

stouffville comment

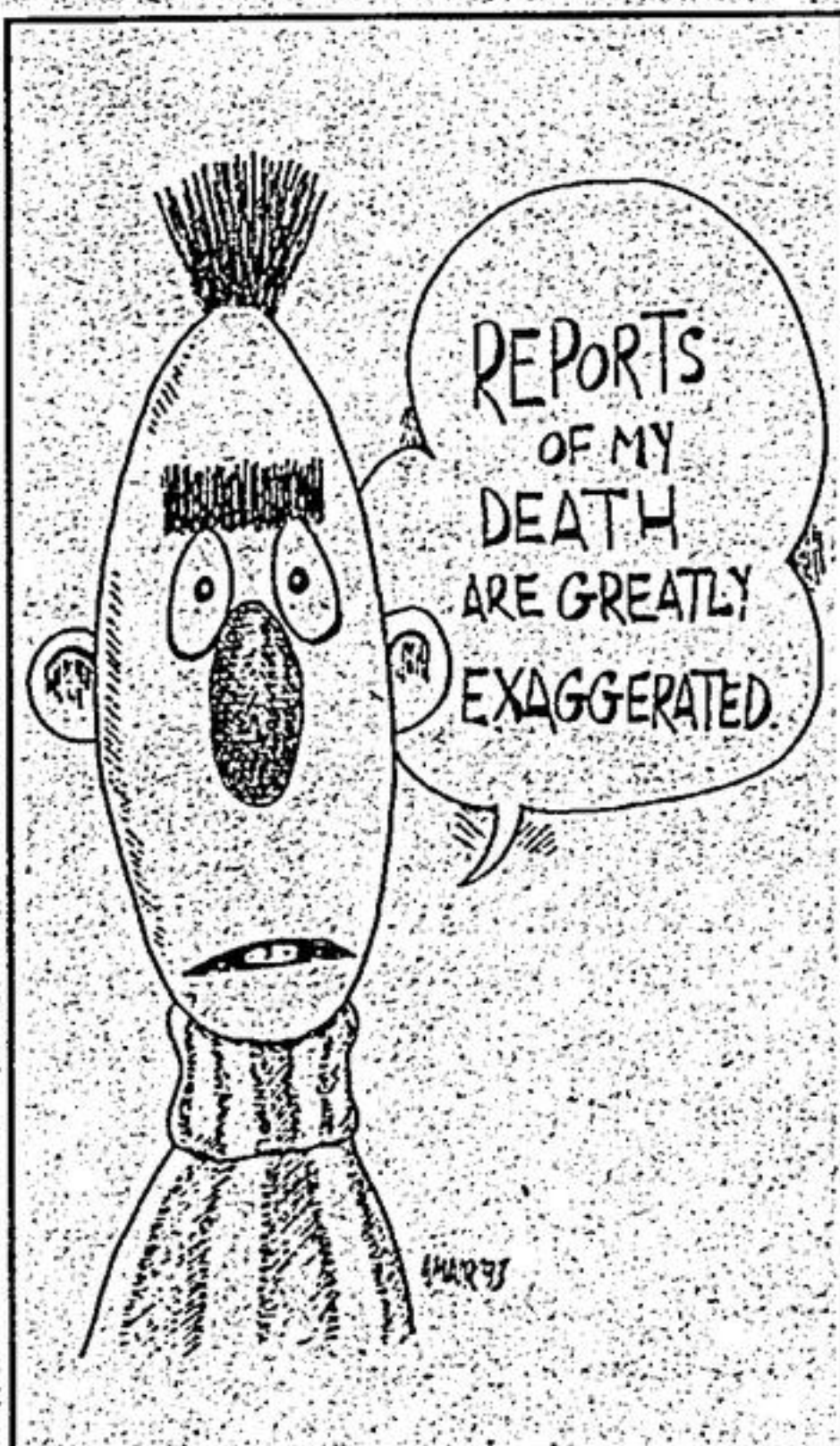
Marriage of two towns has merits

Mayor Fran Sainsbury objected last week to the idea of Whitchurch-Stouffville being amalgamated with Markham. The proposal is one of many ideas which arose from the Vision 2021 report. It's a document made up of the thoughts of politicians and the public on the future of York Region.

Mayor Sainsbury shouldn't be so hasty as to rule out the possibility of amalgamation with Markham. The industrial tax base is much greater in the town to the south. While the mayor insists Stouffville would be footing the bill for expensive Markham projects, the contrary is probably more accurate: Markham residents have greater transit, recreation and fitness facilities and many more services. While remaining independent is our first choice, amalgamating with Markham in the distant future shouldn't be viewed as a horrible prospect.



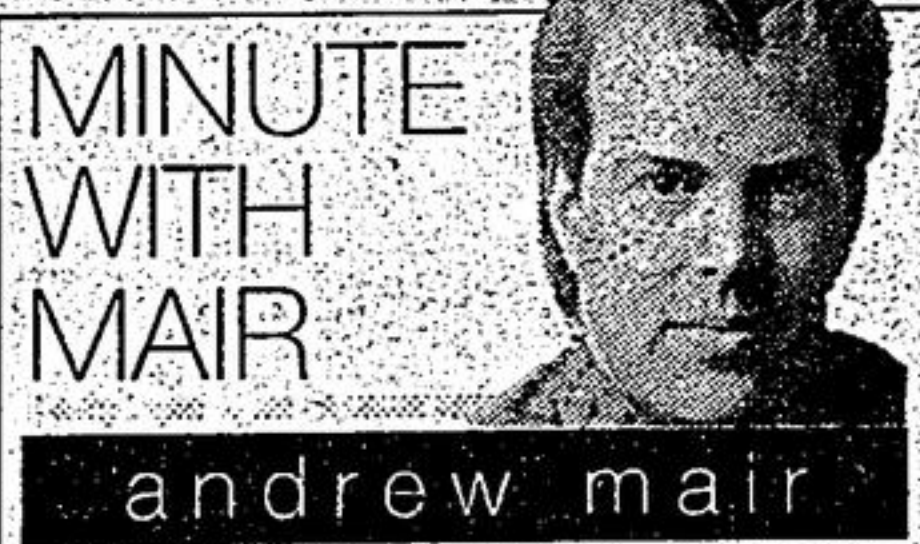
Bert lives! Reports of his demise premature



Reports of my death are greatly exaggerated, said Mark Twain.

Such is the case of our friend, Bert the Muppet, who was reported in these pages to be drowned. It appears that I have been the unwitting victim of some international rumor, and I did you, the reader, a grave injustice by presenting the aforementioned rumor in this space last week. I apologize, but must say my source was previously unimpeachable.

So Bert lives. The false news of Bert's death has spread across the continent, says the Children's Television Workshop. Rumors of the popular Sesame Street puppet's having bought the big one have been flying around North America since



shortly after Muppet creator Jim Henson died.

"He did the voices of Kermit the Frog and Bert, and a lot of people seemed to think the characters would die with him," explained Mingsong Chou, in the CTW's public affairs department. She's heard a wide variety of stories on how Bert dies, including drowning. "It's terrible some of the ones we hear. Bert dies in a car accident, Bert

has leukemia..."

Chou said they have no idea where the rumors originated but they've been reported across the United States and Canada. Oddly, rumors of Kermit dying have not surfaced. "We get petitions from college campuses asking us to bring back Bert and we haven't even done anything to him," she said.

Chou said the CTW has no intention of ever killing off Bert or Ernie. "We'd never be that insensitive to our child viewers." This is not the first time someone famous has turned up alive. Remember Paul is dead?

But all this brings a host of possibilities to light. If Bert is alive, I may have to re-examine the whole Elvis thing. How do

we know he wasn't spotted at the 7-11? And what about JFK? Or Marilyn Monroe? Or Jim Morrison, Jimmy Hoffa, James Dean, and their ilk?

Perhaps there is a club of cult heroes and stars that drop out of the limelight on purpose. I envision them getting together in a secret hide-out to play cards, eat banana and peanut butter sandwiches, and have a good laugh at our expense, while waxing dramatically with statements like, "I want to be alone."

Despite my conspiratorial suspicions, I'm glad Bert has pulled this Lazarus-like stunt. It helps ease the pain I am enduring after I heard what happened to Barney the Dinosaur...

Trip was a mall crawler's dream

There's nothing like a visit to exotic foreign shores to make you appreciate your own backyard.

This summer the Gilderdale clan, accompanied by Granny Pat, spent an educational morning at the Outlet Mall, Niagara Falls, N.Y. Although my husband and I have lived in this part of the world for 18 years, it was the first time we had succumbed to the thrills of cross-border shopping.

One of the most arresting aspects of our journey was the scenery. We gave up the best part of a nice day, and a sizeable portion of a tank of expensive Canadian gas, to traverse one of the province's less prepossessing highways, which nevertheless looked a lot better in retrospect, from the other side of the border.

Our introduction to New York State consisted of an incredibly



depressing vista of warehouses, flat-roofed mall buildings, telegraph poles and tacky motels.

The U.S. customs officer, whose whimsical charm rivalled that of Jean-Claude Van Damme, displayed all the subtle sensitivity for which his profession has become justly famous.

Hostilities completed, we crossed the border and entered every mall crawler's dream world, where I treated myself to a box of band-aids. My son bought the record store's entire collection of U2 CDs and the old man blew \$5.76 on a plate rack.

Brand name clothing, at half

the regular price but twice what I'm willing to fork out, abounded in the stores. Anyone wishing to walk about with B.U.M. inscribed in eye-catching letters across his chest would have thought he'd died and gone to heaven.

My mother, British to the core, stocked up on postcards - none of which, to her delighted amazement, featured the CN Tower. We re-crossed the border the next day only to discover we were 24 hours too soon to benefit significantly from duty-free regulations.

As a result, my unfortunate husband was obliged to donate \$13 to the Canadian government in exchange for being deafened by a bunch of compact discs purchased by our son. In future, judging from his expression at these unwelcome tidings, Niagara Falls, N.Y. will have look elsewhere for a boost to its economy.

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