

# Stouffville now home for local teacher

After teaching for 18 months at Summitview Public School, lifetime Toronto resident Susan Lavine has found she's become more than a little bit country.

So much so, the energetic Grade 3 teacher took up residence in Stouffville last December. And she's delighted with her adopted town.

"It's great to be part of the community. You walk down Main Street and you know many of the people you meet. Stouffville has a small town flavor and charm."

Susan was part of the overall changing of the guard that occurred at Summitview when the school's principal of 31 years stepped down in the spring of 1987. In all, there were nine new staff members when Susan came to the school that fall.

Yet she was impressed by the way the change was handled by both staff and students.

"Despite all the changes, it was still a unified teaching staff. I think the kids knew things would be a little different and they were ready for it."

Born and raised in north Toronto, Susan graduated from Ryerson in 1984 with a four-year degree in Early Childhood Education. After a year at the University of Toronto's Faculty of Education, she taught at a private school in the city for a year.

She then went to Franklin Street Public School in Markham, where she worked half days for a year.

Then it was on to Summitview, where she admits she was impressed from day one.

"It was unlike any other place I'd taught. The look of the building, the high ceilings, and the charm and character was in direct contrast to those new school buildings with the portapacks."

Susan claims she was pleasantly surprised with the amount of parental involvement.

"I was pleased to see the amount of parent volunteers helping with reading in the library, and with classroom activities. It was so nice to see the integration of home and school."

She has also noted how well the Summitview teaching staff works together with regard to co-operative planning, with kids from senior grades being paired with younger students for extra help.

"And it's great how teachers like Carole Pridham and Bianca Creek are working together to arrange such a variety of activities for Education Week, things like a community art display, concerts at Parkview Home, and in-school visits and open houses. I've really been impressed with the dedication of the teachers here."

Susan's own extra-curricular involvement at the school has included co-leadership of the primary choir, and the organization of staff social functions.

She can always be counted upon to contribute her energy and creativity at school spirit events, and she's ready with an 'original' costume for special occasions like Valentine's Day and Halloween.

"My students always ask me what I'm going to dress up as on Costume Day and school spirit days. But they were all disappointed that April Fools Day fell on a Saturday this year. Who knows what they had in mind for me."

While stressing creativity and imagination in her students, along with a 'fun' approach to learning, Susan is also big on discipline.

In her classroom, she maintains a collection of hats, ranging from a Santa cap right through the classic 'lightening bolt through the head' gizmo, which she wears when she is not to be disturbed.

"But the most important thing I try to do is build a high self-concept in my students. We have to build their confidence and their desire to learn, and then help them become good independent problem solvers."

"I think the education system today is going in the right direction, zeroing in on what is needed for the future. We are stressing processes, skills, problem solving, and adapting to change, as opposed to straight content. We are focusing upon

the skills the students will need."

Susan admits to a lifelong interest in teaching.

"When I was in Grade 2, I wanted to be a teacher so I could draw on the blackboard," she recalls with a grin. "As I got older, I found myself working with kids more and more in different activities. I found their minds to be so full of wonder and creativity. Life is still new and exciting for them, they have a unique perception of the world."

A self-professed book freak, she says she just can't resist when confronted by children's books, or material for all age groups.

to write and illustrate a children's book of her own, though it still hasn't found its way to a publisher.

"Maybe some time in the future I'll pursue it," she says.

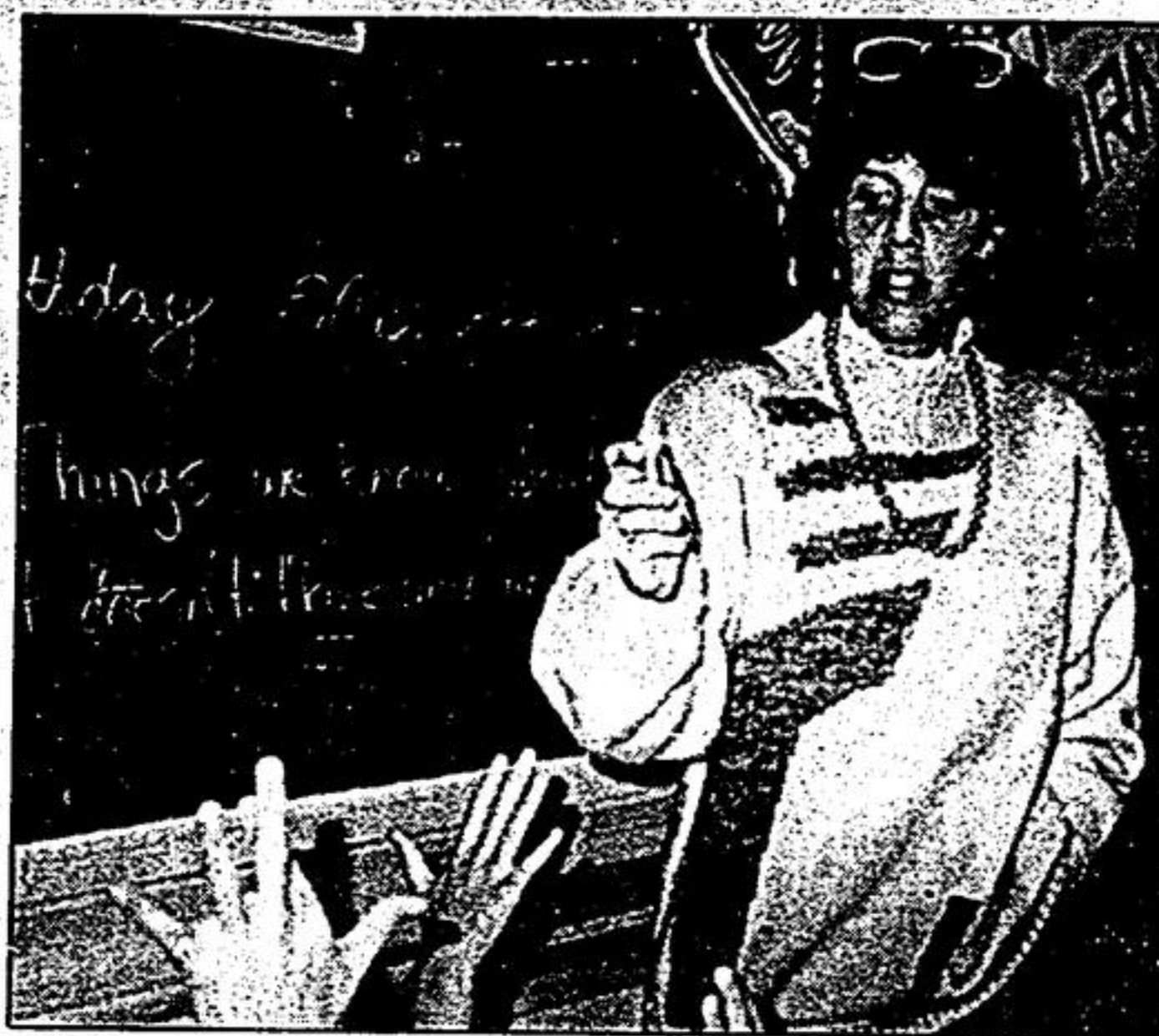
She also hopes the future will see her try a variety of teaching situations.

"There are so many opportunities within the school system. In the long term, I would like to try Special Education, Library Resources and Guidance, to learn new skills and broaden my horizons."

Outside of school, Susan's interests involve music, cooking and cycling. She has her Instructor's certification in swimming and spends part of her summers teaching children to swim.

She is continuing to upgrade her teaching qualifications, having just completed a course in Guidance Counselling. She took a Primary Specialist course last summer, and plans to take Intermediate English this summer.

"I want to be prepared should I get to teach the older kids some year," she says, then concludes by calling attention to her diminutive size, "I'd have to be prepared if I was going to teach students who are all taller than me."



Summitview Public School Teacher Susan Lavine quickly learned to love the Stouffville community when she began teaching here in 1987. A lifelong Toronto resident used to the hustle of the city, she gave it up to move to Stouffville where the pace is slower and residents know one another. But she would like to explore different teaching opportunities in future.

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