

Orchard Park P.S. hails top custodian

KATE GILDERDALE
Correspondent

When Orchard Park Public School's head custodian won the prestigious York Region Board of Education Outstanding Service Award, the news was greeted with unanimous delight by the entire school.

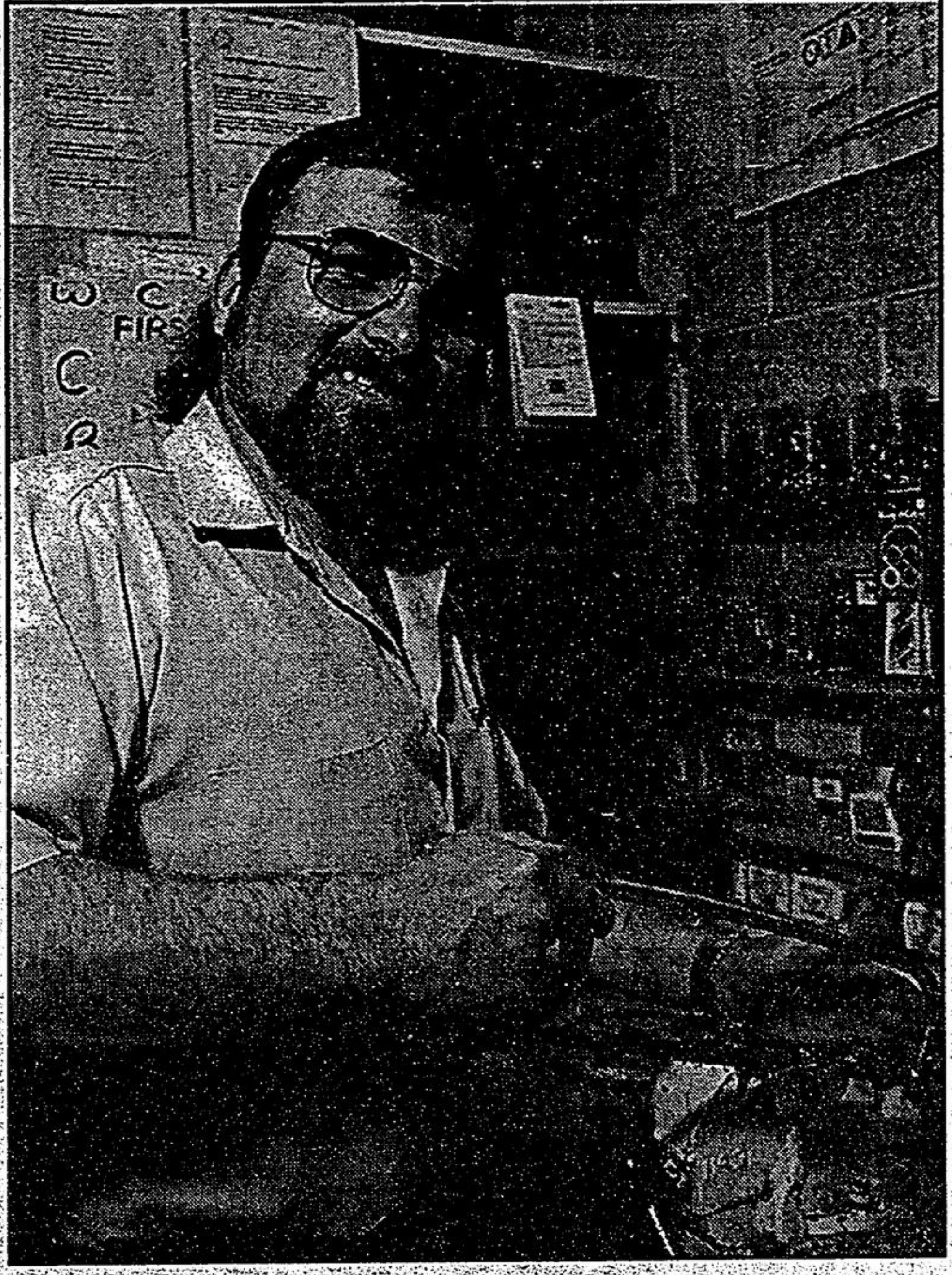
Bob Gilmour himself, however, was amazed to be selected. "I didn't know anything about it," he said. "I came in on my afternoon shift and (principal) Mr. Hopkins asked me to go to his office. He handed me this piece of paper and said, 'Read it.'"

What Gilmour read was a letter to him, from the board, announcing that he had been chosen to receive the award. "I read it and read it, but it didn't really hit me until about two days later." Even now, he can't quite believe he is being honored for what he sees as just doing his job. "My favorite day is Monday," he said. "This is the best job I've ever had and I love it. I've always loved kids. I've got two grandchildren and I get along just great with the kids on the street where I live, just north of Mus-selman's Lake. If you treat them right, they'll treat you right."

Gilmour was a custodian at Summitview Public School for eight years before moving to Orchard Park in 1990. According to those who work with him, he never succumbs to a bad mood and is living proof that a positive attitude works wonders.

When John Hopkins asked students and staff to supply comments about Gilmour for his nomination, the outpouring of affection and respect expressed by everyone was overwhelming.

The following is a small sample of comments from Grade 8 stu-



TOP OF HIS CLASS: Head custodian Bob Gilmour is the pride of Orchard Park.

Photo by STEVE SOMERVILLE

dents: "He is the best person in our school."

"He helps everyone start their day happy and puts a smile on everyone's face."

"He makes school fun and he makes it so people want to come to see him every day."

The reaction from Grade 2 students was equally effusive.

"He's funny and when I go to his office he jokes with me."

"Once he gave me a donut when I was so hungry and I didn't have a snack."

"He's always cheerful and funny."

And, as staff members noted, his sense of humor is matched by his dedication to the job.

"Bob's sunny disposition and exceptional work habits combine with his pride in a job well done to be an example to all staff and students," wrote one teacher.

"Mr. Gilmour enhances the daily working conditions of our school. He is our official-unofficial cheerleader. He constantly encourages

People

students and staff alike to do their best and to view events from a positive perspective," observed another.

Given the immense affection he inspires, it would have been surprising if Gilmour had not won the award. He has time for everyone and, as Hopkins pointed out, he always goes that extra mile to help others.

But what else would you expect from someone who looks on his job as a pleasure, rather than a chore? In Gilmour's words, "Every day is different and every day is a good day." He will receive his award May 8 at The Sheraton Parkway Hotel.

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Catholic board goes for logos

Corporate logos will start appearing this fall on paper Catholic school students use in class or bring home to parents, thanks to a sponsorship deal at the separate school board.

The deal covers all photocopy paper used by students and staff and paper on which school newsletters are written, but not exam foils or "sensitive documents." The board says the advertising, through a company called Educorp Dynamics, will provide up to \$260,000 a year to spread between participating schools. In a board survey completed this month, 34 school councils supported the idea, 23 opposed it and nine could not decide. The board is also allowing corporate logos on school notebooks this fall, through a separate deal with another company.

Trip to remember for Stouffville girl

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Thanks to the generosity of local residents and businesses, Elizabeth Carr flew to Salt Lake City with her parents to receive her Yes I Can! award April 12.

Elizabeth, 9, was born with spina bifida and was expected to spend her life in a wheelchair. However, doctors reckoned without her determination and the dedication and support of her parents, teachers and therapists. Today, Elizabeth not only walks, but has added indoor snow-shoeing, ice skating and roller skating to her impressive list of achievements.

When Orchard Park Public School teachers Ruth Geddes and Regan Crawley heard about the award, they obtained her mother's permission to nominate Elizabeth. Her family was thrilled when Elizabeth was one of only three Canadians to win the prestigious award, which is sponsored by the U.S.-based Foundation for Exceptional Children, a non-profit organization for the advancement of education of disabled and gifted children.

The cost of the flight and accommodation was prohibitive, however, so Geddes and special education assistant Cathy May established a fund for the Carr family at the local CIBC and community response was swift and generous, said Elizabeth's mother, Theresa.

"I'd like to say a heartfelt thank you to everyone in town. The support was enormous, both financially and emotionally. And a huge thank you to Mrs. May and Mrs. Geddes, who orchestrated everything. They just pulled out all the stops and we are so grateful."

Elizabeth was enchanted with Salt Lake City. "As soon as we got there, I looked out the window and saw the mountains. It was so beautiful," she said. The awards' ceremony took place at the Salt Palace Convention Centre and each winner received a bronze statuette. "She also got a certificate and letters from Jean Chretien and Bill Clinton," said Theresa.

When it was over, recipients and their families attended a reception at the Marriott Hotel. "There was lots to eat and drink," said Elizabeth with a happy grin. Geddes and May flew to Salt Lake City to attend the ceremony. Coming back to reality required a considerable adjustment for all of them, acknowledged Theresa. "We had such a wonderful time. It was a once in a lifetime trip and an experience we will never forget."

Chart used in negotiations

"You are here" in negotiating process with teachers, York Region's separate school supporters are being told in chart form.

A flow chart of the contract talks — with an arrow and the note: "We are currently at this stage" — is included in a recent separate board pamphlet.

It was distributed to explain the process to parents, some of whom phone the board worried that a labor dispute could cancel extra-curricular activities before the school year ends, said a board spokesperson. The board is also providing "teacher negotiations hotline" at 713-1211, ext. 7040. Its recorded message this week reminds callers of the "harsh reality of government funding cuts" and says the "bulk of heavy negotiations" with teachers is expected this fall.

A spokesperson for teachers questioned this approach. "We're prepared to negotiate fully now," said Claire Laughlin of York Catholic Teachers.



FOX ON THE RUN: A vixen nervously watches over her two kittens at a fox den on the Aurora Sideroad just east of Ballantrae last Thursday.

Photo by SJOERD WITTEVEEN