

Blindness poses no obstacle to talented Stouffville senior

By BRUCE STAPLEY
Bill Rudd possesses a determined spirit, an innovative nature, and a healthy sense of humor.

All of which have contributed towards helping the 63-year-old resident of Stouffville's Elm Road Seniors' Apartment cope with the near total blindness he's known for the past 12 years.

Bill, a transport driver at the time, suffered irreparable damage to his retinas while sneezing. Several operations have failed to restore his sight, though he's still hopeful research can succeed in finding a way to repair a badly damaged optic nerve.

Thanks to an 'Adjustment to Blindness' course offered by the CNIB, as well as a series of life skills courses provided by the institute, Bill has come out of the experience with a positive attitude and an adventuresome outlook toward life.

"I took any courses they had to offer," he says. "Loom-weaving, chair-caning, wood-working, and I even instructed for a while as a CNIB employee."

And he claims to have seen both sides of blindness while at the institute.

"I saw the good parts and the bad parts there. A lot of the bad parts were with people who wanted sympathy. I have no time for that."

Bill, a father of three, married again two-and-a-half years ago. But the marriage forced him to

make a choice between a faithful but jealous guide dog, and his new wife.

"The dog became quite jealous when we got married," related wife Peggy. "But Bill decided he wanted me more than the dog, so we took it back to the CNIB."

Bill has become an extremely skilled artisan, and his handiwork adorns the couple's apartment. Beautifully crafted wicker planters sit on miniature rush stools, next to an exquisite fernerie in the living room.

Hanging from the walls are his hand-woven rugs with carefully stitched pictures of geese and other objects.

He feels his way into the closet and pulls out a lawn chair and a chaise lounge with the seats restructuring with macrame.

"Peggy figures out the patterns, then she watches all the time so she can point out any mistakes I might be making. If it's not just perfect, I'll start all over again."

At one point, he would sell his creations to friends and relatives.

"I had a good business going while I was living with my sister. I had 38 chairs in her house at one

time. A supreme court judge saw them and bought several for his court room."

Peggy reports even though her husband is just working for a hobby, the apartment sometimes resembles a handcrafts workshop.

"The place gets full sometimes. When he's doing a rug-hanging, he takes over the dining room table, and as soon as I've cleaned up after dinner, he's right back at it again."

Bill claims as long as he has something to which to apply himself, he's happy. And he insists he'll try just about anything.

"I feel since I've been blind, I've learned more than ever before in my life. I'll try anything. I won't say I'll succeed all of them, but most I do."

Peggy says as long as her husband has a project on the go, he's happy.

"He laid the linoleum in the kitchen and installed the air-conditioner. He does the vacuuming and most of the housework. When he's doing something, he's whistling and humming."

Bill agrees being busy in the key.

"If I have something to do dur-

ing the day time, I'm fine. I sleep well and wake up the next morning feeling good."

And most important, he says, he's developed a good sense of humor. Gone are the days when a simple "Good morning" would trigger tears.

"Now, friends call me 'Blinky' and I don't mind. I figure I'm normal now, but I do some embarrassing things, like going to sit in a chair, and missing, or walking into closed doors. But I've learned to make light of it and laugh it off."

Bill is capable of the same physical activity as any sighted person. He'll strike out for a walk and loves to go dancing.

He does miss driving his truck, however.

"When we go out for a drive, he can tell what kind of truck we've just passed just by listening to it," says Peggy.

Both Bill and Peggy have come to appreciate the importance of hearing.

"We feel so sorry for people who can't hear," Peggy says.

As for the future, Bill insists he has no intention of slowing down.

"Anything that comes along, I'll do it," he concludes.

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The Ultra Pampers Jumbo Large Plus 56's was pictured in error. The sizes for the Ultra Pampers and Luvs Disposable Diapers shown on Page 2 of our April 5 flyer were omitted. Sizes should have read as follows:

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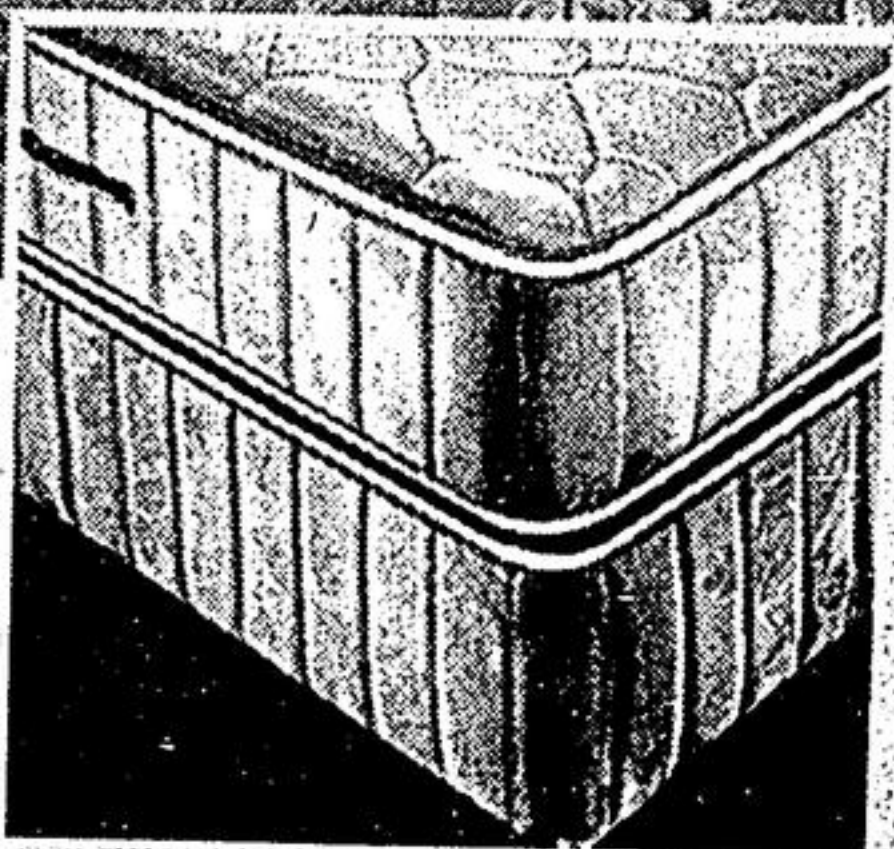
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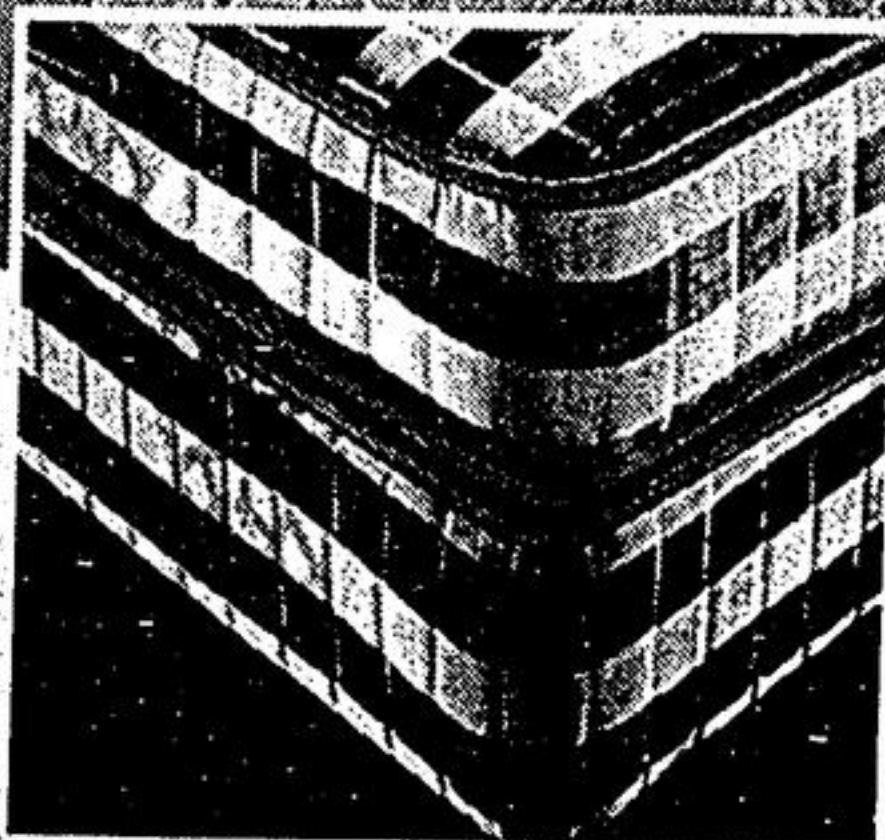
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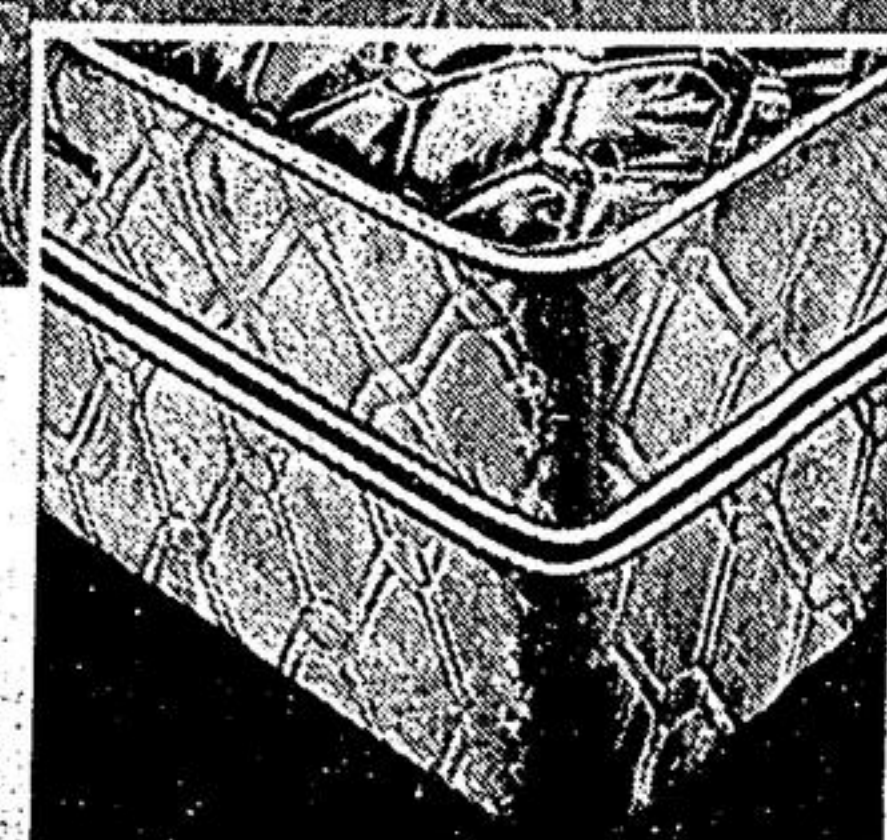
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