

Stouffville Machine plant demolition marks end of an era

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Correspondent

The wreckers' hammer has claimed a rare Stouffville remnant or early 20th century industrial architecture.

But while the Freel Lane building once housing Stouffville Machine and Tool Works gives way to what will be an apartment complex for seniors, few tears are being shed for the demise of the two-story, 20,000 square foot structure which has been vacant since 1994.

"I think it had served its purpose," said Elmer Farthing, who worked in the building as far back as the early 1940s when it was a steam engine powered plant serving the rubber industry.

"It's just been sitting there for a few years. What's been proposed for there now will be great for the town."

Farthing, who began his long association with Stouffville Machine as a summer student, eventually worked his way up to foreman, a position he held when he retired in 1987. "I saw a lot of

people come and go. When I started there part time, there was no electricity, they generated their own. A steam engine drove the line shaft. I remember firing up the boilers for a couple of winters. It was pretty old fashioned."

Originally constructed as a foundry by Isaac and Ed Barkey in 1908, the plant serviced the railway industry in its early days. Products made included the Haggas pump, which used steam pressure from a train to draw from cisterns and streams to fill the train's holding tanks.

HISTORY

In 1942, Barkey brothers sold out to Don Chadwick and Jack Smits, who changed the name to Stouffville Machine and Tool and began to manufacture equipment for the tire industry.

It was purchased by Akron Standard Mould of Ohio in 1963, but was taken over again by the Chadwick family a decade later. The building underwent an expansion in the mid 1960s with the construction of a 180-foot

long single story addition to the north. Charles Jackson, who had worked as an accountant at the plant since 1964, purchased the operation in 1984 and shortened the name to Stouffville Machine.

He continued to run it through 1990 when he sold the business. He rented the building to various tenants before selling the property to developer Gino Testa in 1994.

Jackson recalls that in its heyday, Stouffville Machine made rubber processing machinery for shipment throughout the world. "At one point in the last 1960s we had two shifts going," said Jackson.

"We dealt with all the major tire manufacturers."

But when mergers and take overs started to change the way tire manufacturers did business all across North America, it spelled the end for Stouffville Machine.

"You could see the writing on the wall," said Jackson. "The tire companies started buying equipment out of Canada, and setting up in the United States or elsewhere."

Jackson, who continues to reside in Stouffville while working as a self-employed accountant, is not alone as he looks back fondly on Stouffville Machine.

He said former employees like Mt. Albert's Herb Wagg have requested he save a few bricks for him from the building's demolition.

"I have lots of memories," said Jackson, who is putting together a video documenting the rise and fall of the building and the thriving enterprise it once housed. "I have a video of the business in full operation, and I've been filming it in all its stages as it comes down. I'll also film Gino's new building as it goes up."

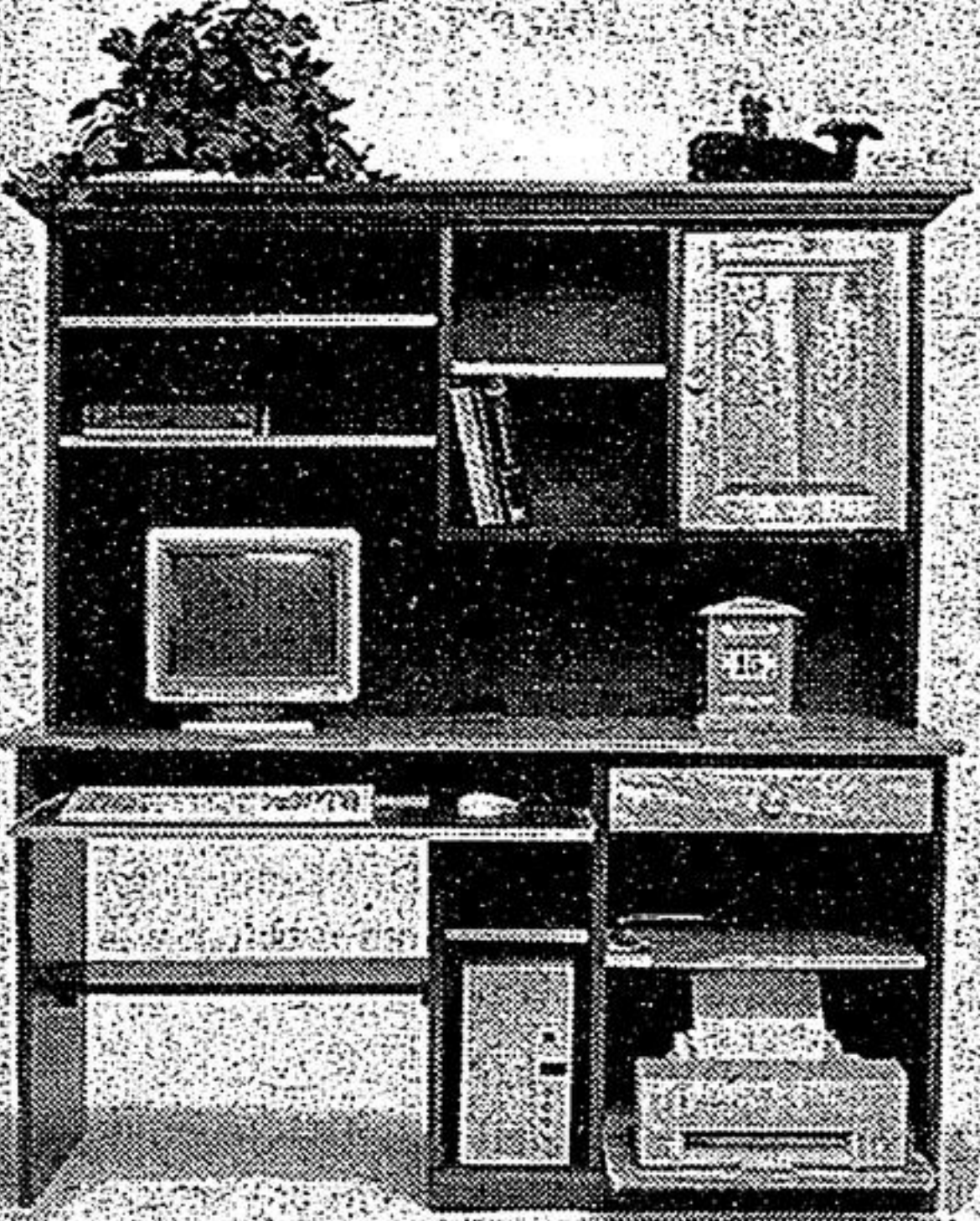
Stouffville area woman recent program grad

Mary Lou McLeod of Stouffville was among the 30 recent graduates of the Ontario Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program. The area resident and her colleagues were recognized at a dinner in their honor in Ingersoll in early April.

Through this program, 12 women and 18 men have been sharpening their leadership skills and broadening their outlook on the many issues that affect Ontario's agri-food industry. They met with diplomats in Washington and Buenos Aires; exchanged views with MPs in Ottawa and MPPs in Toronto; shared ideas with community leaders in rural Ontario and rural New Jersey; visited a spruce forest in New Brunswick and a eucalyptus plantation in Chile; toured food processing plants and a food bank; learned negotiation strategies; practiced impromptu speaking; worked on interview techniques; and gained a vast network of friends and acquaintances throughout the agri-food sector. Since their first meeting in Guelph in October, 1995, they devoted 55 days away from their farms and businesses to attend a series of nine three-day seminars and two two-week study travel sessions. Application deadline for the next AALP class is June 16. Information meetings will be held in Guelph, May 26; Peterborough, May 28; and Kemptonville, May 29. Call Cathy Honderich at (519) 826-4204.


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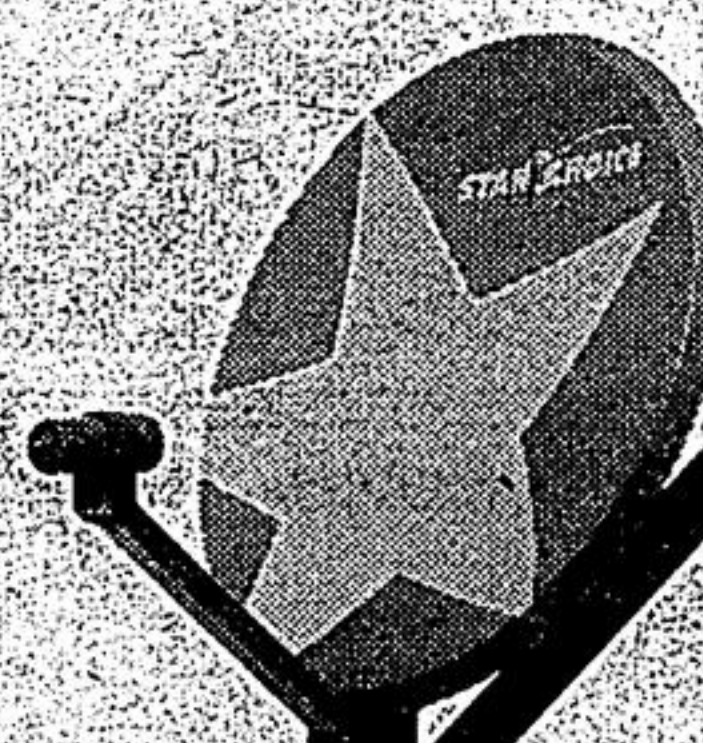
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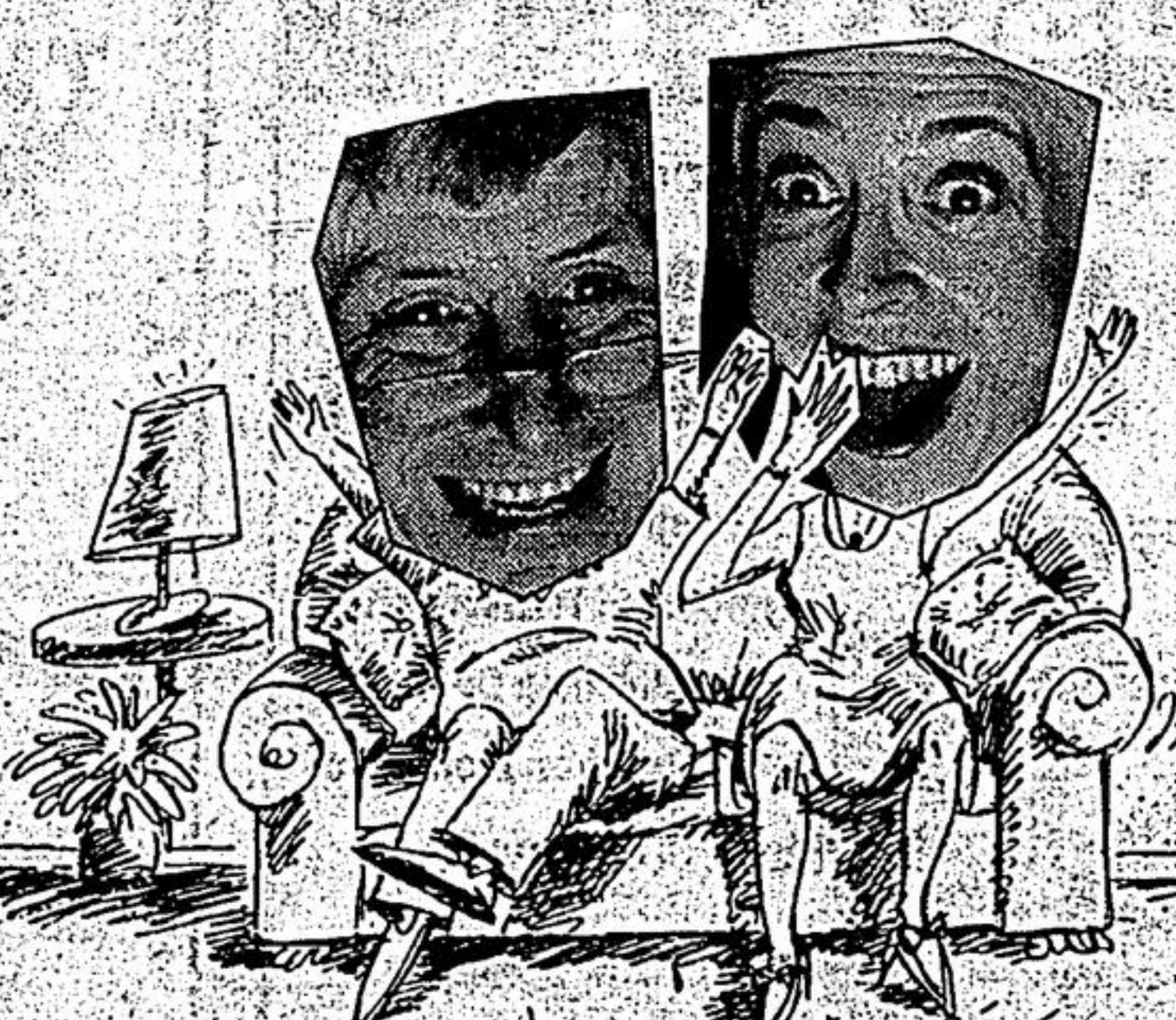
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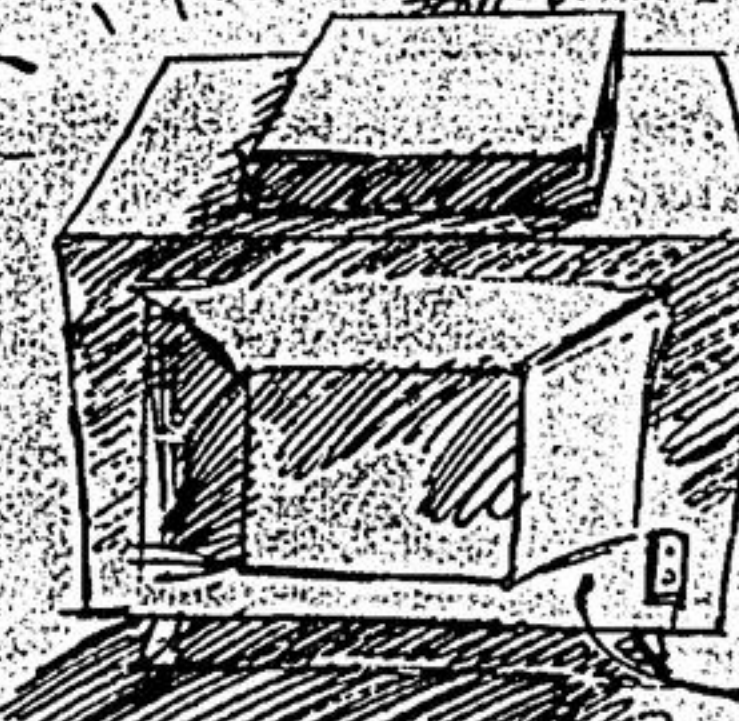
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