

Stouffville's Don Doner

# Hardware is his life's work

By BRUCE STAPLEY

He's a self-effacing man, long on total commitment and short on worldly pride.

Born 59 years ago on a farm near Gormley, Don Doner has spent the greater part of his life in a hardware store. And although he's never hung out his shingle, he tackles the job with all the zeal and dedication of a successful entrepreneur.

Don has served as manager of Card's Hardware, Main Street West, Stouffville, for the past 20 years. Previous to that, he had 23 years' experience in the same line of work.

Don's a firm believer in old-time business ethics; also in the personal touch. He claims work can be fun.

"I've shared company with some terrific people through the years," he says. "I've also met some fine folk right here in Stouffville."

Don's hardware career began in 1945 when he joined the staff of J.K. Agnew. Mr. Agnew's store was located on the north side of Main Street.

"I began at \$15 a week," Don recalls. "He promised to increase my salary to \$20 if I proved satisfactory."

The store was later purchased in 1955 by Reg Stouffer and Don remained there until 1966 when the business changed hands again. That's when Don moved 'up the street' to work for Cec Hendricks. In 1968, Hendricks' Hardware was purchased by Graydon Card.

It was Don who later helped Graydon open at his new location, the flagship store of Card's Plaza in Stouffville's west end.

"I thought of leaving the hardware business in 1966," Don remembers. "I checked out a factory job but in minutes, I knew it wasn't for me."

A respected expert in his trade, Don remembers when all Stouffville stores remained open until 10 p.m., Tuesday and Saturday nights. On Wednesday afternoons, almost everyone closed at one.

Gasoline was sold from a pump in front of the store and kerosene, linseed oil and machine oil were all dispensed from an 'oil room' in the basement.

Don recalls how one customer would always bring in a long-necked bottle he wanted filled with machine oil. "The contents would spill all over the place. Finally, J.K. (Agnew) said: 'Norm, if you ever bring that bottle in here again, I'll break it over your head.' He never did."

In his early years, Don did more than just wait on customers. There were always trades people on staff to do furnace work, plumbing and other things, recalls Don.

"I remember being sent out with a tinsmith to fix the roof of the Wideman Mennonite Church

the week before I was to be married. Looking down the ladder, I was so scared I was sure I'd never see my wedding day."

Don notes with more than a little sadness that the once small town hardware store is being replaced by one-stop shopping centres that boast "everything for the home."

"The modern hardware today is more like a department store," he notes. Don says he still feels good when salesmen say how much they enjoy coming into a 'country' store as opposed to the big city edifice.

While times have changed, Don's personal approach to the business reflects deeply rooted traditional values.

"Service, the personal touch, has always been a vital part of my job," he claims. "I've always tried to act as though the business is my own. I try to treat people as I myself would want to be treated."

Don credits his wife Marion, a career housewife, with being totally supportive and understanding through the years. "She's been terrific," he says.

Don and Marion reside on Baker Avenue, Stouffville, in a house Don helped build in 1960.

The house was roughed in," he explains, "I finished it."

Don and Marion have a son, Barry; a daughter Sharon and a

grandson he describes as "the light of my life."

Has Don adjusted to the 'fast lane' approach to hardware, complete with appliances, wood stoves, garden centres and everything else Card's has to offer?

"You must adapt," Don replies, "the most important things today are good products, fair prices and personal service."

Don claims Card's affiliation with Home Hardware is 'a plus'. "They give us an excellent selection and good prices. The rest is up to us."

Don admits the older he gets, the longer the work day seems. He's 59.

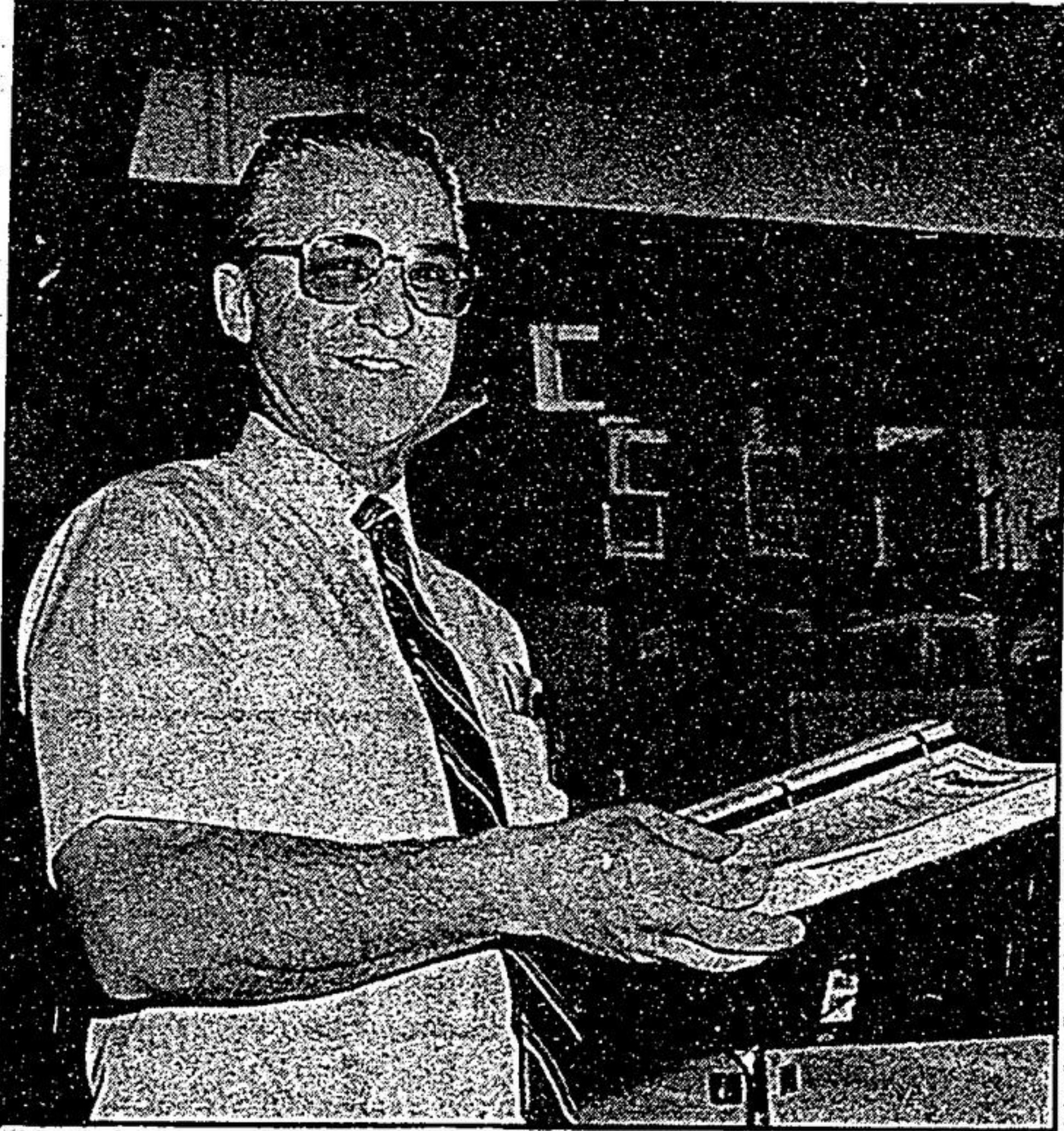
Any thought of retiring?

"I have a few hobbies," Don says, pointing to an expertly crafted grandfather's clock in one corner of the living room. "I'm looking forward to the day I'll be able to spend more time with my family."

However, for now, it's business as usual for the man with the old-fashioned approach to work and to life.

"I'm really pretty boring," he responds with a smile, "why would anyone want to do a story about me?"

If being boring correctly describes Don Doner, family, friends and appreciative patrons hope he never changes.



**Longtime employee**

Stouffville's Don Doner has spent many years helping customers at Card's Hardware store in town. He feels that personal service is the key to success.

— Jim Thomas

## The ATKINS ACTION COMMITTEE

Encourages you to attend the Founding Meeting of The

### MARKHAM PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE ASSOCIATION

at Markham District High School  
89 Church St., Markham  
(North of Hwy. 7, East of Hwy. 48)

**TOMORROW!**

Thursday, February 11, 1988  
7:30 p.m.

A Unique Opportunity to Influence  
The Constitution and Executive  
Leadership of the New Association

Bring Proof of Residency and  
Bring Your Family and Friends.  
Those Over 14 Years of Age May Vote.

## 'home is where the heart is'

February  
10th-13th

Come home to  
Woodside Square  
and enjoy our wide  
array of home

improvement ideas. In

conjunction with Valentine's Day, Woodside Square will be holding a contest with a draw for a romantic, home catered dinner for two. Draw will be made Saturday, February 13th — pick up your ballots from the Info Booth soon!

Don't forget Valentine's Day, Sunday, February 14th!



**WOODSIDE SQUARE**

Finch Ave. E. at McCowan Rd.

*Conveniently Yours!*

In the February 3rd issue of the Economist & Sun, the dates of the 'Home is where the heart is' Promotion, were wrong. The correct dates are Feb. 10-13. We apologize for any inconvenience.