

Beautiful baby contests continue to pack in fans

While beauty pageants and bikini contests may have been nixed by the politically correct revolution, the old fashioned baby contest continues to pack 'em in at small town fairs. Although according to Joe Champion of the Stouffville

Progress Club, which ran its eighth such competition as part of Stouffville's annual Strawberry Festival this Canada Day past, the concept can be every bit as explosive as those now-taboo, "sexist" extravaganzas. Armed with the experience

that comes from having hosted more than a few of these infant parades in the past, Joe decided to set things straight right off the bat July 1 morning. The problem? Parents, or more specifically, grandparents, who only have

eyes for their own ilk. Anyone who has ever watched a grandparent fawn over his or her own offspring's offspring is aware of the phenomena.

Only a few years ago, when I suggested to my own mother that my sister's newest arrival came by his nick name "Hog" honestly, she threw a glare my way that would have frozen over the most sultry summer day.

Apparently, Joe and his Progress Club pals have encountered the odd overzealous grandparent in contests past, with the partisan behavior of these biased grannies and grandpas causing complaints to be registered with the club.

So Joe came right out and announced at the outset Thursday, repeating himself later on, that this was strictly a fun contest. Anyone whose very life would be thrown into a tizzy if their baby, or their baby's baby, didn't place in the top three should pull out.

The idea was to lighten up those for whom a baby contest is like a World Series.

It was also meant to provide a little protection for the three judges, Betty Dart and the brother-sister team of Violet Love and Bill Butler, all three of whom are respectable grandparents.

The strategy worked, as there were no cat calls from parents or grandparents upon the announcement of the winners in all four categories.

The only snag came when, for the first time, a set of twins was entered in the nine to eleven month category.

Joe, who had been sailing along admirably in his role as



From Where I Live

Bruce Stapley

master of ceremonies until then, was temporarily befuddled. Would the duo count as one entry or two?

He made a spur of the moment decision, deciding to make one out of two, and the joint effort became a solo operation.

My wife Susan paraded our eight-month-old son Drew, who was clad in a snappy golf outfit given to him the night before by - you guessed it - his grandmother (who, upon learning her first ever grandson had been bypassed, mumbled something about small town judges knowing diddly about cute).

Once she had finally accepted that her little man hadn't stood a chance against the baby girls with their strawberry bonnets and frilly dresses, Susan contented herself with the fact that the 57 babies entered would help secure her job as a teacher in York Region.

And while we, along with all the other contestants, received a bag of baby care goodies just for entering, the local foodbank got a shot in the arm from the items of food which were the price of entry into the contest.

And, hopefully, the parents and grandparents of all the babies who didn't win are still holding their heads high as they walk down Main Street with their little darlings.

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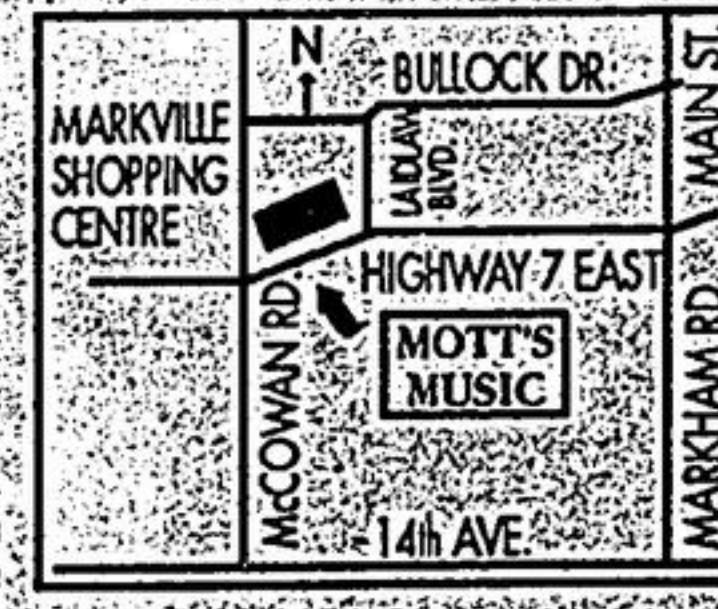
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