

# No regrets for veteran councillor

By BRUCE STAPLEY  
A concern for "the little guy," a willingness to make decisions and a squeaky clean image make up the legacy veteran Ward 3 Councillor Jim Rae will leave behind when he steps down this fall after eight years of local politics.



JIM RAE  
Ward 3 Councillor

The 67-year-old career farmer says he's leaving with no regrets. In fact, there's little the councillor won't miss after calling it quits.

"I wouldn't have stayed if I hadn't enjoyed it," states Jim, who beat out Ken Evans for the Ward 3 post in 1980, and was acclaimed in 1982 and 1985.

His retirement from politics is just another step towards slowing the pace for the man who spent 41 years operating a beef and grain farm on the Seventh Concession north of Bloomington Rd.

He sold the property and moved with his wife, Evelyn, into Stouffville last year. And although he promptly proceeded to go out and acquire more land north of Mt. Forest, he insists it's only a hobby farm. His rediscovery of summer has allowed such luxuries as a recent one-month vacation to Europe.

"I'm looking forward to spending time at the farm, working on my steam engine and helping out as a volunteer," he says of his future plans.

He was born in the former township of Whitchurch. Except for three years in the Royal Canadian Air Force during the

Second World War, he's always been a farmer.

He and Evelyn raised four children.

Of his participation in politics, Jim claims it was something he'd been considering for a while.

"I was always interested in politics at all levels," he maintains. "I thought I'd better give it a try. I was 59. I figured if I get elected, great, if not, well at least I would have given it a shot."

"I don't know if I was unlucky or lucky," he adds with a grin, speaking of his initial victory.

While he admits the early months required much study and learning, he says it was all worthwhile. And he's impressed

when he considers how much the town has progressed since his early days on Council.

"When I first arrived here, we had a clerk, a deputy clerk, a part-time planner and a chief building official. Now we have a full-time planner, a planning coordinator, a planning clerk, a planning technician, a bylaw enforcement officer, an engineering co-ordinator and an entire recreation staff," he says.

He takes pride knowing that it was mainly because of his work that several retiring farmers were able to bypass the official plan and obtain town approval for severances of their farm land so they could stay in their homes after they sold their properties.

"I think there has to be room for compassion," he says of the town's official plan. "If all the people out there want something, then I don't care what the official plan says."

Jim leaves politics concerned about the big bureaucracy in today's political structure.

"It's not a real problem here yet, but it's a concern in the upper levels of government. If the bureaucrats don't get their way, they just sit on things and keep them from happening," he says.

He also can't understand the public perception of politicians as being morally different.

"It bothers me a lot that the public thinks all politicians are crooks," he says. "I know they're not. I often think I'd hate to have

those making the accusations running the government."

He admits the hardest task of any councillor faces is wading through endless paperwork.

"The paperwork never ends," he sighs. "I feel that people in the streets are saying they want less paperwork and less government."

"The provincial government tells us we have to do studies before acting on anything. But when it came time to build a new arena, we didn't need a study to tell us that we did indeed need it or where to put it," he says.

Jim leaves with concerns about where the new municipal offices will be located, as well as a fear over the lack of affordable housing.

He would also like to see Whitchurch-Stouffville's recreation services expanded.

"We've got to have recreation that goes beyond softball and hockey," he states. "We should be looking into providing places for dirt bikers for example, and we should be providing more walking paths and the like."

Jim says he'd recommend anyone thinking about throwing their hat in the ring for the upcoming municipal election to "go for it."

"It's a positive experience," he insists.

And even though Jim is calling it quits as a town councillor, he'll still keep an eye on Whitchurch-Stouffville's future as it heads in to the 1990s.

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