

1982. Although the inventory loss suffered in the incident was not much, Annis recalled the incident vividly as it almost turned deadly.

"They called me at 3:30 a.m. I came down and switched on the lights, walked down the stairs and saw the water and all



PETER  
ANNIS

kinds of things floating and I thought I better check if the pump was working. So I put on these hip boots and went down not realizing that the water could have gone right up to the electricity boxes. It (the water) was only about six inches below that. I would have been killed. So, I smartly got out of there," he chuckled. But that was not before, to his dismay, he stepped on a Waterford crystal and a Royal Doulton china.

"It all floated around and I was walking around in the water and I couldn't see them because it was dirty water. We basically had a three weeks of cleaning period. We didn't lose a lot of stuff. The gift boxes — the boxes got wet but inside they were still okay except for the ones I stepped on. Those things I stepped on today could cost about \$190 to \$225 each. So, I didn't feel very smart stepping on them," he added a little ruefully.

Annis said that today the demand for fine bone china has gone down while its prices have gone up.

"At one time, you could buy a whole tea set for \$220 for eight settings plus the odd pieces. Now, you're looking at one place setting for \$ 200," he said.

In the late '70s, Michael Doulton, a fifth generation member of the Royal Doulton family, came to visit the Belleville store and that event alone, recalled Annis, generated an unprecedented \$40,000 worth of sales in one day.

In its last years, the store's reputation spread far, said Annis.

"We used to have people come from California and other parts of the U.S. shop at our store. When my wife and I took a trip to Bermuda, we met a person, and when we said we were from Belleville, she said, 'Oh, you have a lovely china shop there called Stroud's' and I asked her how she knew about it and she said she had been to Belleville and had shopped at Stroud's."

Locally, the store was a favourite among most prominent families of Belleville as well.

"Among the customers were the families of Jack Parrot, Miles Morton, Max Smith and Bob Clute. In fact, every prominent family in Belleville can tell you that Stroud's was a beautiful place to go to for fine china," said Annis.

*You can reach Benzie Sangma at [bsangma@cogeco.ca](mailto:bsangma@cogeco.ca)*

Intell, Aug. 7/04