

The Tribune
 Established 1888
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Published every Thursday at 54 Main St., Stouffville, Ont. Tel. 640-2101; Toronto phone 361-1680.
 Single copies 20 c, subscriptions \$10.00 per year in Canada, \$26.00 elsewhere. Member of Canadian Community Newspapers Association and Ontario Weekly Newspapers Association. Second class mail registration number 0896.

The Tribune is one of the Inland Publishing Co. Limited group of suburban newspapers, which includes the Ajax/Whitby/Pickering News Advertiser, Brampton Guardian, Burlington Post, Etobicoke Gazette, Markham Economist and Sun, Newmarket/Aurora Era, Oakville Beaver, Oshawa This Week, Mississauga News, Oshawa This Weekend, Acton Free Press, Milton Canadian Champion and The Georgetown Independent.

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Editorials

Fire scene abuse disturbing

Just being a fireman is tough enough, especially a volunteer fireman who, at the first beep of his portable signal pack, must "drop everything and run".

When the blaze occurs at an early-morning hour and six miles from the station, it's tougher still. Time and distance are not acceptable excuses when property and lives are at stake.

However, these are difficulties a well-trained brigade can handle. But when the problem is people, that's another matter. Spector interference at any fire scene, cannot be tolerated.

This, from what we can learn, is what

happened, Nov. 3, during the blaze at the vacant Shalimar Restaurant near Musselman's Lake. While brigade members are hesitant to discuss it, the fact is, they had to absorb verbal abuse beyond description.

It's conduct of this kind that makes us realize what police too must endure; insults from sideline slobbers against those who are attempting to protect us all.

Being only human, retaliation can occur. In most cases, it's warranted.

With respect to the fire at Shalimar, it's too bad the volunteers hadn't turned their attention to the troublemakers and flushed the lot of them into the lake.

Need search-rescue unit

Whitchurch-Stouffville needs a search and rescue unit. The recent tragedy at the Conservation Dam bears this out. Not that a life would have been saved because of it, not this time, but under different circumstances, this could be the result.

The Town has a nucleus on which to establish such an organization in the County Breakers, a local C.B. group that's been active here. We feel most members would be willing to utilize their knowledge and equipment for such a use.

The Town of Markham has had a search and rescue unit for several years. It's fully

chartered and recognized by the Fire Department and York Regional Police. The membership's been involved in several missions, most of which have come to swift and satisfying conclusions because of their fast action.

Up to now, organized searches here have been left to the police. Rescue falls on the shoulders of firemen. But this need not necessarily be or if it must continue, both could use a little help.

That help could come from the County Breakers and knowing some of the personnel, they're ready and willing to take it on.

Gov't. land not sterile

"Farm land in north Pickering will be sterile no longer," said Ontario Riding M.P. Scott Fennell in a prepared statement.

It came as a follow-up to an announcement by Transport Minister Don Mazankowski that a second airport in the Metro area wouldn't be required for ten years and perhaps longer.

Mr. Fennell is of the opinion government-owned agricultural land should be sold back to farmers and returned to full-scale food production.

However, the recommendation makes no

sense, for two reasons.

First, no farmer could afford to buy it back, not for what Ottawa (or Queen's Park) paid for it and certainly not for what it's worth today.

Second, the entire area, for the most part, is producing as much or more in food than it ever did. Why? Because good farmers are farming it, be they original land-owners or tenants from outside.

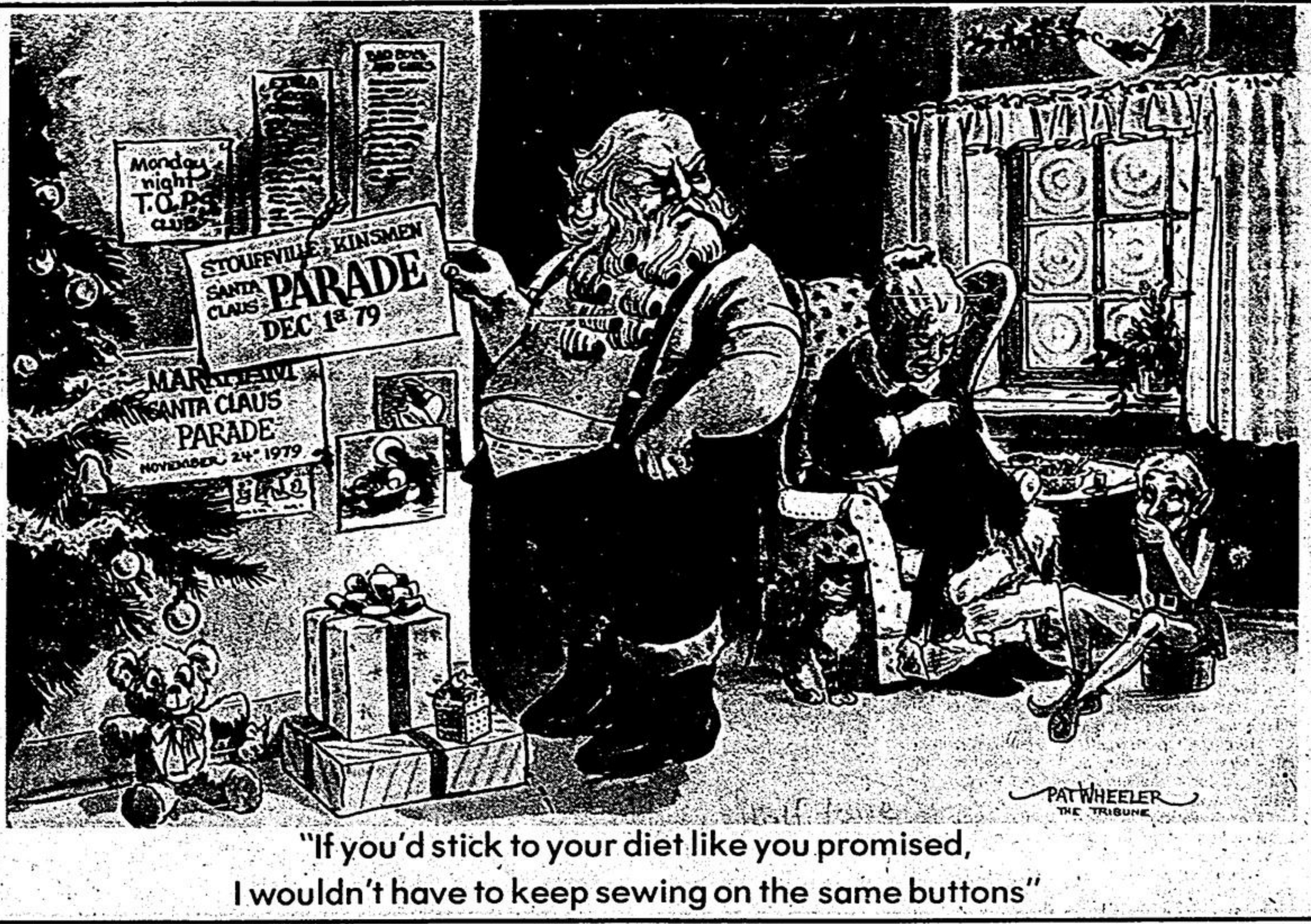
Before Mr. Fennell talks about sterile land, he'd be wise to tour the district and see the results for himself.



Men and machines improve mid-town stream

Construction crews are heading into the home stretch of a \$700,000 re-channelization project in Stouffville. If the weather holds, all work, with the exception of sodding, should be completed by

Christmas. This view of the new stream bed is looking north-west towards the bridge on Market Street with the Baptist Church in the background. Jim Thomas



"If you'd stick to your diet like you promised, I wouldn't have to keep sewing on the same buttons"

Roaming Around

An extra special graduation

By Jim Thomas



High School Commencements are special. I've always felt this, even though, on many occasions, the ceremonies have held no attachment in a personal sense.

I've attended graduations at Uxbridge, Pickering, Markham, Thornhill, Thornlea, Langstaff and, of course, Stouffville over the past twenty-eight years and, with the exception of one (that I'll not identify at this time), have always come away with an inner feeling of pride and satisfaction.

Why, you ask? What's so intriguing about a program where the participants are strangers?

The question makes sense and maybe my answer doesn't. However, the truth is, at each event, I re-live a milestone that's missing from my life. For, as strange as it may seem, I never attended my own graduation and, for that omission, have been doing penance ever since.

I had no excuse, except for the fact all the 'brains' in my Fifth Form class completed the course in one year. I didn't because I was afraid I couldn't. So rather than flunk the works in a separate bid to keep pace, I split the subjects up, taking five one year and four the next.

That was fine except all my friends passed me by. I felt like a misfit in a class of fresh faces. So, when the 'big night' arrived, I failed to show. But the show went on just the same and I was a loser.

That's why, when I see young guys striding confidently across the stage to receive their diplomas and awards, I see myself. There, but for a stupid, self-distrusting decision, go I.

However, such self-abasement came to an end, Friday when I along with dozens of other proud parents saw sons and daughters rise to the pinnacle of academic accomplishment. It was Commencement at S.D.S.S., an evening of rapture after eighteen years of waiting. Our Susan, a Grade 13 graduate. It seemed like only yesterday I took her picture, a seven-pound bundle of joy, wrapped in a pink woolen blanket. Now I was doing it again, only this time, the portrait of maturity; a dream come true.

I had long looked forward to this night. It wasn't just special like previous Commencements. It was extra special.

From her first day in Kindergarten to her last day in Grade 6. From her first day at high school to her last day in Grade 13, and then Nov. 9, a red letter day for all of us.

There were forty-six in the Year 5 graduation class and 146 in Year 4. Quite a change from the first Commencement I attended at Stouffville High back in November 1951. At that time, there were six honor graduates from Grade 13. These included Shirley Steckley, Ivy Schneider, Willard Moyer, Marean Jamieson, Jessie Harding and Vera Doust. There were twenty-one graduates from Grade 12 - Marion Atkinson, Ruth Atkinson, Pauline Barkey, Ernestine Cooper, John Davis, Floyd Doner, Lorne Emmerson, Gordon Galbraith, Jim Hewlett, Helen Hisey, Donna Keeping, Isobel Keffer, Isobel McCreight, Doug McWhirter, Clifton Morris, Doreen Ogden, Helen Paisley, Murray Pipher, Jean Rae, Edna Sanderson and Marie Stover.

Undoubtedly a red letter day for those parents too.

For our Susan, it's the second of two stepping stones towards full academic learning. For Mom and Dad, it's one up and five to come. With the youngest still in Kindergarten, and her parents approaching middle age, here's hoping future Commencements are all down hill.

Sugar and Spice

Time to retire this retread

By Bill Smiley



To be or not to be? Retired, that is. This is the question that many codgers of my age or near it grapple with in those lonely dark hours of the night when you've had too much coffee and can't get into the ravelled sleeve of care, as Shakespeare put it. Or get to bloody sleep, as some of his less flowery countrymen would put it.

It's a question that has also stirred a great deal of agitation among sociologists, medical reporters, and old guys who are healthy as trout and are about to be kicked out at the age of sixty-five with a speech, a copper watch, and a pension that will have them eating dog food by the time they are sixty-eight. It used to be a gold watch. Not no more, not with gold hovering around the \$400-an-ounce mark.

In fact, just the other day, I dug out my father's gold watch, which was given me on his death by my mother, because I was her favorite. I have never worn it, because I don't wear vests, and it's a big, heavy brute that must be slipped into a vest pocket. You can't wear it on your wrist, or put it in your hip pocket. It's as big as an alarm clock.

I took a long look at it, and if it hadn't been Sunday, might have hustled down to my friendly gold buyer. But Roots, or Conscience, or Common Sense, took over, and I sadly put it away again, with such other memorabilia as my war medals, my hip waders, and a fading picture of my first real girlfriend, in a box in the basement.

Roots told me it was a precious symbol that should be passed on to my eldest son, of which I have only one. Conscience told me it was a rotten thing to do. And Common Sense told me that there was probably about one-eighth of an ounce of gold in it.

I am, however, holding in reserve a broken tooth with a gold inlay. When I came back from overseas and was discharged, I was given a form to present to my own dentist, listing the dental work to be done, at government expense.

He was a typical WASP. He looked at the list of work, which was quite extensive, after a term on short rations in prison camp, and laughed. "Ho, ho, Bill. You don't want all that gold clattering up your mouth. This was signed by a French-Canadian. They're great for gold in the teeth." If that dentist is alive today, I would be quite happy to strangle him. I went along with him, while noting his

prejudice, and instead of having a mouthful of gold, I got one little inlay. "If he'd followed directions, and counted the teeth that have been pulled, or fallen out, or broken, my mouth would have been worth about \$4,000 today, instead of maybe \$6.00.

Well, this hasn't much to do with retiring, which we started on away back there, but it does show what inflation can do to a man.

What about retiring? I look around at colleagues who have chosen early retirement, or who have been forced to retire because of that magic, arbitrary number, 65.

Some are happy as hummingbirds and swear they would not even put their noses back into the old shoe factory (high school). Others are miserable, plagued by illness and a feeling of being useless. The latter drive their wives out of their respective nuts, hanging around the house, getting in the way, edging into senility.

Editor's Mail

An insult

Dear Jim:
 I for one agree with your tough editorial stand on the Halloween problems in Stouffville.

The situation has reached an intolerable state, one that no law-abiding citizen should have to endure.

Who are these punks anyway? Where do they come from? How can they pull these kinds of stunts and get away with it—

In my opinion, Mayor King should have read the Riot Act and indicated in this manner that the town meant business.

Here we have a Council that weeps and wails over nude stage shows at Ballantrae and takes no notice whatsoever of a Halloween disaster right in the middle of a main urban area. It's time, I feel, they get their priorities straight and deal with matters of major importance.

I didn't hear of any trouble at Ballantrae. Did you?

Gerald Mackenzie,
 Stouffer Street,
 Stouffville.

Thus I waver. I thought some years ago that I would soldier on until sixty. Surely forty years of work is enough. Then I am swayed by my father-in-law, who recently retired at eighty-six, and my wife, who can barely stand me at home for a weekend.

If we lived in a decent climate, I'd probably be retired and happy. There's nothing I would like better than to saunter down to the square, play a game of chess with some other old turkey, drink a little vino, and watch the girls go by, with cackling remarks.

Try that in the local square, and they'd be carting you off to the last resting place, frozen solid in a sitting position.

Why don't we all give up, we old gaffers? You know why? Because we are not old gaffers at all. In my chest beats the heart of a fifteen-year-old maiden (who has been smoking since she was two).

In the old days, we'd be retired, happily playing chess or shooting pool, because our sons would be looking after us, and our wives would feed us well, and know their place, and our daughters-in-law would be producing hordes of grandchildren to light us on our way.

These days, we are still looking after our sons, and our wives are avaricious and spoiled, and our daughters-in-law are already separated from our sons and not keen on having more than one and a half children.

Oh, I keep my staff on its toes. One day I announce firmly that I'm going to retire next June. Their faces light up and they say, "Oh, chief, how can we get along without you?"

Another day I say, "Well, haven't decided yet. What with inflation and all, y'know..." And their faces drop into feet, and they say, "that's great, chief. How could we get along without you?" And I smile. To myself.

I've finally figured out the solution. Retired men, unless they have some insane hobby, like making rose trellises, drive their wives crazy.

If my wife will sign a written agreement, duly witnessed, that she will go out and get a job (she once was a waitress, shouldn't be any trouble) the moment I retire, I'll do it. I don't want her hanging around the house, spoiling my retirement.