

Jack-of-all-trades runs Christian school



Photo/JIM THOMAS

Multi-purpose principal

Wally Robinson, principal at Stouffville Christian School often finds himself filling in for teaching and maintenance staff along with his responsibilities as the school's administrator.

By BRUCE STAPLEY
For Wally Robinson, it's a long way from Cochacamba, Bolivia to Stouffville. But, according to the Peterborough native who's now into his fourth year as principal of Stouffville Christian School, the distance is only in miles.

"I taught in the public school system in Peterborough for seven years, and was principal of a mission's school in Bolivia for seven years. My experience in Bolivia was more similar to what I'm doing now than my time spent in the public system."

Wally knows better than anyone, the workings of a privately funded school like S.C.S. are far different than your average neighborhood educational institution.

"You're very much on your own in a private Christian school," he claims. "You have to provide services that are usually provided by an infrastructure."

The Stouffville posting has been, in some ways, an even greater challenge than he was faced with in Bolivia.

"In some ways, we had a better facility to work with than we have here. We didn't have to contend with winter weather down there."

However, the political climate often made for anxious moments in the country that underwent 12 changes of government in the seven years he and his family were there.

"Here, we have 'snow days' where school is cancelled because of dangerous driving conditions. In Bolivia, we'd have 'Political Unrest Days' that would also result in the school being closed."

The Bolivian school, that provided education in English for children of missionaries living there, as well as for local chil-

dren, gave Wally a firm grounding for what he would be up against as principal of the Altona school.

He claims it taught him to be versatile, a trait required when you're in a school totally dependent upon teachers and parents for everything from funding through everyday upkeep.

"Within six weeks of arriving at the school in Bolivia, I was driving a school bus. Here, I don't have to do that, but I've ruined more than one pair of shoes plunging backed-up toilets."

And while he accepts everyday maintenance as just another part of his overall job description, he has nothing but praise for the Stouffville school's facilities committee.

"The maintenance and upkeep is very well looked after here," he claims. "The parents are doing a terrific job of keeping the facilities in top condition."

Wally has been extremely impressed with the dedication of his teaching staff.

"They are all qualified, caring people," he says. "The parents can be satisfied their children's best interests are being looked after here."

To counteract the built-in isolation of a private Christian school like S.C.S., Wally has set out to make contacts with other private schools in an effort to share know-how and common experiences. The school has joined the Association of Christian Schools International, a professional body that allows them to tap the resources of other Christian schools worldwide.

Wally is very much a part of everything happening at the school, from attending board meetings, right through going

outside to participate in the students' recreation times.

"I feel a familiarity and a closeness with the students," he says. "I try to get out and play boot hockey or ringette with them at recess when I can."

His duties include teaching classes, both regularly, and on a short-notice basis when a teacher is sick. He is involved in the enrolment procedure that sees him interview parents of prospective students. And he's in constant contact with parents who make up the school's board.

"The board makes the policy, and I run the school," he says. "But the big difference between us and the public system is I'm directly accountable to the parents, not the system. That's why a lot of them like the school—they have access."

Wally claims his involvement in Christian education springs from a desire to integrate his faith into every aspect of his life.

"To me, Christianity is a way of life, not merely a religion."

He claims students at the school are encouraged to see the world in an 'integrated' way, where everything can be seen as having come from God.

"When I grew up, there were 'sacred' things, and 'secular' things. They never seemed to come together. I think Christianity must affect everything, you do."

"Christianity," he continues, "must be practical, and 'life'-centred. It's of little value in the abstract."

Wally feels the school has become very solidly established.

"We offer a good program, and the kids are being well equipped."

The opening of the new facility, expected to be completed within the next few years, is expected to add to the school's efficiency, as well as allowing it to offer Grades 11 to 13. It's now restricted to junior kindergarten through Grade 10.

Wally lives just down the road from the school with his wife, Wilda, and his four children, three of whom attend the school.

GRAND OPENING



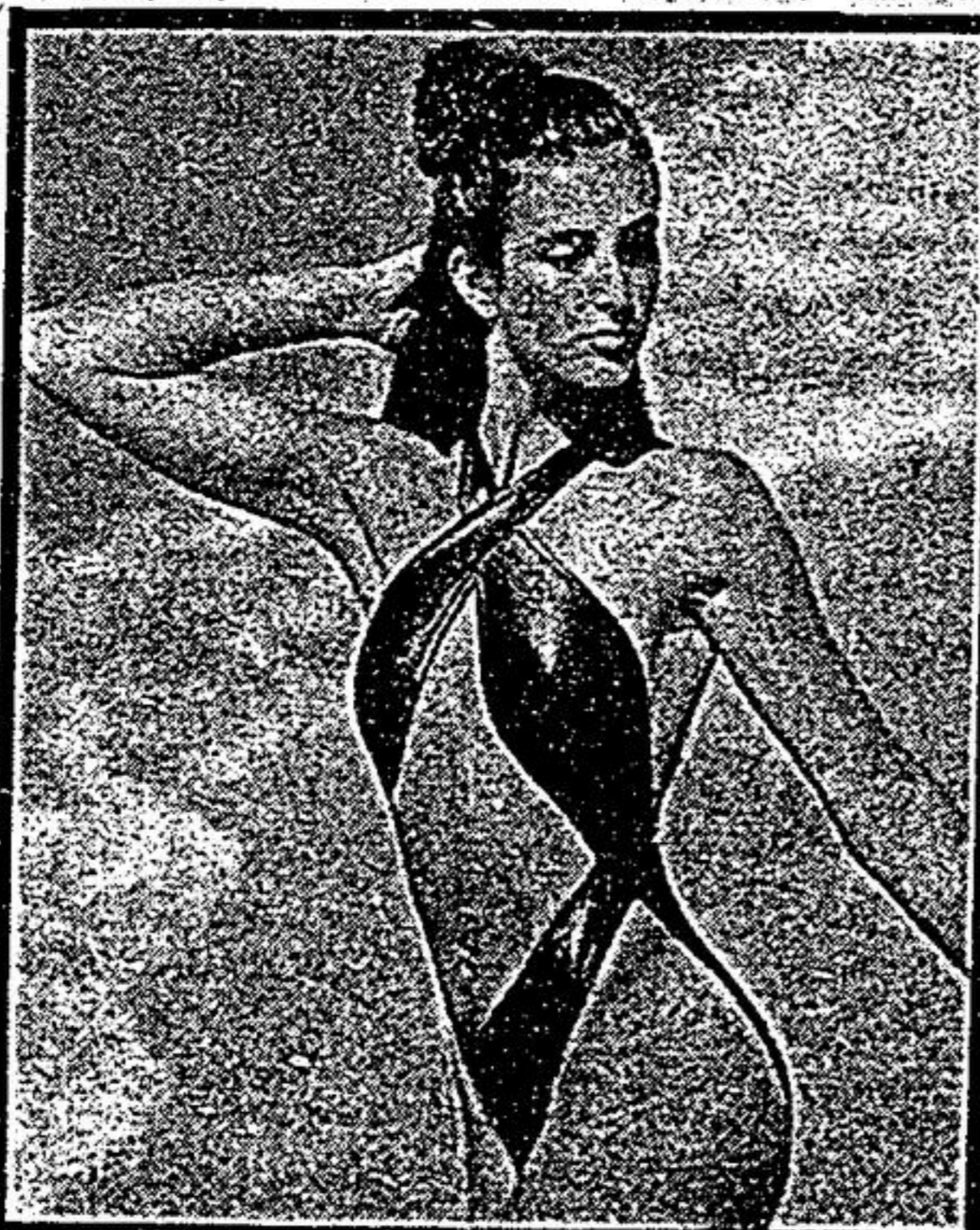
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Claremont news

Beef dinner offered at church

By LAURI TOWATA-ROY (649-2296)
By SANDY HILL (649-2653)

The United Church is planning a beef dinner fundraiser for Sunday, March 13. There will be three sittings at 4 p.m., 5:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. The price of dinner is \$8 for adults, \$4 for children under 12. Tickets are to be purchased in advance. Please call 649-2183.

The Four Seasons Golf and Country Club is celebrating St. Patrick's Day with a dance, Saturday, March 19, from 8:30 p.m. to 1 a.m. City Limits will be the live band performing. A light snack, party hats and door prizes will be available. Admission is \$25 per couple. For reservations, please call 649-2436. P.S. Dress in green.