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Editorials

Youth project aids seniors

The media is often accused of publicizing the negative side of youth—what they do wrong rather than what they do right.

If this is so, it's only because the negative side is accentuated by the public and, in turn, is picked up by the press.

This week, we have an opportunity to point out something very positive concerning a project undertaken by a group of young people here in Stouffville. Twenty-nine Grade 12 students at S.D.S.S., under the leadership of staff teacher, Jim Rehill and co-ordinator Steve Spang, are giving of their 'spare period' time, Monday through Friday, to assist senior citizens in town.

This is not a totally new program here. The truth is, it's now in its fourth season. However, it may be totally new to some Stouffville residents, seniors included.

It works this way. If an elderly person requires a service, like having his or her sidewalk shovelled or a prescription picked up at a local store, he or she need only call the school at 640-1433. The requests are passed on to Steve Spang who, in turn, selects one of his willing workers to do the job.

A flat fee of \$1 is charged, but the money isn't pocketed by the student. It's held 'in trust' and later returned in the form of a seniors' party later in the year or something equally appropriate.

Organizers of this program and its participants are to be commended. We trust the people will respond. In doing so, they make it a success.

Congratulations, student volunteers of Grade 12 and GOOD WORK.



Grade 12 students at S.D.S.S. work "Hand In Hand" with senior citizens

Shun parents on sex course

Sex education (or lack of it) in York County's schools, is currently an issue before the York County Board.

If progress on this program holds true to form, it's unlikely anything concrete will be implemented by the fall term in September.

Why? For several reasons.

First, the committees and sub-committees make everything too complicated. For example, guideline A: "The provision to students of a sound understanding of the physical, emotional, ethical and social aspects of their sexual and interpersonal relationships, including those responsibilities for a successful marriage, parenting and family life, to aid in their wholesome and integrated growth as individuals." And guideline E: "Discussion on sex-role stereotyping and gender identification, to help each child feel proud of his maleness or her femaleness, that they may feel secure in who and what they are."

Second, the sex education committee and the Board as a whole, appear more concerned with pleasing the parents than getting on with the job of instructing the students.

As an example, recommendation 4: "That, as the principal sees appropriate but no less frequently than once a year, a letter be sent to each parent of students up to Grade 10 inclusive, outlining the Family Life-Sex Education program for that school year so that parents may discuss the content matter with the school, and have the opportunity to see an alternative for their child for any part of the program to which they object."

Since it's necessary for the school to become involved in a sex education course, it's an admission that parents cannot cope. So why, we ask, should these same parents have a say in what is told their child? They've abdicated all responsibility in this regard.

Third, no lay teacher should be given this task, regardless of fill-in training provided. This is a job for the professional in the field whose knowledge and credentials far exceed those of his (or her) critics.

With instruction in the hands of a pro, the Board should be able to slice through the red tape and proceed with its program immediately.

Four dogs are two too many

One dog is dead; torn to pieces by four German Shepherds near the Felray Sub-division at Ballantrae.

Sure, the unfortunate pet was on private property. The owner admits this. But children often do the same; in this case, likely the same result. That would have been tragic.

Who's right and who's wrong in a legal sense, isn't our concern. Child safety is. For

this reason, the folks currently harboring these animals would be well advised to solve the problem before something serious occurs.

Temperament aside and excluding kennel operators, four dogs are too many. The maximum should be two and the Town would be well advised to introduce such legislation if the ruling's not now in force.



Sugar and Spice

It's desk and mind-cleaning time

By Bill Smiley

New Year is a time for housecleaning: the house, the desk, the mind. Not to mention your personal relationships, your language, and your ears.

I'll leave the house to my wife. And if you think that's male chauvinism, whatever that silly phrase means, you're right. A male is a male. A chauvinist is a superpatriot. And we all know what a pig is — one of the most valuable animals man has ever created in his own image.

Theoretically, I'm a male. I was so pronounced, I imagine, at birth, due to certain plumbing. I am not a chauvinist. I do not believe in my country, right or wrong, although I love it. I do not trust my government as far as I could throw a used car into a swamp.

And I am not a pig, although I wouldn't mind being one. Do you realize that a pig produces, in his or her short life, about eight times what a human does?

To eat: pork chops and roasts and bacon and pig hocks and ham and head cheese and pigs tails. Not to mention sowbelly, if you want me to get male and chauvinistic.

To wear: pigskin for making gloves. For sport: making footballs (he put the old pigskin square between the uprights).

For use: pig bristles for making shaving brushes, although I fear they are becoming plastic in this plastic age. And finally: sows' ears for not making silk purses of.

O.K. That deals with cleaning up the house, in a rather round-about way. The Old Lady can do it. I'll help clean up the basement if she's ever crafty enough to get me down there on a Saturday morning.

Just began cleaning up my desk. That's definitely worth while. I have just re-read

some Christmas cards, merely skimmed on arrival. I always enjoy a card from my kid brother, banished to the Siberia of the James Bay project in Northern Quebec. He hates everything so much that he makes me feel positively benevolent toward the world.

Then there's my TV repairman, as he always signs himself, who drops a line every Christmas from Westport, Ont. I suppose I'll never know his real name, but there's always a cheery message, urging me to go on pricking balloons and stuffed shirts, even though he often doesn't agree with me.

There's an annual card from Major McErving in California, who is hooked on the bagpipes, with a lively account of the various events the pipers have attended in the past year.

Here's a letter from an old fighter pilot friend, who reminds me of the time, on the way home from a country pub, that I missed a turn in the road and went straight through a thorn hedge. Next day my face looked as though it had been raked by a termagant with long nails.

And a letter from Beth Boyd, a former student, now in Lacombe, Alberta. I quote: "Hopefully you'll recall me as being tall, beautiful and an extremely bright student. However, the reality is — short, acne and the only person who consistently spelled 'throughout' as 'through'." Not so, Beth. I remember you exactly. You sat near the back where you could titter and giggle with Gail Ellison. And I'm sure the acne is gone. And that you're short but beautiful. And I'm glad you are happy.

Then there's the usual smattering of letters and cards from deeply religious people who take my tongue-in-cheek remarks wide-

eyed and write me earnestly, quoting scripture and verse, to outline my easy road to hell.

Hello, hello! What's this? An unopened letter. Let's see. Well, well, a cheque for just over \$1,000. Dated November, 1977. I thought that the old finances had gone a bit haywire in the last year. I hope they'll cash the blinking thing. There is some silly rule about not cashing cheques that are more than six months old. Happened to me a few years ago.

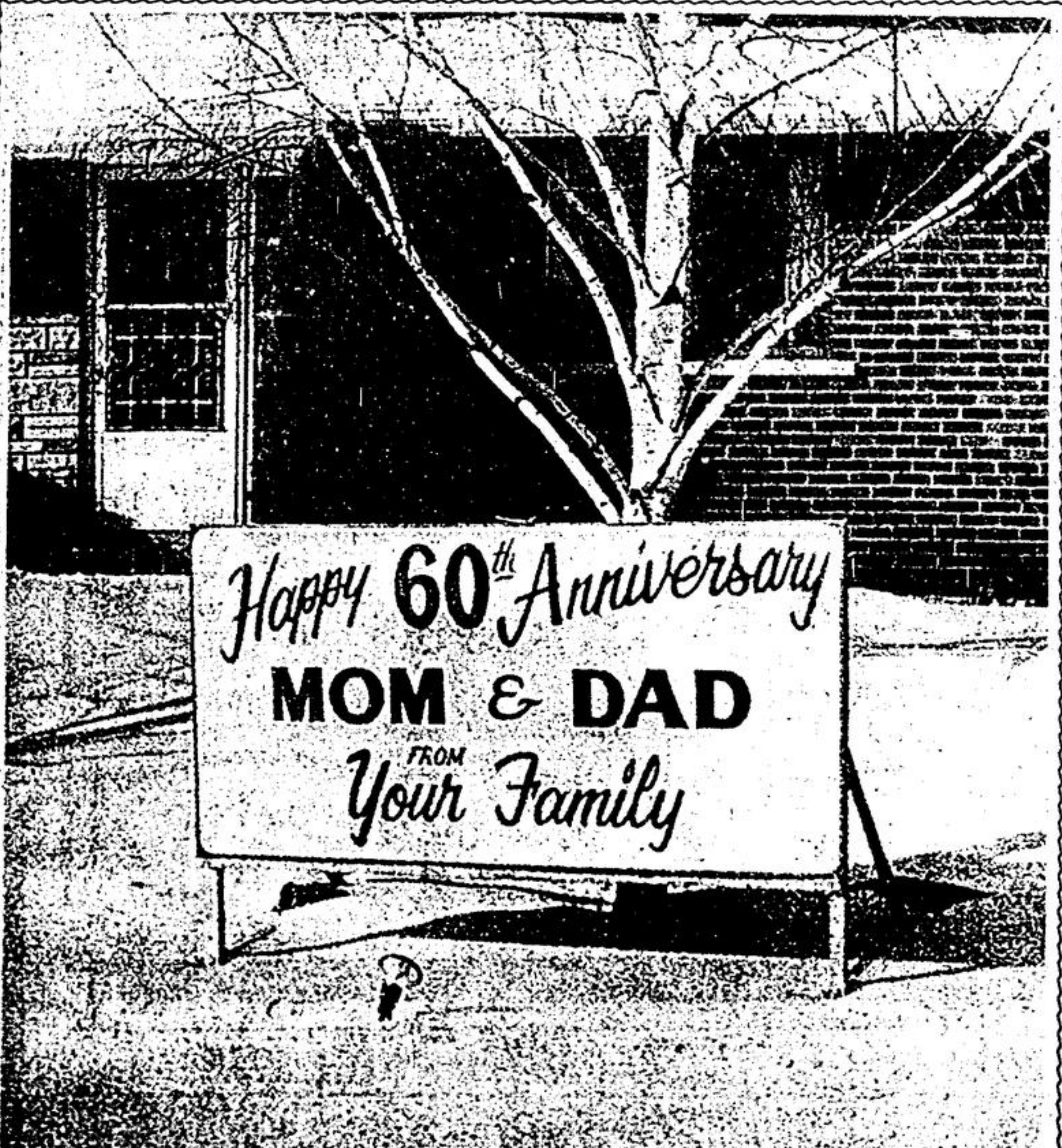
Here's one from Germany, and a card from Australia, and two from Texas and one from Holland and a note from Dawson Creek, and another from Oregon. That's the summer crowd, from Our Trip.

Another note from Anne, a former student: "Why did Joan Engel get an A-plus on an essay, and I got an A, when I wrote them both?" Life, Anne. An old friend of mine, George McCowan, wrote an entire French exam for a friend at university, was caught in the act, kicked out, and is now a Hollywood director, with several ex-wives and a big income. No connection, but where there's larceny, there's loot.

From Miriam Fischer, Milton: "God bless you for your invigorating column in this week's Champion. It was more than Sugar & Spice, it was like a shot of adrenalin to my 'wounded ego' that had been bruised badly in the last two years, since I turned 65." Thanks, Miriam. I'm getting there.

Well, it's been fun cleaning up the desk. All I have to do now is clean up my personal relationships, my language, and my ears.

Hmmmm. No problem about the ears. Let's hear from you, readers. That might do it all. Have a fine year in '79 and don't be scared of a damn' thing. Woops.



Front-yard sign says it all

The family of Mr. and Mrs. William Dart are obviously proud of "Mom and Dad". They said so with a giant sign on the front law of their parents' Loretta Crescent

home in Stouffville. Mr. and Mrs. Dart celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary, Sunday.

—Jim Thomas.



Window on Wildlife

Birds require water in the winter

By Art Briggs-Jude

Often during a winter's day, various kinds of birds may be observed attempting to catch the water as it drips from a sun-warmed roof. Although all birds, through necessity will eat snow, it is only when other sources of liquid are not available that this practice is carried out. For there is something very attractive in a pool of fresh water, and in the winter time this is especially so. That all birds need water as much as food is a proven fact and a trip to an open riffle on an otherwise frozen stream will bear this out. The tracks and other evidence in the snow show that many feathered visitors are using this waterhole.

A number of years ago during a relatively open January such as we've experienced in the early part of this month, a friend and I discovered just such a location. Out for a Saturday stroll to try and pinpoint a wintering bluebird, we came upon a sheltered ravine. Old fruit trees covered the far slope extending to a stream bed at the bottom. Huge willows lined this creek, which for the most part was frozen over.

Our attention was almost immediately drawn to a long-tailed bird, running on the ice towards a small patch of open water. As we set the lens on our camera, this robin was joined by another. Several cedar waxwings then appeared, a third robin dropped in, and with a flash of blue came our much sought after bluebird. Here indeed was a panorama of color and activity against the winter snow. A Downy woodpecker backed along a small

sapling to take his turn for a drink, while more waxwings alighted to complete the picture.

The birds were continually flying between this winter oasis and a thick hedge of multiflora rose, behind the crest of the near hillside. The lesson was here for us to learn and we decided to take advantage of the birds' natural wants by artificial means.

A little used extension cord, an old tire, and a discarded metal snow disc were later assembled in my companion's backyard. Using a light bulb as an element, this shallow dish of water was supported by the tire lying flat on the snow. The results were immediately apparent.

During the following days the temperature dipped sharply and the nearby creek became completely frozen over. The bluebird with the robins and waxwings at times swarmed around this new found water supply, and a mockingbird, absent for a few days returned on a regular basis.

If you are providing food for winter birds, try giving them a winter drink too. A garbage can lid turned upside down and placed on a couple of old tires works very well. Insulate the tires and make sure they are level; then fit the metal lid flush with the uppermost rubber ring. An old lamp shade fitting or some other such socket should be placed in a metal pail with the bulb up fairly close to the bottom of the water dish. It is best to support this light fixture with a large tin can and fasten a sheet of foil under it to reflect the heat upwards. A

little experimenting will tell what size bulb is required, and of course the better the unit is insulated the smaller the light bulb required. I have used a forty watt in mine most of the time but had to switch to a sixty when the mercury descends. Also a sheltered sunny location is best, for on milder days the power may be shut off.

The number and variety of birds attracted will of course depend on the area in which you live. Nevertheless, the behavior of even the numerous house sparrows and starlings upon discovering this welcome treat, will reward any effort you put forth. As in the case of feeding, other species may be attracted to the scene by the actions of the commoner types. Who knows, maybe you'll get a rare visitor too.

TINDER 'N EMBERS.....There are at least 20 robins wintering in Richmond Hill.....A sharp-shinned hawk paid a visit to an Axminster backyard in the same town.....A ramble last Sunday south of Gormley produced a flock of 18 redpolls and a lone large raccoon sound asleep in a pine tree.....Pickerel are starting to hit in Lake Scugog.....Gerald McKeating (the peregrine falcon man) will speak on "Endangered Species" at the Richmond Hill Naturalists meeting, Fri., Jan. 19. The local bluebird nest-box project "Operation Comeback" will be launched at the same time; 8 p.m. sharp, Blue Flame Room, Richmond Hill.