

Fixture at Summitview Public School retiring

BRUCE STAPLEY

Correspondent

When classes begin again at Summitview Public School in September, there will be a fixture missing.

Dal Gourley, who has taught at the school for 23 years, plans to retire this spring. The 19-year Stouffville resident will take advantage of the York Region Board of Education's early retirement, although she's still uncertain just what she'll do next.

"I really haven't made any definite plans," says Mrs. Gourley, a mother of two with two grandchildren. "But I won't look for any definite work unless I get bored."

Mrs. Gourley, who has worked as a special education teacher at the school for the past 15 years, will continue to help out on a volunteer basis. "My husband hasn't retired yet so I don't have the freedom to get up and go," she says.

Born in Trout Creek, Ont., Dal grew up in Schumacher. She attended teachers' college in North Bay before teaching a year at nearby Loring in 1954.

The Gourleys then moved south to Richmond Hill, where Dal taught at Henderson Ave. Public

School for seven years before coming to Summitview.

"I've been here 23 years, but it's never been boring," says Mrs. Gourley. "It has been rewarding and I've enjoyed it."

As a special education teacher, Mrs. Gourley was responsible for teaching language, arts and mathematics to students experiencing learning difficulties. Many would do their tests in all subjects with her orally, as they often have trouble expressing themselves in writing.

"Some kids just can't cope with written tests," she says.

Her students go on either to the high school in Stouffville or Don Head Secondary School in Richmond Hill, where they can take basic level subjects.

Mrs. Gourley has been pleased to see a shift in the overall emphasis in education on learning by rote. "There's a place for drill, but not the whole program. Better to have the new programs where the kids learn manipulative skills, especially in math," she notes.

She is also encouraged by reading programs that allow for the different levels of development in children.

And she doesn't feel the tendency among students towards poor spelling is all bad. "In creative writing, to mark the spelling too stringently would inhibit creativity," she says.

As for today's students, Mrs. Gourley feels they are, for the most part, a sound bunch.

"There are some who don't respect authority in general. But the kids are more self-reliant and sophisticated today," she observes.

The village of Stouffville has experienced a great deal of change from when she first arrived on the scene, she says.

"It's a different community now. There are more ethnic groups, which is good for the town. But I wouldn't want to see Stouffville grow too much bigger."

While both of Mrs. Gourley's children attended Summitview, they were never taught by their mother.

And she says when her husband finally retires, the couple might just move back north.

"We would like to eventually have a log house," she says. "But I don't know if that's a dream that will ever come true."



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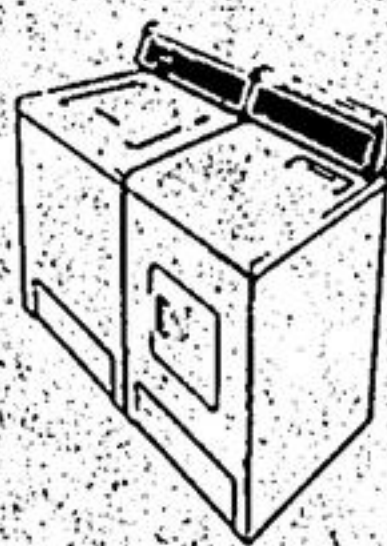
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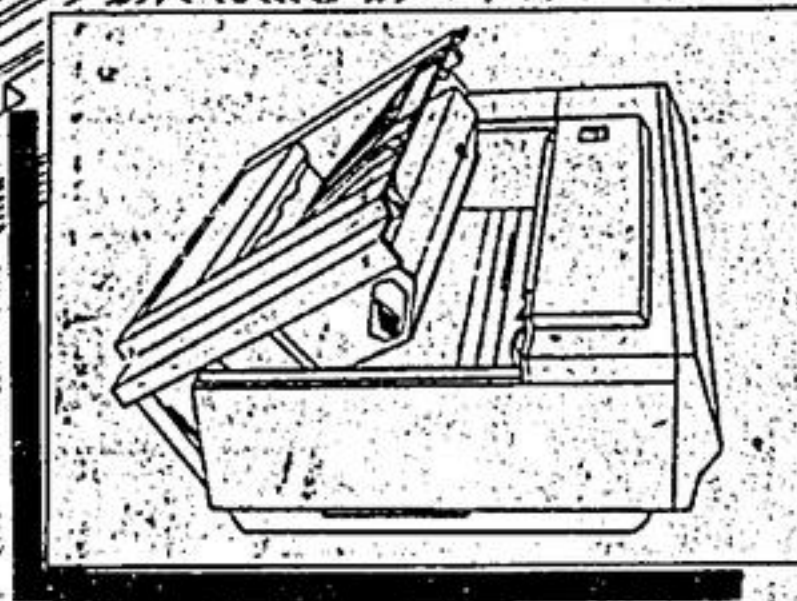
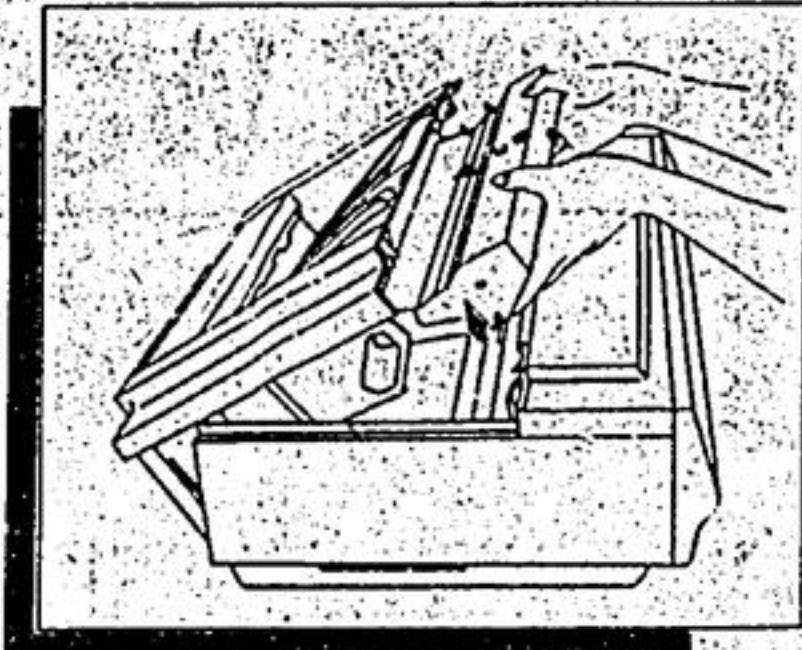
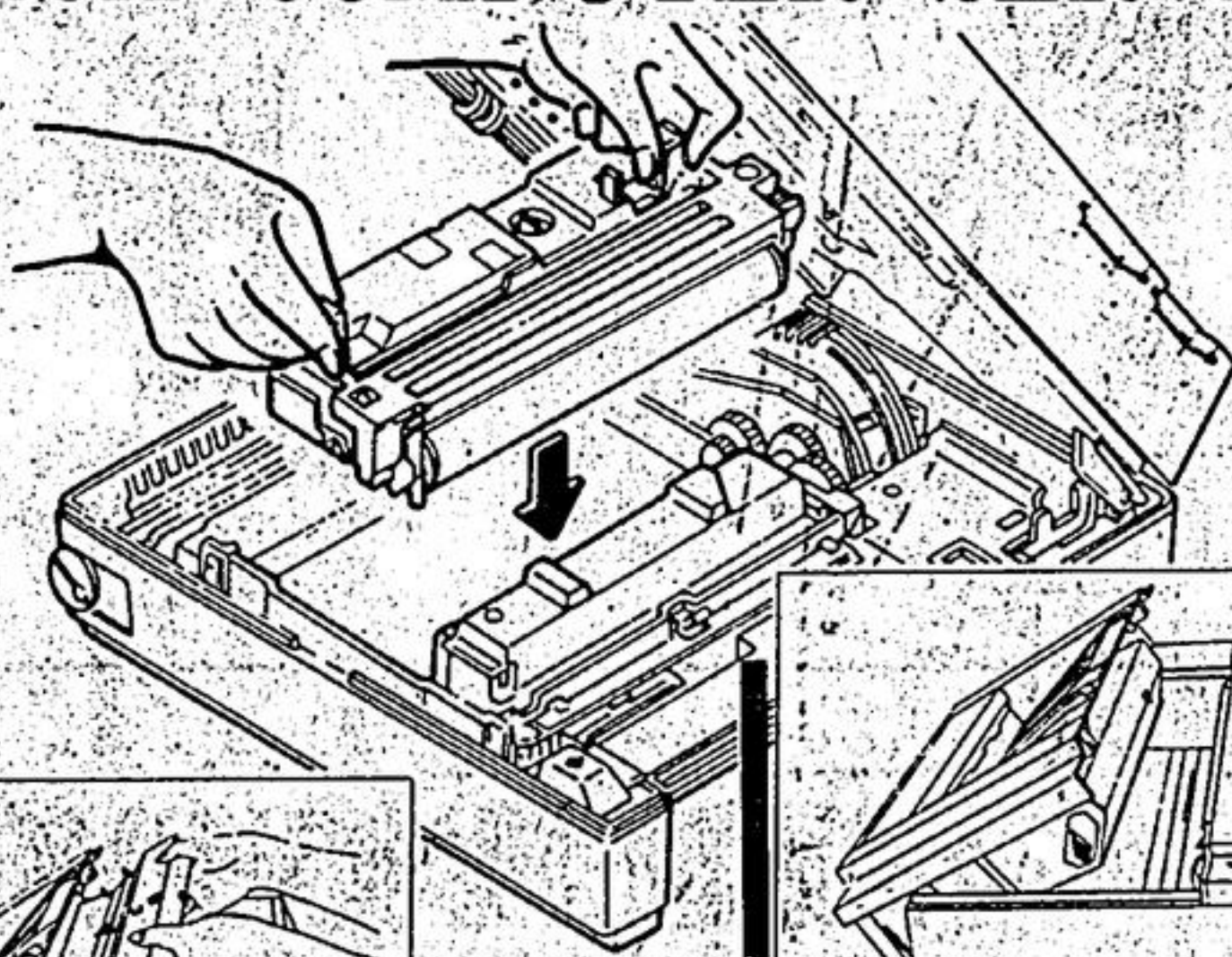
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