the site investigation and laboratory results, a foundation engineer will then provide specific foundation design guidelines including grading specifications, concrete footing depth and configuration, and rebar placement. The next step is for a structural engineer to create a set of structural drawings. The architect then takes the soils report and structural drawings then creates a package of documents for any remedial work to be completed.

What has been outlined above can be a long drawn-out process and quite expensive as well if you do not have a foundation repair specialist, a geo technical engineer and a structural engineer on board from the beginning, An experienced foundation repair specialist can spot design errors which have been overlooked and in fact he can even propose an alternate and better repair solution, thus keeping the work on schedule and on budget. This only occurs when all three parties know one another and have work together. It saves not only time but money as well.

In repair design, borings and laboratory testing may be needed if there is no other way to get the data but such investigative work can often be incorporated into the beginning phase of the foundation repairs, a method which can provide significant overall savings on the project. Design-Build puts the project in the hands of the contractor from the very beginning.



This newsletter is sponsored by the following reports - Replacement Cost Reproduction Building Appraisal Reports (RCR), Occupancy Design Fixtures Appraisal Reports (ODF), Damage Assessment Reports (DA), and Loss Appraisal Reports (LA) for Marshall & Swift Field Valuations. Our current fees are:

| MUNICIPALITY | RCR | ODF<br>Add | DA  | LA<br>Add |
|--------------|-----|------------|-----|-----------|
| Abbotsford   | 400 | 200        | 700 | 300       |
| Burnaby      | 500 | 200        | 800 | 300       |
| Chilliwack   | 500 | 200        | 800 | 300       |
| Coquitlam    | 500 | 200        | 800 | 300       |
| Delta        | 500 | 200        | 800 | 300       |
| Langley      | 500 | 200        | 800 | 300       |

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|-----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Maple Ridge     | 400 | 200 | 700 | 300 |
| Mission         | 400 | 200 | 700 | 300 |
| New Westminster | 500 | 200 | 800 | 300 |
| North Vancouver | 500 | 200 | 800 | 300 |
| Port Coquitlam  | 500 | 200 | 800 | 300 |
| Port Moody      | 500 | 200 | 800 | 300 |
| Richmond        | 500 | 200 | 800 | 300 |
| Surrey          | 500 | 200 | 800 | 300 |
| Vancouver       | 500 | 200 | 800 | 300 |
| West Vancouver  | 500 | 200 | 800 | 300 |
| White Rock      | 500 | 200 | 800 | 300 |

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