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Champion COMMUNITY Page

This Central American experience is a central one for Father Earl Talbot

By IRENE GENTLE

The Champion

The tiny Guatemalan village of Teculut'an now boasts a Pepsi plant.

On the outskirts, it's all spiffed up with newly paved roads.

Times sure have changed since 1976, when Father Earl Talbot, now of Holy Rosary Parish, first made his way to Guatemala.

Then, he arrived in the wake of a devastating earthquake and ended up staying for five years.

Even after returning to Canada in 1981, Father Talbot has kept his roots to Teculut'an well watered, returning from his latest trip on February 8.

He and six Milton representatives made the latest trek hauling a precious cargo of \$50,000.

The money was raised by the joint efforts of Holy Rosary Parish and Milton's four Catholic schools. It included a \$15,000 top-up from Dufferin-Peel Catholic students.

Since returning, more money has been raised via a February 16 Mardi-Gras 'Jesus Jam.' One thousand students got in the groove for four long hours to raise \$15,000 during that event.

Milton's Lauren MacDonald, Anne Courtney, Marisu Hun, Brian Millette, Michael Girodat and Willy Robinson left January 29 to explore the country that not so long ago was scourged by the brutal Hurricane Mitch.

Some of the \$50,000 will go towards buying building supplies for the village. The rest will help sponsor education and fund the local Nutrition House.

Still, the trip was not about rebuilding in the wake of disaster. For Father Talbot, it was another homecoming.

For the small delegation that accompanied him, it was about stepping into a different world.

"One of the things that fascinates our group when we go down is how expressive they are there," said Father Talbot. "It has a lasting impact on our folks."

The impact hits hardest when the visit coincides with Candlemas, as it did this year.

Staged 40 days after Christmas, Candlemas is a nine-day festival representing giving the baby Jesus to God.

As one would expect of any self-respecting Central American nation, Candlemas in Guatemala is some-

thing to experience.

The town of 5,000 swells as prodigal sons and daughters are welcomed home for the holiday.

The whole thing kicks off with a church service. After that, it begins to resemble a joy-filled full contact sport.

"Everyone has a candle and they go outside and process around the park," said Father Talbot. "The firecrackers woke us up every morning at five."

Since Candlemas is a celebration of light, firecrackers play a large role, with new displays put on nightly for the duration of the festival.

This year, even the circus made it to town.

"There were four Ferris wheels," said a bemused Father Talbot. "I think that's a record."

For the Canadian visitors, the whole week was a torrent of colour, music and light.

There was even a dash of fame.

"We were walking beside the mayor, being treated like celebrities," recalled Father Talbot of one memorable procession. "It was humbling."

In time, even the most staid Canadian representative gave way to the electric joy of the revelry.

"When in Rome do as the Romans do," shrugged Father Talbot. "Even though they have little there, they like to celebrate life."

While the meaning of faith may be the same everywhere, the face of it can differ drastically.

In Guatemala, the face of faith can be very young.

Baby-faced nuns and aspirants dot the tiny town. That's a marked contrast to the Hamilton Diocese, for example, which Holy Rosary falls within. There, the average age of those called is 60.

The visit was not all music and swirling colour. There was also a solemn viewing of the Hurricane Mitch damage.

In Teculut'an, the rebuilding has begun. New homes are being constructed away from creeks and riverbeds, on land donated by the Pepsi plant and the local Bishop.

Next year, Father Talbot hopes to show off some Canadian hospitality by bringing a handful of Guatemalans to Milton for a week.

Meanwhile, he has returned to the parish rejuvenated.

"The poor evangelize us, teach us what the Gospel is about," he said. "I go there to get inspired."

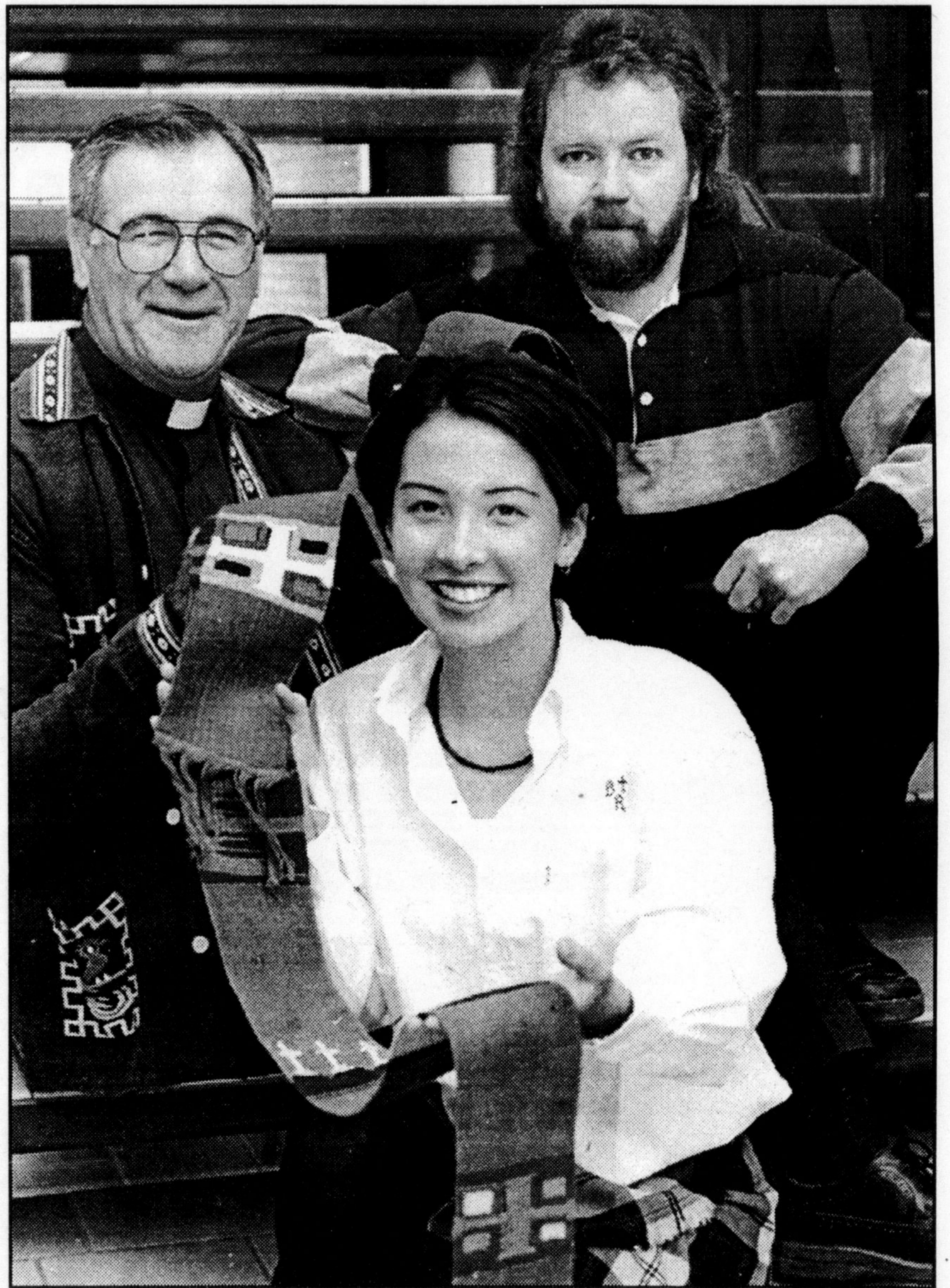


Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Father Earl Talbot (left) of Holy Rosary shows off a bit of Guatemala along with Bishop Reding's Lauren MacDonald (Centre) and Chaplain Brian Millette.

Beware, flu season is here for another long run

When is a cold not a cold? When it's the flu.

So button up, baby, because the flu season has blown in. In all it's aching,

sniffing glory.

For most people, the flu is kind of like a spectacular cold. While it has its own influenza virus, the symp-

oms can often feel like a cold on steroids. That means a cough, headache, appetite loss, muscle aches, fatigue and fever.

For the unfortunate, the flu can also come hand in hand with stomach ache and diarrhea.

On the other hand, a mild flu can

feel just like a cold.

For most people the flu will come and go in a week or two. Sure, it may

• see CARD on page 18



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