Grateful for new start in Milton after escape from Amin's Uganda

by Ann Hauprich-Nielsen Leaving one's homeland to start a new life in another country is an emotionally trying experience at the best

But to depart from all that is familiar with only the clothes on your backknowing that your life is in danger and you may never be able to return—is something worse. It's traumatic.

the situation the Gaff Mohamed Family fled Uganda shortly after Idi Amin came to power in the early 1970s.

Four years ago And though four years have passed since their exodus from the politically terrorized African nation, memories of long months of separation

and fear for those left behind

linger on. Mohameds-who now live in Milton townhouse development-is courage and perseverance and, according to them, even

some small "miracles." Naj and Gaff Mohamed had been married 10 years and had three small children-a Riyaz, and daughters, Rizpa Rabia—when they decided to flee Uganda and seek refuge elsewhere in the summer of

How it was At the time, Mr. Mohamed enjoyed a top position with East African Airlines and had an active home and social life in the community of Entebbe. The family resided in a bungalow on Lake Victoria surrounded by several acres

of private gardens. "paradise" is how they remember it. The lawns and gardens were looked after by an 18year-old lad named "Daki"

who later became the family cook as well. A young woman called "Maria" was employed as governess for the children. She came to work for the Rivaz was born, and, ac-"Daki" were like members of

the family.

Involved A community-minded individual, Mr. Mohamed was charter president of the Lions Club in Entebbe. He was also chairman of the city's PTA belonged to Entebbe In-

Both he and wife, Jan (pronounced "Nadge"), were members of the Interline Airlines Club based in Kampala and travelled widely throughout Kenya and Tanzania. Much of their leisure time

together was spent with friends on the golf course or swimming in the nearby lake. Mohamed occasionally took the children

on vacations to such exotic places as Cairo, Egypt, when her husband was away on business for extended periods of time. Life was good and they

wanted for nothing. Upheaval

But as tensions grew in neighboring African coun tries during the late 1960s, they began to contemplate a move to a more politically environment-like Canada. They did not want their children to grow up in a nation surrounded by upheaval and political unrest.

In Mr. Mohamed's words: "We had considered leaving Uganda before 1972, but never dreamed we would leave under the circumstances we did."

They had hoped, at least, to emigrate as a family—and to

be allowed to take their them." money and certain possessions with them when they made the move.

people-most of them British subjects—exactly months to 'leave Uganda effective June 6, 1972

Each family was told they

The Mohameds departed from their homeland abthe result of a bureaucratic

Everything they now possess has been accumulated through four years of hard work and sacrifice in this country.

To England The first to leave Uganda Mrs. Mohamed together with the children—in August 1972. The youngsters were then aged eight, six and

Though a native of Uganda, in England with relative ease. This was because her passport identified her as a "British subject."

(This is one of the small "miracles to which the Mohameds refer. They said a request to change her status to "Ugandan" when the country gained independence turned down by a friend in the he would be coming," she immigration department who said. had some foresight into the events that were to come. Mr. Mohamed had his status to "citizen Uganda"—and consequently had a much more difficul time leaving the country.)

No good-byes Although Mr. Mohamed was at the airport the day his wife and children left, no good-byes were said.

The children were instructed by their father ahead of time to walk straight past him onto their plane. Under no circumstances were they to let on that they knew him. His own life was in

jeopardy—and he didn't want the soldiers to know his family was leaving. "I was crying on the inside,

but I had to be strong," Mrs. Mohamed said. "I couldn't let the children see how upset I was for fear they would break Letters censored "I could see Maria and

Daki waving to us from the visitor's deck," she recalled. "They were crying very hard. I still think of them often and wonder what's happened to

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several other friends since But Idi Amin and his ar- leaving Uganda, but has mies had other plans for de- never received any replies. This is because the government censors all of the mail Three months General Amin gave 80,000 coming into and leaving the

And so it happened that Mrs. Mohamed and children arrived safely in Britain in the summer of 1972 could take the equivalent of with one suit case apiece and \$100 with them when they left a few identifying papers in hand-but no money.

("I managed to grab my solutely penniless, however- children's birth certificates favorite photographs before leaving, but that was it," she said.)

Nightmares Her brother (who had settled in England a few vears earlier) took fatherless family under his wing—and saw to it the children were enrolled in British schools.

Similarly, Mrs. Mohamed wasted no time in finding a job so she could earn her keep. Within two weeks of her Mrs. Mohamed was per- arrival in London, she was mitted to join relatives living employed in the governdepartment—a position she kept until Gaff called for her and the children to come to Canada in June 1973.

> Still, it was an emotionally upsetting time for Mrs. Mohamed and the children "They would wake up in the

middle of the night screaming and Amin rose to power was for their father and ask when

missed their father so much, they became physically ill. Children sick

"I brought them to a doctor in London to find out why they were so sick," Mrs. Mohamed recalled. "He told me there was no biological reason for their poor health suggested it was a result of the psychological strain they'd been under-and sure enough, when they united with Gaff they became

themselves again!' During their first two months apart, the Mohameds were unable to communicate because of the cenorship and fear that Ugandan authorities would prevent Mr. Mohamed from leaving the

And though he managed to get out in November 1972 and write to Naj and the children that he had arrived safely in Canada, Mr. Mohamed and the family were not reunited until several months later.

As Mr. Mohamed had some relatives living in the Toronto

Manpower

during his first winter and spring in Canada.

(Mrs. Mohamed said she's written to Daki, Maria and Penniless—as his wife had been upon arrival England-Mr. Mohamed set out looking for work almost immediately. He was advised by im-

migration authorities to seek out a job through Manpower, but he found that to be a useless avenue of pursuit. Every morning for the first 10 days, he got up early in the morning and took the train to

dressed in his only salvaged But everyday the story was matter what time he arrived he was always "too early" or "to late" to apply for the

Manpower office-

position he sought. "Aggressive" Mr. Mohamed soon tired of treatment he receiving and decided only way he was ever going to get a job that interested him in Toronto was to be

aggressive. So he found his way to Toronto International Airport one chilly morning and made up his mind not to stop "pestering" them there until he was promised employ-

"I had almost 20 years of experience working with airlines and I wasn't going to let it go down the drain," he said

His perserverance paid off. Two weeks after he filed his initial application at the airport, he received word that Air Canada could use him as

A needed break Though it was a far cry

from the position he'd once enjoyed with East African Airlines, Mr. Mohamed was overjoyed. It was, he knew, the break

he needed. A start in the right For the next seven months, Mr. Mohamed worked and sacrificed with thoughts only of how many things he needed to buy before Naj and the children could join him.

"My family had everything they could ever want Entebbe, I couldn't let them here and nothing," he said. Wrote daily With the goal of securing a

comfortable life for his mind, in Mohamed skipped meals, worked overtime and spent absolute minimum on entertainment or anything

necessities for himself.

"I used to write to Naj every single day," he said. "And though I missed her and the kids terribly and worried if I didn't hear from them for a few days, I couldn't allow myself the luxury of an overseas phone call. I knew I'd need the money more when they joined me here."

By June he could stand the separation no longer, however, and also felt financially secure. He decided it was time to send for the family in England.

Reunited

Having saved up "days off and rearranging shifts with some friends at the airport Mr. Mohamed was able to give Naj and the children his undivided attention during their first days in Canada.

One of the first places he took the family was to the Ontario Place, Black Creek friends. Pioneer Village and other places of entertainment for youngsters their age.

Shortly after the "holiday their new environment. reunion," Mrs. Mohamed landed a part-time job as a passenger agent with Air far cry from the lavish life-Canada, and between their two salaries, the Mohameds soon saved enough money for Mohameds are thankful just the downpayment on their present Milton home.

Promotion An added financial boost came when Mr. Mohamed was promoted to "flight dispatcher" for K.L.M. Royal Dutch Airlines. (It was the airline he originally applied to for work, but accepted Air

came first.) to renew his lisence with DC- hills. Give yourself a brake.

10s and 747s—and is optimistic that he may return to his former status with the airline before too long.

After two years in Milton, Naj and Gaff Mohamed say they are "very happy" to be here and that they've been graciously received by their neighbors in the community. Involved The children, they say,

have adjusted well to public school in Milton-and even belong to a few of the community's youth organizations. And though Mr. and Mrs.

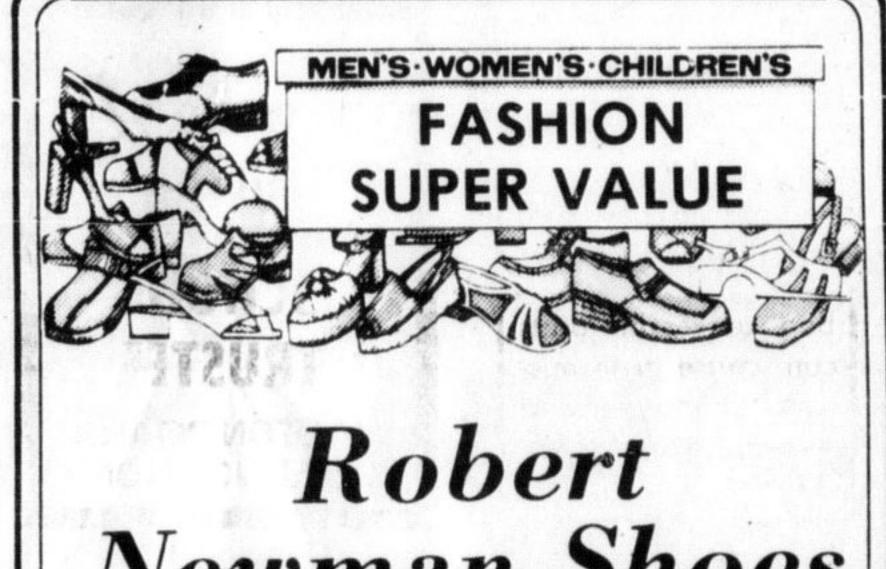
Mohamed are both employed in Toronto, they make it a point to keep up on local news and events—taking an active part, whenever possible. Mr. Mohamed has joined a

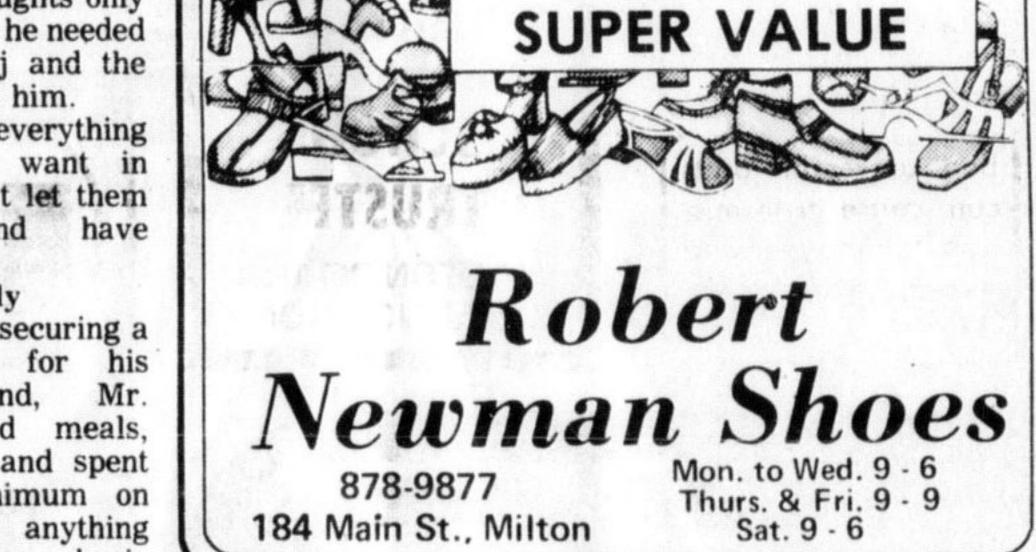
fraternal organization in town and both Mr. and Mrs. Mohamed belong to recreational club where they CNE followed by trips to are getting to know many new

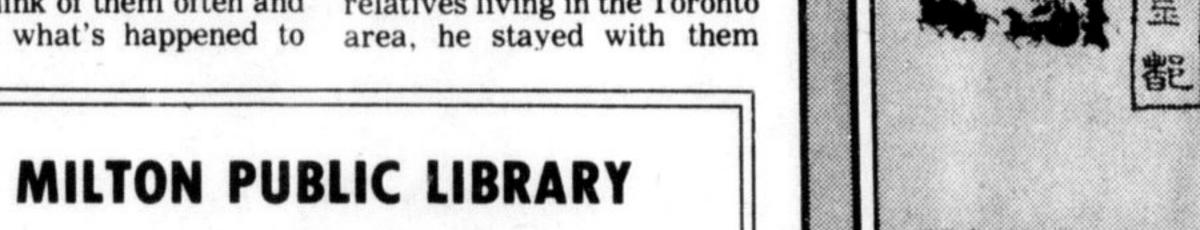
They appear cheerful and content—and have only positive things to say about

For though life in a Milton townhouse development is a style they once enjoyed in homeland. to be alive—and together once again.

Bicycles, like cars, lose some of their braking efficiency in wet weather and on hills. The Ontario Safety League reminds cyclists to test your braking power on hills and after rain. You'll need Canada's offer because it more time to stop and you'll have to adjust your balance to He will be travelling to allow for sliding. Don't be Amsterdam in the near future grounded by wet roads and







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NAJ AND GAFF MOHAMED look through some photos from Uganda as they reminisce about the peaceful life they once enjoyed in Entebbe (before Idi Amin rose to power), their escape from the politically terrorized nation in 1972—and the long, hard road to building a new life in Canada. Behind them are pictures of their three children, Rizpa, 10, Riyaz, 12, and Rabia, nine. The youngsters now attend public school in



THE TOWN OF MILTON

AND SCHOOL BOARD **ELECTIONS** POLLING NOTICE

The Regular Polling Day for 1976 Municipal and School Board Election shall be:

MONDAY, DECEMBER 6th, 1976

Between the Hours of 11 a.m. and 8 p.m. A notice has been mailed to each Dwelling Unit in the Municipality advising the location of the Polling Place and the Advance Polling

Place for the electors in the respective Dwelling Units. ADVANCE POLL

For the purpose of receiving Votes of Electors who expect to be unable to vote on December 6th, 1976.

THERE WILL BE TWO ADVANCE POLLS SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 20th, 1976

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 27th, 1976

between the hours of

11 a.m. and 8 p.m.

At each of the following locations for Electors of the respective Wards.

WARD I, TRAFALGAR

Percy Merry Public School 263 Britannia Road East, Milton, Ontario.

WARD 2, MILTON

Town of Milton Municipal Offices, 251 Main Street East, Milton, Ontario.

WARD 3, NASSAGAWEYA

Campbellville Lions Hall, Campbellville, Ontario.

NAMES NOT ON POLLING LIST

Any person who was qualified to have his name entered on the polling list during the period of enumeration (September 7th, 1976 to October 12th, 1976) and finds that his name is not entered thereon or who has not filed the necessary forms to have his name entered during the period for corrections to such list (ending November 5th, 1976) can attend at my office to secure a certificate which will allow his name to be entered at the polling station. In addition to this, qualified electors may be entitled to have their name added to the list at the polling station on polling day.

Qualified Elector means: a person who during the period of September 7th, 1976 to October 12th, 1976 was a Canadian citizen or other British subject, a resident of Milton or a non-resident owner or tenant or a spouse thereof and has attained the age of eighteen years by December 6th, 1976.

PROXY VOTING

Form are available at my office for the appointment of a voting proxy. A certificate to vote by proxy must be certified by THE CLERK. This can only be done between November 16th, 1976 and 5.00 p.m. Tuesday, November 30th, 1976.

> J. McGeachie, Clerk & Returning Officer, Town of Milton.