

# Shopping survey of area retailers gives cause for optimism

A post Christmas survey of some 20 retailers in the Stouffville and Uxbridge area gave cause for both optimism and reflection.

The optimism came as a result of the success enjoyed by the vast majority of the businesses over the Christmas shopping season.

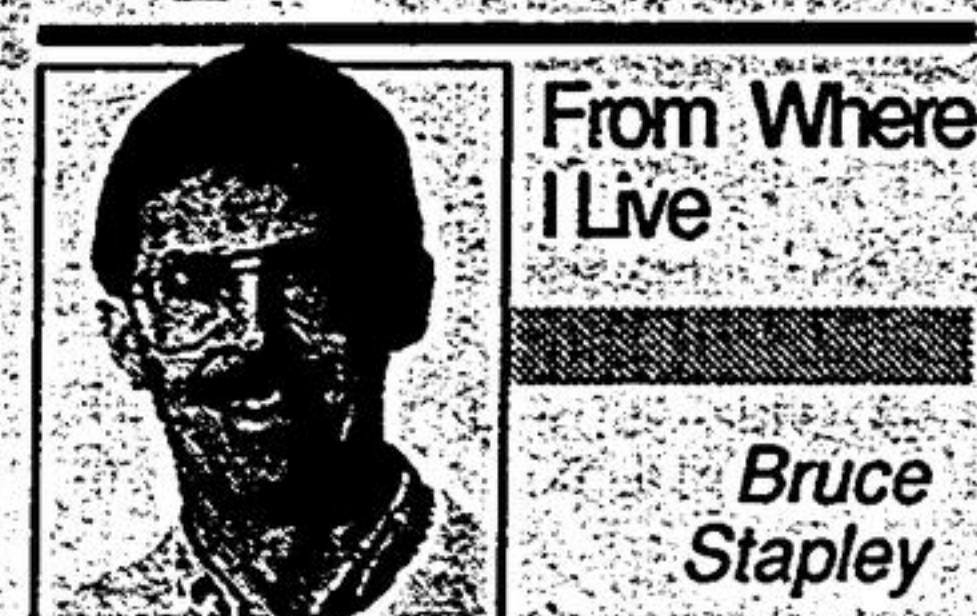
In most cases, sales of everything from baking goods to appliances were up over 1992.

Of the few not reporting increases, most were veteran businesses who were content to settle once again for the relatively healthy sales figures achieved the year before. Others were first year merchants who, while having no past figures to compare with, were happy with their volumes achieved in this their inaugural Christmas sales season.

Also heart warming was the contention of a good percentage of the business people that unlike some years, there was action in their stores after Christmas and into the early days of the new year. In recent years, there have been times retailers have felt they could leave the door wide open and go home in January for all the traffic they were likely to get.

The renewed confidence shown by local consumers over the Christmas shopping season just past has retailers breathing a little easier. As a former retail merchant, I know there is nothing more depressing than sitting in a store full of merchandise - and a drawer full of bills to be paid - with nary a customer in sight.

Having dispensed with the optimism, what gives one cause for reflection is the fact that the two book stores I contacted - one in Stouffville, one in Uxbridge - both commented on how their sales had managed to hold



From Where I Live

Bruce Stapley

steady once again, just as they had over the past several years.

Stouffville's John Lord, who has run John Lord's Books for the better part of 20 years, was so bold as to suggest the book business is actually recession-proof. "Books are a cheap form of entertainment," this consummate retailer told me in his matter of fact manner.

Barb Pratt, who has operated Blue Heron Books in Uxbridge for four years, reiterated Lord's contention. She pointed to the cost of attending a movie, saying that for the same cash or less a person can grab a paper back and wrap him or herself up in it for several days. Then, it can be passed along to a friend, or read again a little while down the road.

When I suggested the book business was the game to be in, both merchants were quick to insist it was the established retailers, rarely the authors, who stand to benefit. With a Canadian book qualifying as a best seller with just 5,000 sales, it doesn't take a mathematics degree to figure out you can't retire off the royalties of a couple of literary successes in this country. But if your cash register is steadily ringing with the sound of sales of books written by a wide variety of hopeful authors, you stand to make a decent living.

With a recent Toronto Star article stating how Canadians spent more money than ever on entertaining themselves during the economically-challenged year just past, it's not hard to understand the tune being sung by book sellers such as Lord and Pratt.

And while a couple of book stores in Stouffville and Uxbridge may not be indicative of a trend, anyone who experienced the lineups that were evident in bookstores at Markville Shopping Centre during the days leading up to Christmas will agree that people still consider curling up with a good book to be one of life's little pleasures.

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