

stouffville comment

Downtown needs boost

Council has been busy debating rural business opportunities, and whether antique shops should be included on the most-favored list. This, of course stems from the fact that an antiques barn was rejected by council and the owners are on their way to the OMB.

This is all well and good, but shouldn't council be spending its time trying to find ways to perk up a downtown core that is not exactly thriving? Rural businesses generally take care of themselves. Usually, it requires a bylaw to amend the zoning, and the case is closed. Most businesses run out of rural people's homes, and they come up with ideas very well on their own.

Council, and EDAC might do well to work together to eliminate some of the draconian sign bylaws in town, come up with a downtown revitalization program, offer merchant incentives and attract new and viable business here. Fish ponds and fairgrounds are fine, but boosting Stouffville's economy should be concentrated at its heart. To begin outside and work in is backward and a waste of time.



Playing a real cat and mouse game

More from the country notebook.

Sitting in the living room, reading quietly by the fire, with the Fabulous Mrs. Beasley at my feet is my Utopia.

And I had achieved this idyllic state last Thursday and was deeply involved in a lengthy novel when my calm was shattered by such a commotion, I thought the world was ending.

I dashed upstairs, following my three cats. They were obviously in pursuit of something.

Most people I know would gladly let their cats dispose of anything unwanted. Table scraps, bugs, mice and the like would be all part of cat's way to earn its keep in most homes. But not our house.

We have the most domesticat-

ed felines in the world.

If they catch something, they play with it. No killing whatever. This is fine for the cats, but not so good for the quarry.

They are batted around, chased, cornered, and generously harassed. We have saved all manner of critters from our playful trio, but for the most part, it is my wife who performs Animal Rescue 911.

Thursday, it was my turn. I dove under the bed and there they were: the cats had formed a circle around a tiny, wide-eyed mouse. The mouse was hopping about frantically, whacking its head on the underside of the box spring with each leap. I scared the cats away, and the mouse promptly ran into the corner. Then the cats zoomed



MINUTE WITH MAIR

back, tails twitching. The mouse darted back under the bed. So did the cats.

The game continued in this way for a few minutes while I scrambled to get something to throw over the little rodent.

Back into the corner the mouse ran, and I was sure I had him this time. But he made a break for it. Now, for those who have been feeling faint at the

mere prospect of encountering a mouse, stop reading. Things get a little silly from here on in.

The mouse dashed through two cats, and ran up the outside of my pant leg. One cat jumped; the mouse made a left turn and ran up back. I could feel its tiny feet clinging to my sweater.

Another cat came behind me and made a leap. Up went the mouse. I now had a mouse on my head. It just sat there.

Rather than try to lift it off and risk it being attacked again, I walked downstairs ever so slowly, and headed for the back door.

The mouse remained still, on my head, all the way down the stairs. I just had to see what it

was up to, so I made a detour in the washroom and looked in the mirror. There he was, staring back at me, rubbing his tiny paws.

I had to laugh. My passenger and I then went into the woods, and I bent down to set him free. He wouldn't get off. I bent right upside down. He still wouldn't jump off. Gingerley, I pulled him from my hair and set him down. He looked at me, as if in thanks, and then scampered off into the brush.

The next day I heard that you have to take a mouse seven miles away, or it will come back. If this is the case, I expect I'll be seeing him again, probably sooner than I would like.

Have a politically correct holiday

I'm going to miss the NDP when they lose the election in 1995.

Their earnest desire not to offend special interest groups even when it means offending everybody else makes them a gift to any columnist. Just last week they were in the hot seat again, accused of trying to cancel Christmas.

Our man-of-the-moment was an unfortunate fellow by the name of Brian Charlton, whose 15 minutes of fame began with that notorious anti-white-male ad for a government job.

On that occasion, our toothsome premier wisely declined media comment, so it fell to the hapless Bri to defend the indefensible, which he did with spirit and, one might say, if he hadn't been so desperately sincere, arrogance.

Several days later, our fearless



KATE'S CORNER

but canny leader, having not taken any direct blame for the situation, reversed the party's decision on the ad, referring to it as 'inappropriate' - the adjective the NDP has made uniquely its own.

Brian, choking on his own rhetoric, bravely backed up the premier, no doubt hoping to fade into blissful obscurity with all good speed. He might even have managed it had his timing not been disastrously off.

The holiday season, as it is now officially known in NDP circles, was on the launching pad. Once again, the C-word was a political

hot potato. Visions of religious fanatics singing carols, helping the needy, attending Christmas services and staging live nativities, danced menacingly in the party faithful's collective head.

Providing massive government subsidies for decorations representing a Christian celebration, which by sheer coincidence falls right in the middle of the officially sanctioned holiday season, was clearly out of the question.

Large evergreen trees covered in lights and non-religious symbols (once inappropriately known as Christmas trees), Santa Claus (inexplicably not taken to task for being a white male) and Frosty the Snowperson have thus far been spared.

But for how much longer? May your holiday season be filled with generic joy that has no particular religious significance. And may all your Dec. 25th's be white.

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