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A Metroland Community Newspaper

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## Uxbridge builder pays tribute

By BRUCE STAPLEY

He epitomizes the very essence of a rags to riches story.

His legacy is a delightful mixture of earned friends and respected foes.

He's a legend to all whose lives he's touched.

Gino Testa, the son of an Italian farmer, arrived in Canada, 35 years ago, with but 25 cents in his pocket.

He slept under a bridge.

Today, he sits behind a desk on the site of his latest new-home development, Testa Heights, Uxbridge. And he marvels at how good Canada has been to him.

"This is a beautiful country," says the man who's built houses and apartments from Uxbridge through to Niagara Falls — with a few stops in between.

"Canada treated me well from the first day I arrived."

Gino's tribute is more than verbal.

For years, he's exhibited his generosity to friends and strangers alike.

The care he once received from the staff of Uxbridge Cottage Hospital following a car accident, has inspired him to make a generous financial donation for every home sold in his 200-unit development. These 'gifts' exclude lump sum donations.

"I care for people and for the community," says the man whose straight-forward, honest manner sets him apart from many high-stake developers. His workaholic nature that saw him 'on the job' Christmas Day, is countered by a compassion that had him delivering a fruit basket and a coffee cake to nurses on the Uxbridge Hospital staff, and patients, the very same day.

So great is Gino's concern for

the medical facilities of Uxbridge and area, he recently purchased two homes near the hospital site, to make way for a 22,000 square foot Medical Centre. This way, he explains, the medical needs of the sick and elderly can be tended to at one location.

"Right now, sick people must drive all over town for medical services," he frowns. "I'd like to see all services in one building, with the hospital next door."

On Saturday evening, as a tribute to his many friends, Gino hosted a dinner in the Goodwood Community Hall. The banquet was in celebration of his 35 years in Canada.

For George Johns, a close friend, whose restaurant catered the 'feast', it was a labor of love.

"Every night I go home and thank God I have Gino for a friend," he says, adding, "I sure wouldn't want him for an enemy."

Mr. Johns describes Gino as 'the greatest'. "Trouble is," he points out, "when he retires, he won't be able to help people any more."

Gino admits any success he's enjoyed has been built on trust.

"See this," he notes, pointing to a scrap of paper. "It's a contract, containing a name, an address and a dollar figure written in pen and ink. "This, and a handshake, is a contract."

Gino proudly refers to a 'Letter To The Editor' published in a local newspaper. In it, a customer tells how Gino extended his closing when he had every right to take the man's deposit and void the deal.

But the clincher, raves Mr. Johns was the day Gino took a group of men, including a hydro inspector, on a tour of Testa

Heights. "Everyone was standing and waving. The inspector couldn't believe it. He said he'd never seen this kind of reception for a builder before. Usually, they throw bricks at them," he recalled the hydro official saying.

For Gino, a regular work day can extend from five in the morning until nine at night.

He and wife Elisa reside in a lovely home north of the Bethesda Sideroad in Whitchurch-Stouffville. He's the proud father of four children and four grandchildren.

For a hobby, Gino raises beef cattle. The 140-acre farm north of Stouffville gives his life 'true meaning'. He gladly shortens his sleeping hours to pack as much activity as possible into his days.

Born in Patricia, Italy, Gino vividly recalls arriving at Toronto's Union Station at 11 p.m., a cold night in March, 1953.

The protection of a bridge was his temporary refuge.

His first job was that of a pin-boy in a Toronto bowling alley. He was paid 90 cents a night.

He then travelled to Kapuskasing where he worked on the railroad. Later, he took a job in a lumber camp and then toiled as a bricklayer's helper.

Gino sums up life in three descriptives — hard work, caring and honesty. One can also add determination and sensitivity.

With Gino Testa, "what you see is what you get."

"I don't like beating around the bush," he insists, "tell it to me straight."

For 35 years, Gino's been telling it straight.

And on Saturday night, he said 'thanks'.

His guests responded "the pleasure's all ours."



Gino Testa built his company on hard work, caring and honesty. He began life in Canada as an immigrant who slept under a bridge and earned 90 cents a day at his first job in a bowling alley.

—Jim Thomas

### Crime Stoppers

## Attempted robbery at Brooklin bank

Crime Stoppers and the Durham Regional Police are asking the public's help in solving an attempted robbery at the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce on Baldwin Street, Brooklin, January 8, 1988.

At about 2:20 p.m., a man entered the bank and, for a few minutes, read through some information at the back counter. He then went to the withdrawal counter and there spoke to a clerk. He discussed opening an account and then passed her a note telling her he wanted cash.

He opened his coat and showed her the butt of a gun saying, "this is real." He demanded cash several more times and the clerk hesitated. He then told her to stay where she was and walked out the door, turning west towards the Post Office.

He is described as white male,

about 30 years old, 6 feet in height, 180 pounds, medium build; dark brown, straight hair, just over his ears; thin beard and moustache neatly trimmed, wearing a light blue cloth-type jacket, waist-length with a zipper front, matching scarf and black cloth pants. He was wearing a white golf cap with 'Ballentines' on the front in reddish letters or writing.

Were you in Brooklin this day? Did you see this person? Did you see him in a car?

If you have any idea who this person is, call 222-8477 or 1-800-387-8477 (free from all phones including pay phones).

The informant will not be required to identify himself/herself or go to court.

The Crime Stoppers office is open 8 a.m. to 10 p.m., Monday through Friday.



### Quiet please, we're trying to read

Students from all grades at Whitchurch-Highlands Public School took part in a read-a-thon February 9, part of the school's annual fundraising campaign for purchasing new equipment and organizing field trips.

Pictured left to right are, (back row) Dawn Albright, Jennifer Offenbeck, (front row) Chris Manuel, Michael Powell and John Dandy.

—Blaine Kaneko

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