

David toots Canada's horn

By BRUCE STAPLEY

David Bennett is a jovial man who sells himself, his company, and his country.

Quite naturally, his buttons were popping last month, when he received a citation from the federal government recognizing his efforts towards the promotion of tourism in Canada.

David is a driver for Simcoe Coach Lines, working out of their Sutton office. The Goodwood father of three, a driver for 10 years for Travelways before coming to Simcoe, had taken a group of Californians on a 17-day tour of the Maritimes in September. One tour member wrote a letter of commendation to Ottawa.

And while he's received the usual thank yous and tokens of appreciation his efforts normally earn him, he was taken aback by the citation from Ottawa.

"I thought they wanted more income tax, or something," he joked.

"It's not too often you obtain something like this," he said of the certificate from the Ministry of State for Small Business and Tourism. It expressed appreciation, saying he'd gone out of his way providing the tour guests an enjoyable experience in Canada.

The award was accompanied by a letter from Bill Scott, MP for Victoria-Haliburton.



David Bennett is more than just any tour bus driver. He's the winner of a federal government award for promoting tourism through his attitude and enthusiasm toward his job as tour guide to visitors from the U.S. and abroad. He was recommended for the commendation by a traveller on his bus.

David, father of Frank Bennett, a one-time partner with Norm Faulkner at the Stouffville Sales Barn, has made it his business to become a walking

travelogue in his 11 years of driving tours throughout North America. He leaves nothing to chance.

"Once I've been to a place, I

can throw away the map," he claims. "But you must be constantly upgrading your knowledge about the history and the attractions of every area."

Consequently, he says he'll spend an hour or so each night while on the road, reading and becoming more knowledgeable about the area he's in.

"I have an extensive book collection. When people ask you a question on a bus tour, you have to be able to give them a straight answer, whether it's the population of a town, or a fact about a town's history."

David travels throughout North America have more than qualified him for the role of knowledgeable ambassador to touring guests.

The Maritime tour that resulted in his award, was actually put together by him 10 years ago, and has been used ever since by Great Western Travel Tours, the company that contracts Simcoe for the junkets.

He's currently putting together an itinerary for an Ontario tour for Great Western, to begin next summer. He's learned through the years just what people want to see and do, and it always gives him a great sense of satisfaction to know they've enjoyed themselves.

"The greatest pleasure in this job is when people tell you at the end of a trip they were happy; that they saw everything there was to see; things they wouldn't have seen if they'd been driving themselves." He claims that while American tourists are always impressed with what they see, it's the Europeans who are open-mouthed.

"The Americans know more or less what's up here. But for the Europeans, it's a whole new experience."

David claims it's essential to enjoy people in his job.

"I really love meeting people. You meet different folks each trip. And I love driving; I love the highway."

He says his years as a transport truck driver prepared him for driving a tour coach.

"I learned the roads well; how to get to a place. But of course, when you're leading a tour, you have to learn all about the places you're going through."

David estimates he's driven about a million miles since he began his bus tours. He'll spend as many as 300 days on the road annually. Last year alone, he spent 240 nights in hotels.

Does he have any future aspirations beyond driving tours?

"If I ever retire from the road, I'd like to put tours together."

Based on his years spent beating pathways across this continent, David Bennett would be the perfect person to handle this assignment.

Single parent workshop

Raising children with a partner is often difficult enough. But single parents meet twice the challenge.

The Markham Family Life Centre is offering a workshop and support group for single parents at the Markham Community Library beginning this month.

The sessions will deal with changing lifestyles, unfamiliar emotions, the reactions of others, and adjusting to new relationships within the single parent setting. The course leader is Sara Dimmerman. The workshop begins Wednesday, Nov. 30 from 7 to 9 p.m. and runs to Dec. 14, when it breaks for Christmas. The sessions resume Jan. 4 and continue to Jan. 18. The cost is \$45 per person.

For more information, call the family life centre at 294-2371.

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Porter's Office Building, London, 1989
Conference of Federation of Ontario Horticulturists, University of Western Ontario, London, 1988
Three Centuries Festival, Epsom, 1988
High Gallery, Victoria, 1987
Buckingham Fine Art, Markham, 1988
The Spirit of the West, auction, Toronto, 1988
World Wildlife Fund (Canada), Toronto, 1988
University Hospital, London, 1988
Pescott Cosimo Art Studio, Ayles, 1988
Heng Upt Gallery, London, 1988

AWARDS

Port Moulton Historical Show, 1987, 78, 79 (in categories Overall Painting, Watercolour and Overall Media)
Art Gallery St. Thomas-Eggs, 1988
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White Art Exhibition, The Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, Maryland, 1983, 1984
Whitman Gallery, New York, 1983
Art Gallery St. Thomas-Eggs, St. Thomas, 1987
Buckingham Fine Art, 1987
Hume Wood II, Toronto, 1988
48 Southwestern Art Exhibits, London Regional Art Gallery, London, 1988
Buckingham Fine Art, Markham, Ontario, 1988

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