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Canon Jim Puxley and his wife Mary leave for the Maritimes in August. The Uxbridge residents are sorry to leave the many friends they've made in the Uxbridge-Stouffville area.

Puxleys leave Uxbridge with many memories

By KATE GILDERDALE
When Canon Jim Puxley and wife Mary move to the Maritimes in August, they will leave a considerable sense of loss among the many people whose lives they have touched.

Canon Puxley's distinguished career has taken the couple to many places including their present home in a converted schoolhouse near Uxbridge. When they leave to join their daughter and son-in-law in Halifax, it will be with very mixed feelings that they say goodbye to family and friends in this area.

Mrs. Puxley, who was born and brought up in Toronto, ("I'm a Canadian from about the middle of the 17th century,") met her husband when she boarded a ship bound for Montreal in Liverpool, England in 1929. She had been visiting her sister, who was at school in Scotland.

It was Canon Puxley's first transatlantic crossing. "I was born in Goring on Thames in England," he explains. "I grew up on the Thames, and went to school at Eton and then to Oxford." From there he obtained a fellowship to Yale University and was on his way there when he first met his future wife.

Canon Puxley was at Yale for three years, until 1932, during which time he wrote his first book on the gold standard. "I had the opportunity to come back to England for a couple of months between the second and third year to think about my future," he recalls. He returned to Yale with several possibilities in mind.

"I was invited to go back to Eton as a master, which was very tempting," he states. Lloyd's Bank were interested in taking him on in their bullion department, but the third option, which he eventually chose, was to go out to India as an educational missionary, at one of the oldest Christian colleges in the country.

The Puxleys got married in Toronto in June, 1932 and left for India, where they stayed until 1940, and the advent of World War II. "In September that year, I joined the Indian army, where I served six years, reaching the rank of Lieutenant Colonel," says Canon Puxley. By the time he was released from service in Halifax, Nova Scotia, the couple had three children; the eldest born in Canada, the second in India and the youngest in Pakistan.

It was then the Puxleys agreed he should study theology, and he was accepted at Trinity College in Toronto. Although he was separated from his family, which was in Ottawa by then, he found things worked out well. "There were so many of us back from the war, with quite a group of us in our 30s, and we enjoyed each other's company. It was a bit like being back at school." He was able to get home for Christmas and in the summer.

During his years at Trinity College, the Bishop asked him to take charge of a country parish at Roche's Point on Lake Simcoe.

"I was in charge of the main church, as well as one at Sharon and another at Holland Landing," he smiles. "I would be down in Toronto all during the week, rush home Friday night, race round the parish on Saturday, take three services on Sunday and catch the 7 a.m. bus back to the city on Monday morning."

Canon Puxley was ordained Deacon in 1947 and Priest in 1948. "Then I was whisked off to become general secretary of the Student Christian Movement of Canada (SCM)," he remembers. SCM is an ecumenical organization whose representatives visit universities to lecture and debate theology with the undergraduates.

"I was with the SCM from 1949 to 1953 and travelled the country far and wide," declares Canon Puxley. He worked one year for the Canadian Council of Churches.

"They asked me to become secretary of two of their departments," he says. "The Department of Overseas Missions and the Department of Evangelism."

After a year, he was asked to go to Halifax to become president of University of King's College, the oldest university in the Commonwealth outside the Britain. After nine years in Halifax, the Puxleys returned to Toronto, where he became director of the Ecumenical Institute of Canada (now the Ecumenical Forum), which was a new venture.

Canon Puxley believes strongly in ecumenism. "I would not be happy to simply be an Anglican Priest," he insists. He was with the Institute for 10 years, "It was my last job before retirement in 1973," he explains.

At that time the Puxleys were living in Toronto and using the converted schoolhouse, which friends had lent them, as a weekend retreat.

Their friends were renting the schoolhouse from the School Board. "They wanted to buy it, but the Board wouldn't let them," Mrs. Puxley states, "they said they might need it again." The Puxleys were able to buy the property from the Board in 1966 and they moved in permanently in 1973, when Canon Puxley retired.

It was a shortlived retirement. The local rector approached Canon Puxley and asked if he would consider joining him in a "team" ministry, with each man working half time. "I told him not to take a half time job, but to work a quarter of the time. He still worked at least twenty hours a week," recalled Mrs. Puxley.

Eventually the ministry was split between four men, including one lay preacher. "We had a very good time," asserts Canon Puxley. "It became very popular with the congregation, they were getting so many different voices, and they never knew who would be giving the service." Eventually the group broke up, and a new rector was appointed.

Canon Puxley worked with the new rector, doing odd jobs. "I was still warden of the Church Army," he recalls. "The thing I really spent more time on than anything else was to lead groups in ecumenical Bible study." He found it very rewarding to have the opportunity to study the Bible in a way he never had before.

He was involved in the groups between 1973 until 1986, when he began to feel the strain. Originally the study sessions were held in Toronto, but he started holding groups closer to home when the travelling became difficult. He had groups in Newmarket, Unionville, Markham and Stouffville. Canon Puxley began to cut back in 1986, with his final session taking place in March this year.

The Puxleys have high praise for Christ Church Anglican in Stouffville, where they have been members since 1964 and where they have made so many friends. Their departure will create a gap which will be hard to fill.

"Canon Puxley to me embodies what it means to be a Christian," states Rev. Paul Scuse. "He and his wife are highly involved in present-day issues such as affordable housing. When people think of Christ Church, they think of the Puxleys," Rev. Scuse recalls an evening when young people visited their home to talk to Canon Puxley and ask him questions. "At the end of the evening, they asked if they could come back again," he says.

Christ Church Anglican is holding a special open house for the couple on Tuesday, June 21 from 7:30 until 10:00. Desert and coffee will be served. All friends of the Puxleys are welcome to attend.

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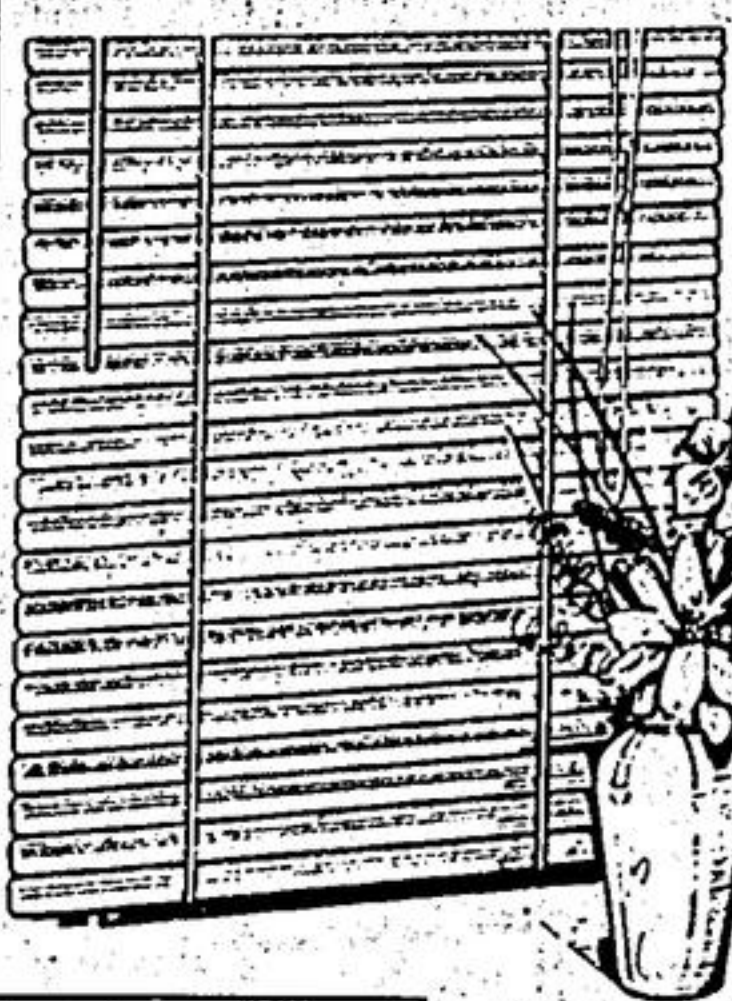
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