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**BUDD VANZANT** By BRUCE STAPLEY

# REMEMBERING A QUIET, LITTLE TOWN

Florida writer-artist Budd Vanzant looks back on his Stouffville origins

*"The library set a pattern of lifetime reading. I never thought about being a writer. I was 13 when I first came in contact with a typewriter, at the Stouffville Tribune."*

FOR BUDD VANZANT, a 63-year-old St. Petersburg, Fla. resident who called Stouffville home for the first 15 years of his life, a long-time goal has finally been realized. But it almost didn't happen.

The former newspaper advertising salesman, who has supported himself for the past 10 years by writing magazine articles, had hoped to someday put a book written by his hand in the local library he used to love so much as a boy in Stouffville.

This spring, he dusted off a 1979 manuscript, one that had been rejected again and again at the turn of the decade, and sent it out one more time.

The book, a western novel, was accepted by a small publishing firm in the United States. And such is their satisfaction with the piece of fiction that they asked Mr. Vanzant to write another one. And now a third is underway.

But while he says he won't get rich on the money the books are bringing in, he's just happy to be fulfilling a life-long dream.

"I've found what I wanted to do," he says in a recent interview from his St. Petersburg home. "But boy-oh-boy, I almost missed it."

Mr. Vanzant says he lives a simple life in Florida, busying himself with his writing and painting, which he does as a hobby.

"There's never a day that goes by I'm not at the word processor," he says. "I'm working on books, mainly, but you keep an eye open for articles you can be writing too."

"I'm making a living. I'm not driving a Rolls Royce, but I'm happy. Most people get unhappy because they want things they can't have. I've come to appreciate the things I have. I'm just lucky to be here."

His first book, *Stranger in Hoganville*, is now on the shelf of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Library. He sent the *Tribune* a copy, along with a letter describing his first exposure to a typewriter when he was employed by the *Tribune* on a part-time basis at the age of 13.

He would arrive at the *Tribune* office at 7 a.m., start the fires and clean out the ashes, as well as sweep the floor. But he would invariably end up sitting alone at the old typewriter.

Ironically, he wouldn't buy his own typewriter until he was 30 years old.

*"A lot of writing and several typewriters flowed under the bridge before I got into writing books. Now when my first western is off the press, I thought I'd donate a copy to my hometown library. If you can find a place for it on the shelf somewhere, I'll be most pleased."*

Mr. Vanzant says he chose to write western novels "by the process of elimination. I didn't like science fiction and romance novels aren't for me. Westerns were the only thing I could live with."

The stories are set in Montana. Mr. Vanzant says he studied enough about the state's history to make him familiar with its western heritage.

He says that while a western wouldn't have had a chance of selling 10 years ago, there has been a revival of interest in such books. And using the drawl of the characters in his stories, he says "they're comin' back good now."

Mr. Vanzant last visited Stouffville in the early 1970s. "I knew it was the '70s, but I was seeing it in terms of the 1930s," he recalls.

*"I got a phone call today from New Orleans, from Harold Hisey. Harold lived a block over from me. I lived on Victoria St. and he lived on Clark St. His father was a butcher and worked for Harvey Schell at Schell's Butcher Shop on the north side of Main St., next door to the Stouffville Tribune. He moved to New Orleans in 1947. He's retired now, but he had a successful career with the local TV station there. His mother died last week in Toronto at the age of 77."*

Mr. Vanzant lives on his own in his St. Petersburg apartment. A daughter lives in Mississippi and his ex-wife is remarried.

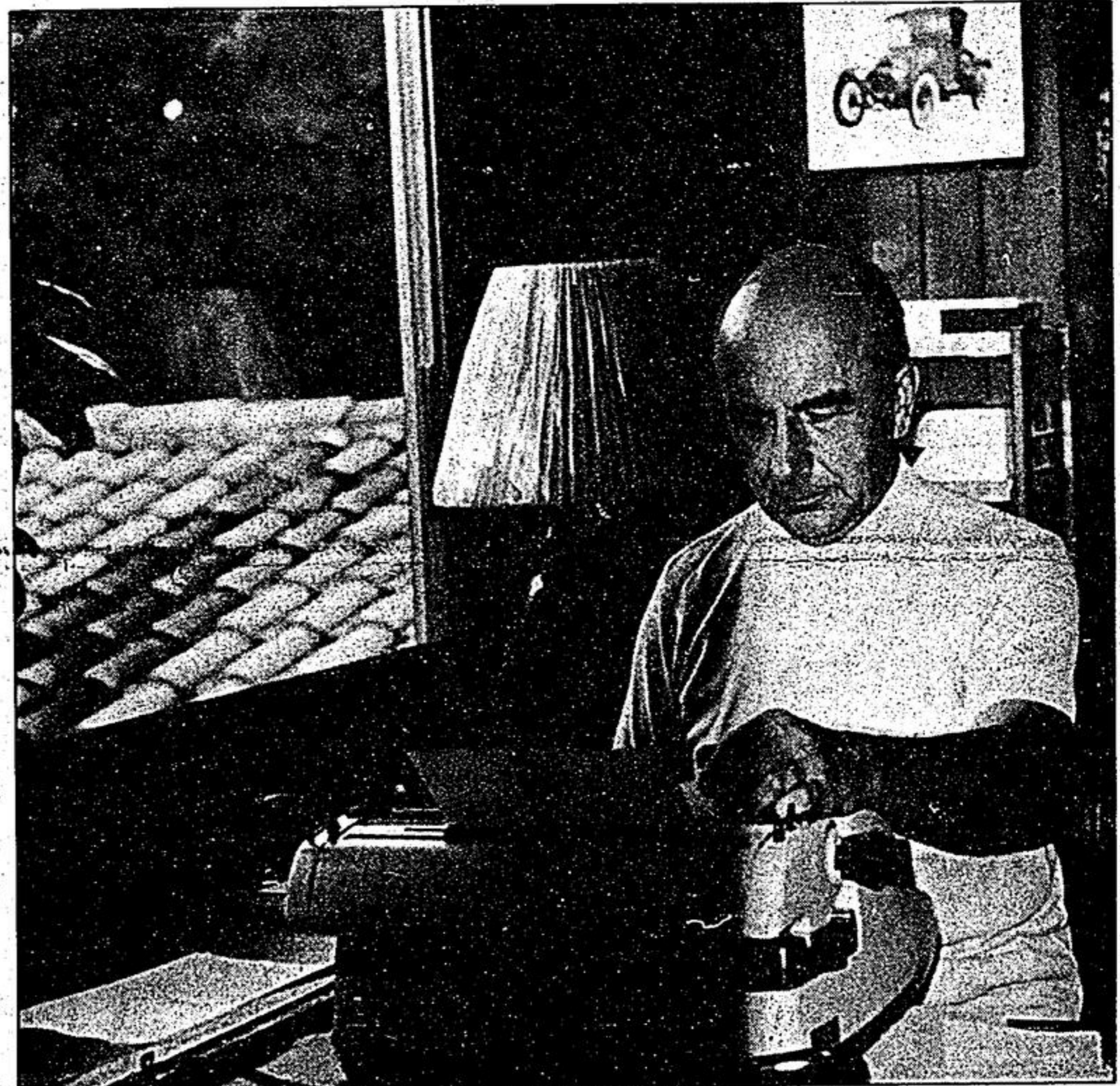
Ever the philosopher, he says he gets together with the former Mrs. Vanzant and notes that they get along better than they ever did, 25 years after their divorce.

"You look back and you can't remember what all the fuss was about," he says, adding "I'm basically a loner. I like people, but I like to be able to withdraw from them. I don't really know any other writers or painters."

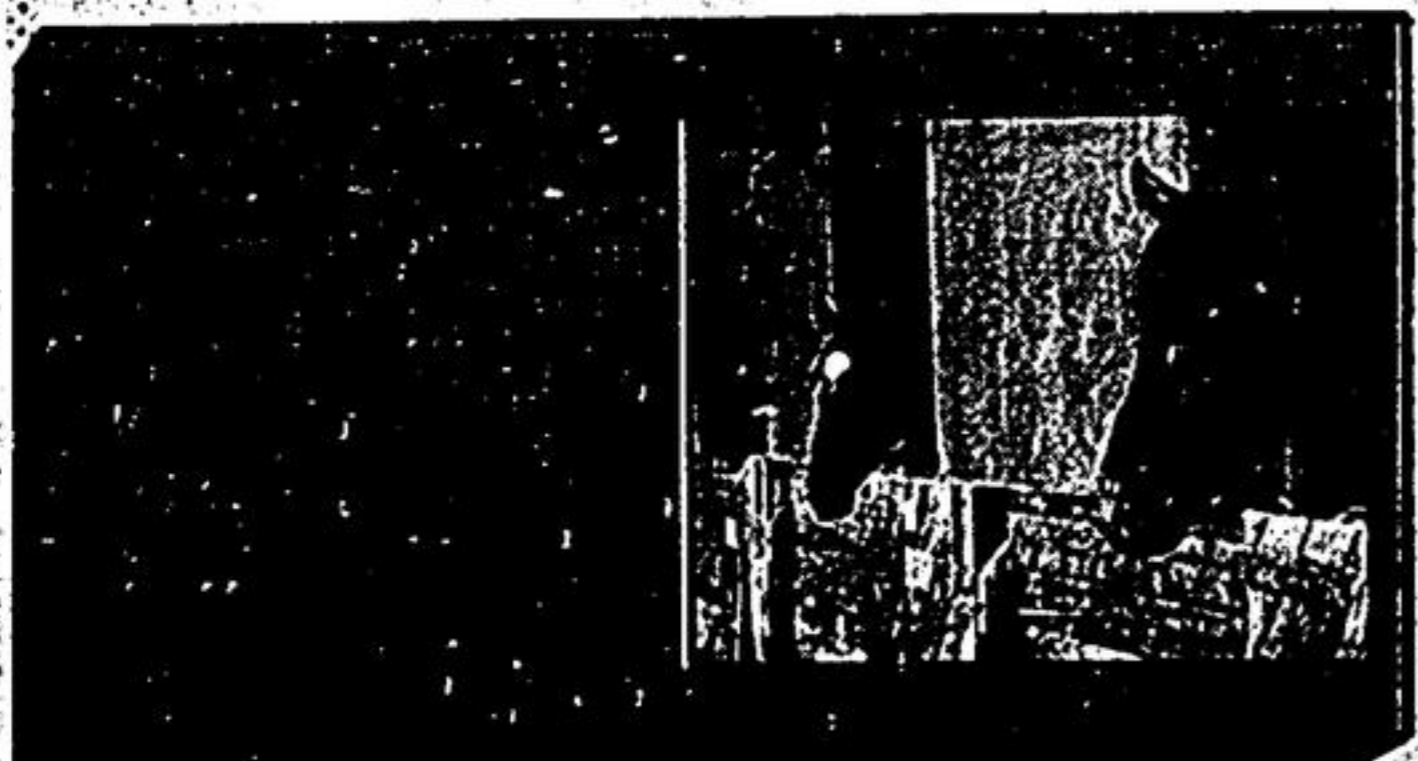
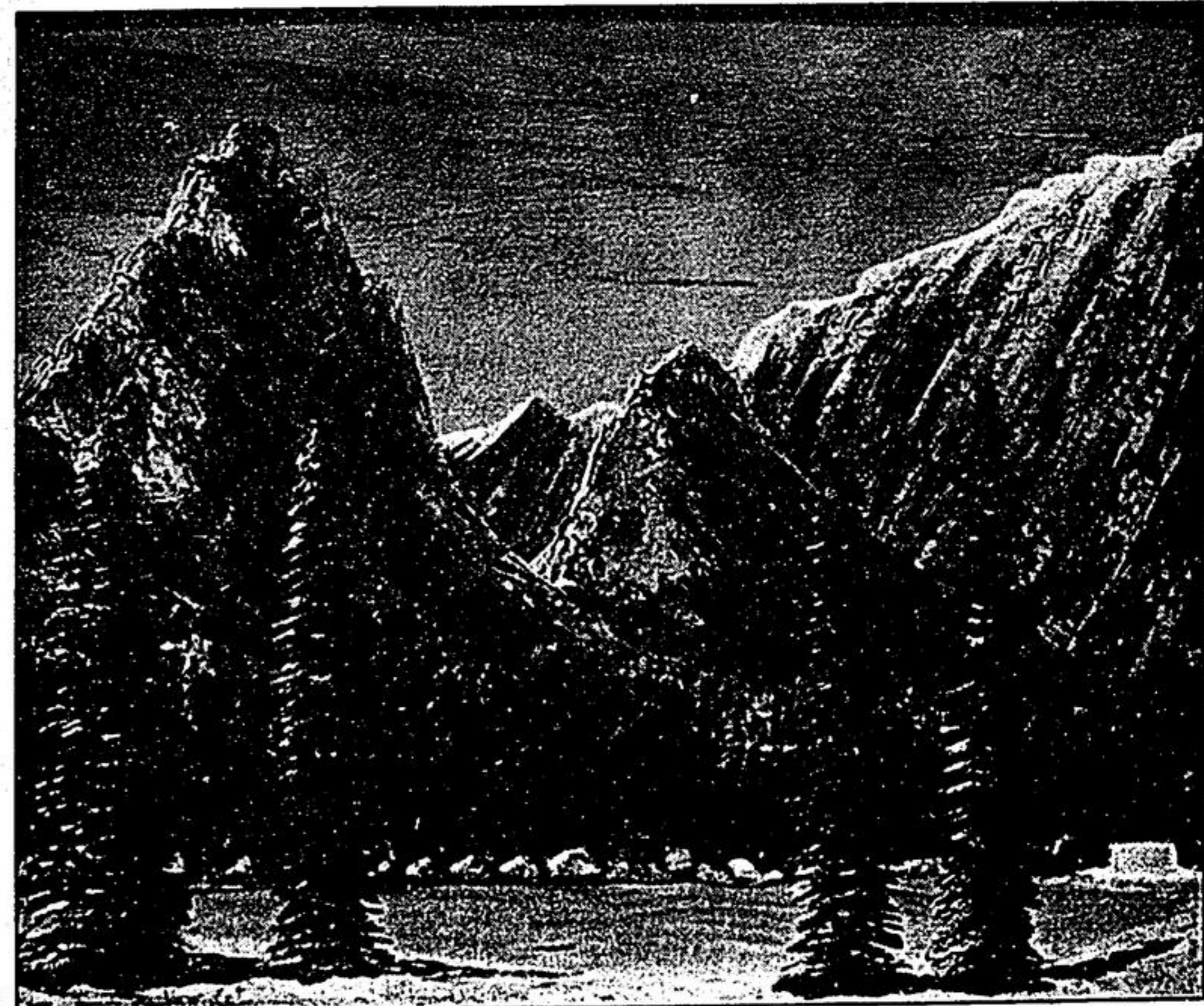
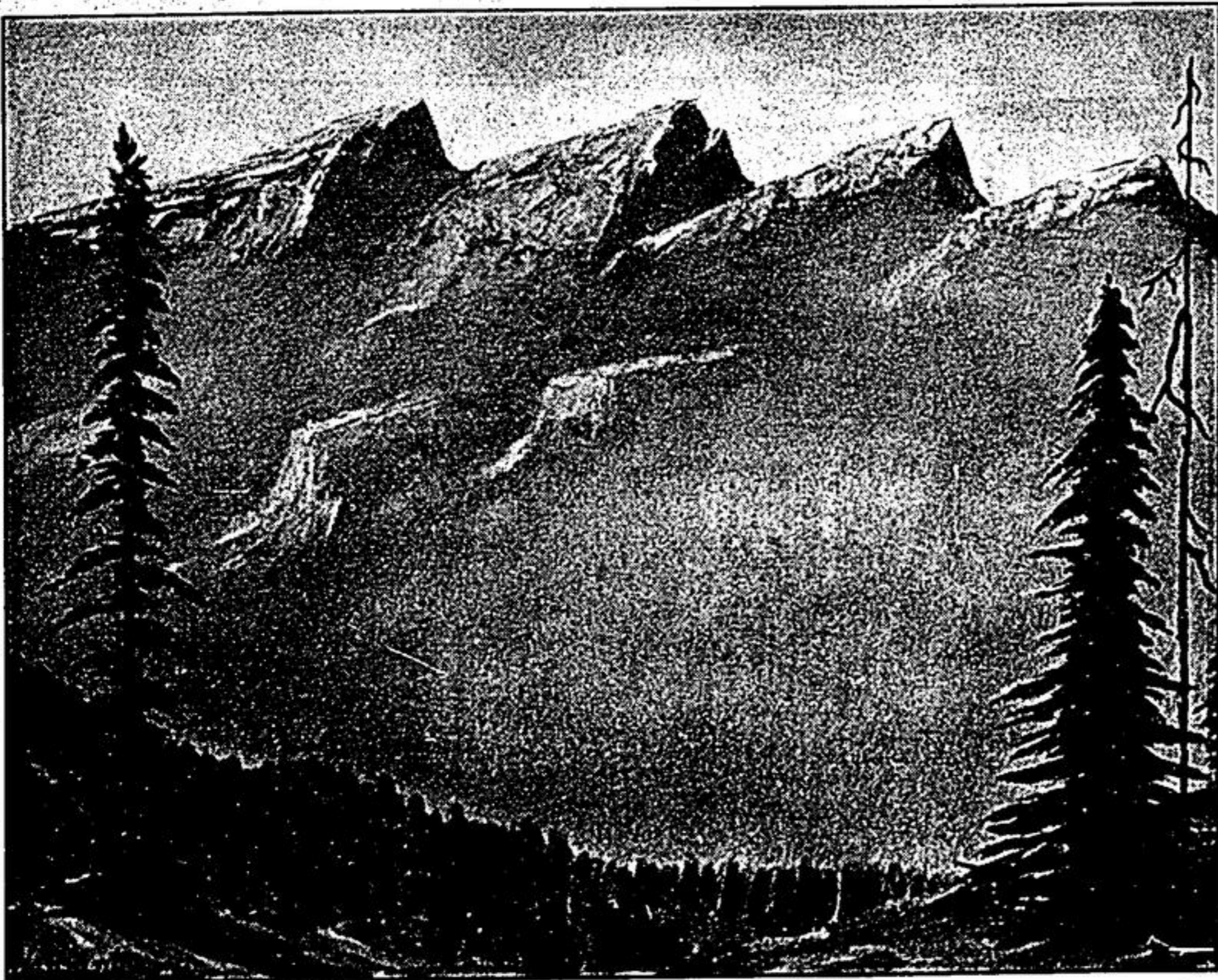
And as for his recollections of Stouffville, he says he'd love to return for a visit one day, but doubts he would recognize much other than his old school, Summitview P.S., and his old house on Victoria St.



Budd Vanzant (back row, far left) in Miss Brooks' Stouffville. When he last visited Stouffville in the 1933-34 class at Summitview Public School in '70s he saw the town "in terms of the '30s."



Vanzant's first book, *Stranger in Hoganville*, is now on the shelf of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Library. He was employed by the *Tribune* on a part-time basis at the age of 13. Below, his artwork reflects the strength of the landscape.



*What's in a name?*

Original music with a message (See page 12)