

Disabled face many obstacles

By SHEILA MCLEOD
STOUFFVILLE

The curbs at Stouffville's crosswalk are not much more than six inches high. That's hardly a giant step for man unless, like Edgar Lewis of Tindale Ave., he is disabled. Then that small drop from sidewalk to road can assume the proportions of an abyss.

Seventeen months ago Mr. Lewis would have taken the step as effortlessly and automatically as the majority of pedestrians. Now he must grasp the nearest signpost, haul himself out of a wheelchair and hang on until his chair is manoeuvred over the curb to a position where he can again struggle into the seat. At the other side of the crosswalk he must go through the same routine, all because of curbs that are not much more than six inches high.

When Mr. Lewis walked into hospital in September of last year he little realized that, at fifty-seven years of age, he was entering a phase in his life where wheels would supplant legs and become indispensable appendages.

Stricken by cancer of the spine, Mr. Lewis

wears a brace from chest to waist. He cannot walk without support because, as he puts it, "the two-by-four that holds me together is weakened."

Technical observation, rather than clinical self-analysis, is typical of Mr. Lewis, a former auto-mechanic who likes to know what makes things tick. Limited mobility, he says, has given him a more enquiring mind; the time to probe and ask why.

Why, he has learned, takes on a new focus when a disabled person ventures out into the walking world with a wheelchair. Mr. Lewis and his wife Edith are prompted to wonder why, at every curb without a slipway, every building without a ramp, at insurmountable stairs, inadequate entrances, inaccessible facilities.

Significantly, these same "whys" are now being echoed persistently by disabled persons throughout the province. Rochelle St. John and Judy Smith, aides at Markham's Participation House, are presently circulating a petition and preparing to lobby in York Region for changes in public facilities which would better ac-

commodate residents like Mr. Lewis.

Mrs. St. John expects the campaign to be most successful at municipal level. She points out that Markham, perhaps more sensitive to impaired physical mobility because a Participation House is within its boundaries, has already adopted a policy which requires future public buildings in the municipality to be accessible to the disabled.

Although it is not known how many residents in Whitchurch-Stouffville face the same local navigational hazards as Mr. Lewis, Mayor Gordon Ratcliff, when contacted by The Tribune, conceded that council could make their journey smoother.

Council, he felt, should consider legislation which would require ramps and adequate access for wheelchairs to future public buildings in the community. "I'm sure," he added, "we also have control over the curbs in town and we will certainly look into the possibility of establishing slipways, particularly when we relocate the downtown crossing."



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Claremont News

Music night proves highlight of season

By ANNE LONEY
CLAREMONT

The Christmas Music Night held in the United Church was a highlight of the holiday season. Earl Cook, filling in for the Rev. Linstead who was suffering from a cold, welcomed the audience and made a very capable M.C.

The tuneful evening started with a medley of old favorites, "Silver Bells," "White Christmas," and "Let There Be Peace," played by church organist, Clarion Baker and Lee Warden on the drums. Later they played a second medley of "Jingle Bell Rock" and "Let it Snow."

With the choir in the background, featured soloists, Kim Evans and Nancy Ward's lovely young voices sang "Every Star Shall Sing a Carol." Always welcome on a program was Rosemary Timms who sang "I Believe" although she was trying to overcome a very annoying cold. She also joined with Jean Drake whose clear Alto blended beautifully with Rosemary's in a duet, "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day."

Another delightful voice was that of Kathy Stickwood singing "O Holy Night," the old Hymn bringing back memories of other Holy Nights.

A musical selection, "The Entertainer," featuring Steve Woolhead with the clarinet, accompanied by Muriel Anderson at the piano and Mike Willis with his trumpet, was thoroughly enjoyed by all who admired their wonderful talent. Steve, who is also a marvellous pianist,

played two solo numbers of his own arranging.

The numbers chosen by the choir, "All This Night," "My Heart Rejoices," "No Room," and "Shepherds in the Fields Abiding," as usual, was greatly appreciated. Interspersed during the evening was congregational singing, with the audience selecting the numbers.

All in all it was a grand performance. Earl Cook gave the Benediction, bringing to a

close a most satisfying and heartwarming evening.

A collection of over \$50 was received and turned over to the Taylor Fire Fund.

The Women's Institute will meet at the home of Mrs. Elizabeth Fryer on Wednesday, Jan. 15, at 2 p.m. The program will be on Her Hon. Pauline McGibbon, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario. The Roll Call will be "Name a Woman V.I.P."

Town considers idea

Edgar Lewis is not a man to let setbacks get him down and is actively working on ways to learn to get around better. One help is ramps for public buildings and slipways on curbs, which the town is considering.

Don Bernard

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