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Photo/BRUCE STAPLEY

Jack and Anne Cornelisse are closing their painting and decorating store after almost 22 years in business on Stouffville's Main St. The couple have

purchased a house in Fergus, Ontario. They aren't sure what the new owners of the property plan to do with the house and store.

By BRUCE STAPLEY
After almost 22 years in business, Jack and Anne Cornelisse have sold their Stouffville Paint and Decorating Centre location, and are hanging up the paint brushes.

April 12 will mark the last day of business for the store that has operated longer than every other in the Main St. East business district.

"Every other store has changed hands since we've been here. Only O'Neill Funeral Home and Armstrong, Button and Ness were here before us," says Anne, who raised four children in the house that adjoins the decorating centre.

Jack and Anne came from Holland in 1957. Jack had been an office manager in Holland, while Anne had worked in the office of a ship building plant.

Upon coming to Canada, Jack found work as a night auditor at the Royal York Hotel in Toronto. He gradually got into the painting contractor business, working out of his home in Bay Ridges.

"One day Jack was working on a paint job across the street from here, and he noticed this building was for sale," says Anne. The couple bought it. Though it was just a house at the time, Jack saw the potential to add the store.

"It was an old house," recalls Anne. "We knocked the porch out, and put the store in."

Anne, who has an Interior Design Certificate from Seneca College, ran the store while Jack worked painting and decorating houses.

While the couple tried hiring help occasionally, they decided it wasn't working out, so Anne remained the only shopkeeper, enabling customers to get to know her personally.

Anne remembers how Main St. used to be when they started out. "When we came here, it was mainly residential at the east end of town where we are. There was a vacant lot next to us, where the old hotel used to be located, and there was a pool hall in the old church where the Post Office is now."

She also recalls that it was a different atmosphere in Stouffville back then. "In the beginning, you knew everyone who came in. Now there are a lot of new faces."

"The kids could cross Main St. safely, and didn't have to wait five minutes like you sometimes have to now."

The couple became involved in the St. Mark's Catholic Church Choir, and Jack coached house league hockey in town for several years.

Jack developed an interest in a visiting ministry run out of Markham that saw him spend many hours visiting people in hospitals and old age homes.

The couple built a solid customer base, and watched as the trends came and went in home decorating. "When we started, wall paper was about 39 cents a roll, and a gallon of good paint cost about \$10," says Anne.

"People never used to put up wallpaper in a new house, preferring to go with the paint the builder put on the walls. Today, borders are very big."

Anne claims that after 21 years of putting in long hours, including Saturdays, that it was time to take it easy. "Jack is 60. It's time to do the things we like to do. Jack likes woodworking, and his visiting at the hospitals, and I like to do pottery."

What she is looking forward to most, she claims, is being able to spend more time with friends and relatives, including a new grandson. "If people would come to visit on Saturday evening, I would have no time to prepare."

The couple has bought a house on a half acre lot just outside Fergus, Ontario. "We like the town," says Anne. It is friendly and has good community spirit. I think it's like Stouffville was 25 years ago when we first came here."

However, Anne says they will miss the people they got to know in Stouffville. "We met a lot of really good people here. The schools were great, our kids always enjoyed them."

Reflecting upon their years operating a husband and wife business, Anne feels they succeeded because of the fact they had to work a little bit harder because of their being newcomers to the country.

"I guess immigrants are more dependent upon each other than other couples. We had to watch how we spent our money, and we had to go the hard way."

Jack says he's not certain exactly what the new owners have in mind for the property that was both a home and a place of work for almost 22 years, but claims they are not going to run a decorating centre.

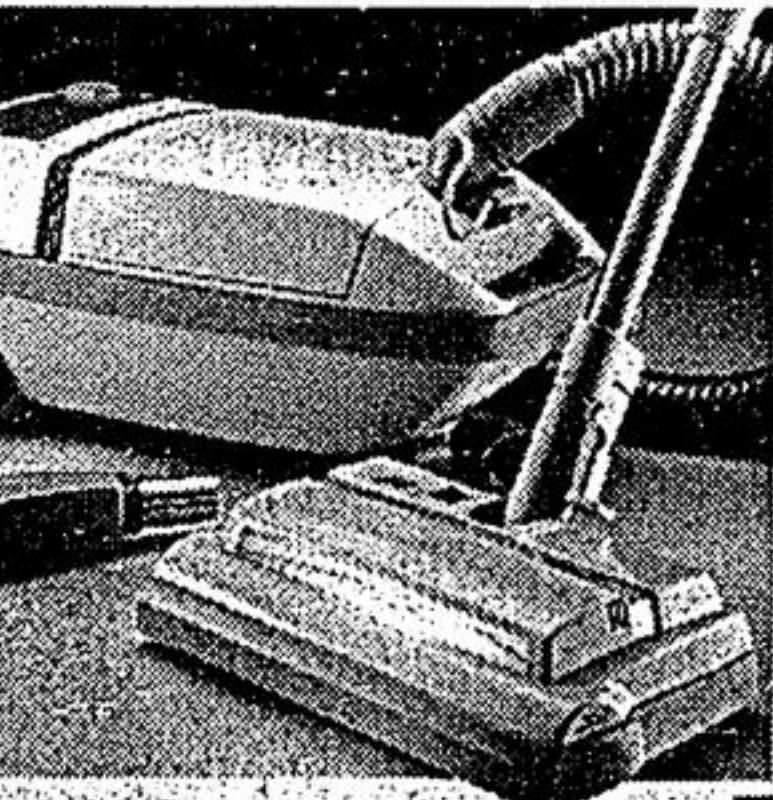
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