

## ARTS &amp; ENTERTAINMENT



Jeff and Tessa Evason of Stouffville travel the globe, entertaining audiences with their psychic show.

## Grand illusions

NOREEN O'LEARY  
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From Stouffville to Singapore, Jeff and Tessa Evason are reading minds all over the world.

The husband and wife team have performed their illusion and ESP show in 28 countries, including Egypt, Israel, and England, and continue to travel solely to entertain.

The Evasons have been reading minds together since 1983. After working together for five years, the two became a couple and later married.

"We were both so in tune with each other," Tessa said. "I think that's what really hit it off for us. We became best friends instantaneously. It felt like we'd known each other for all of our lives."

Jeff and Tessa met in Canada when Jeff was asked to work at a fashion show where Tessa was modeling. At that time, Jeff was performing strictly an illusion show. Tessa came in as a partner in his act, and the two have been a psychic pair ever since.

The duo describe their show as a combination of illusion, perception, and the power of suggestion. They say some people put them in the category of magic, while others put them in the category of psychics. The Evasons perceive themselves as a mixture of both.

"By combining both illusion and magic, the show becomes something that has better mass appeal," Tessa said. "People don't necessarily have to believe in psychic ability, to actually enjoy the show. We're not trying to convince people to believe in it, we're just trying to entertain them."

The Evasons incorporate numerology, telepathy, mind over matter, and prediction into their show. One of the highlights of their act is called "Second Sight." It involves Jeff selecting audience members while Tessa stands on

stage blindfolded. Tessa will call the audience members' first and last names, and will describe many of the objects they are carrying, from the photographs in their wallets, to the number of keys on their key chains, to the type of cars they drive.

Jeff and Tessa say they are sometimes challenged by skeptics.

"If we pass their test, then they become the biggest believers," Tessa said.

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"We're okay with skeptics," Jeff added. "We're going to appeal to everybody. No matter what, you're going to be entertained."

One-on-one readings are not a part of the business that the Evasons promote. "Tessa is very selective, she needs somebody she feels comfortable and in tune with," Jeff said. "Our main thing is the show. It is really an entertainment thing that we do."

Jeff said colleges and universities provide the perfect setting for their show. "That's a perfect age because they're highly educated and open. As we get older, we get a little more jaded, and a little more closed-minded."

However, both Jeff and Tessa agree different audiences give off different kinds of energies.

Tessa believes her interest in the psychic world may partly be a result of her cultural background. She said as a child growing up in St. Lucia, she felt spirits or ghosts exist, and she paid particular attention to her dreams. Jeff remembers his interest sparking when he began

# Life in Canada artist's inspiration

## Visiting royalty presented with Bessey's work

The essence of rural life is captured on canvass by Stouffville artist James Bessey.

Landscapes, local scenes, and nature are the focus of Bessey's work, which he's concentrated on for the last 25 years.

Prior to leaving the business world — Bessey worked in the natural gas industry until 1972 — art was simply a hobby.

Now 78, Bessey said he's enjoying his second career.

"This was a hobby that grew into something big," he said. "It's now my living."

At first, "it was scary" to depend on selling his paintings to make ends meet, but demand for his work steadily grew. "We're not millionaires, but we're putting bread on the table," he said.

Bessey's done work on commission, as well as Christmas cards for a company in Winnipeg. For 20 years he was commissioned to paint what he calls "fading Canadiana" for Lennox Industries, which distributed Bessey prints to its customers.

A year's work — 39 pieces — will be on display and for sale at Latcham Gallery today, Friday and Saturday.

The themes Bessey paints are representative of life in Canada, and as such, have an appeal to visitors. His works have been presented to Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh as well as the Queen Mother, as commemorative gifts from the Province of Ontario and loyalist societies.

Bessey jokingly describes his

art as "so conservative it's radical."

From ancient barns and old farmhouses in the area to fine examples of Victorian architecture, Bessey captures the essence of Stouffville, Uxbridge, and Markham in watercolour.

"In my work there's a lot of feeling," he said, adding that the absence of people in many of his paintings does not detract from their personality.

"The answer is in the land, and nature and animals," Bessey said. "The secret is simplicity."

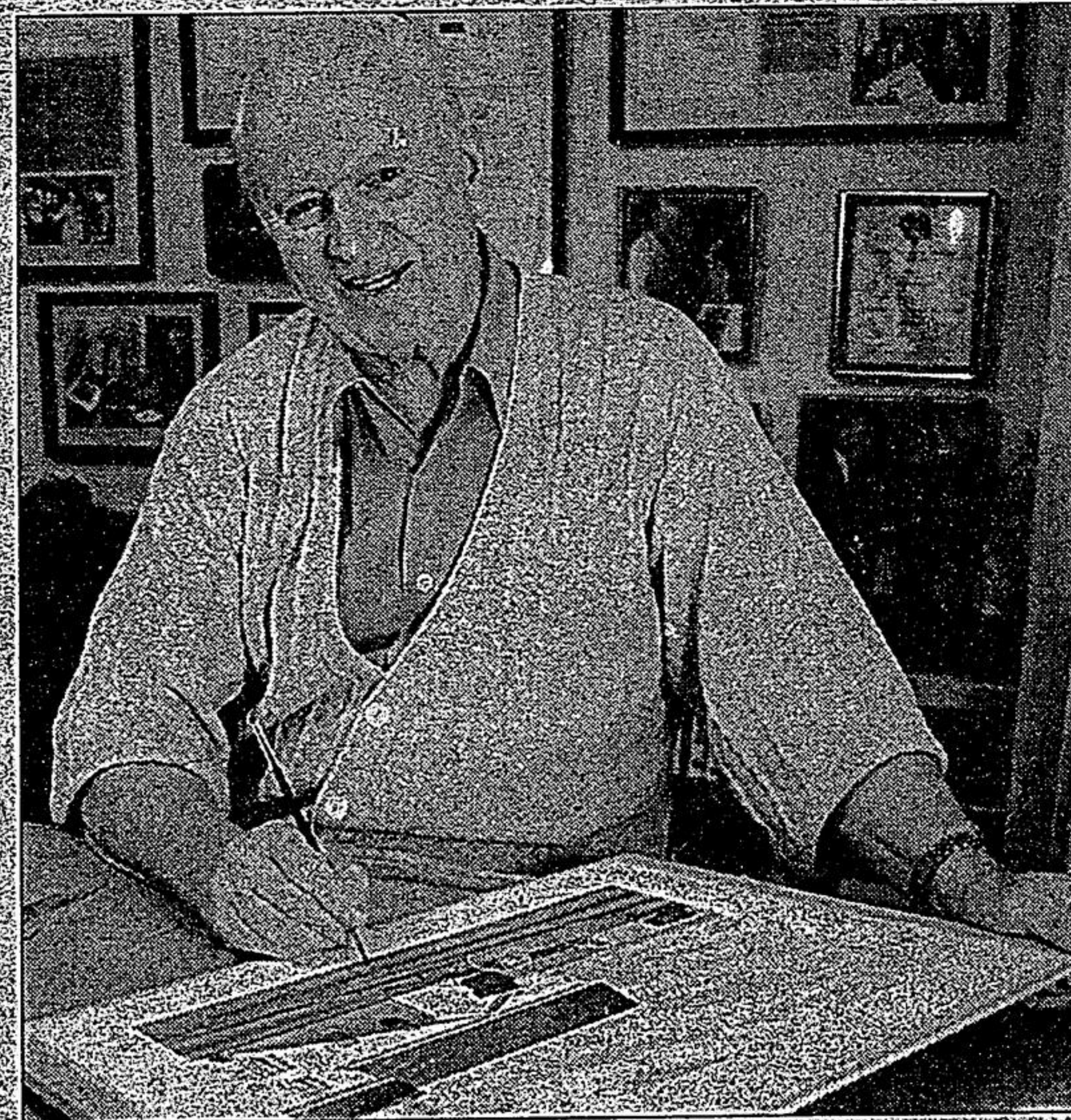
Bessey, who was born and raised in Toronto, and his wife

made Stouffville their home 18 years ago.

In addition to immortalizing local vistas on canvass, Bessey believes it's his duty to also give back to the community. He often demonstrates his craft to high school students, giving them insights into the medium of watercolour.

Bessey is also an avid supporter of the Latcham Gallery Association, and will donate a portion of the proceeds from his current exhibition to the group.

— Julie Caspersen



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Artist Jim Bessey prepares for his Latcham Gallery art exhibit.

## Simple Tones come full circle

### Quartet made first foray into music biz at Markham Fair

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CORRESPONDENT

An unplanned performance at the Markham Fair's teen talent contest, launched the recording career of the a cappella act, The Simple Tones. "Someone who knew us entered our names in the contest and told us four days before," explained the group's Jonathan Hiltz.

The foursome, which also includes Brandon Rozen, Shane Ho and Jason Stavroff, were 16-year-old students at Vaughan Secondary School.

"Brandon and I wanted to start an a cappella group for one big school performance. We got together with Jason and Shane whom we hardly knew," Hiltz recalled.

The quartet sang *For the Longest Time*.

When they performed at Markham Fair six years ago they

won first place in the variety category.

"At that time, to a bunch of kids, winning \$100 was a lot of money. We thought we might have something here and instead of splitting the money, we started a bank account," said Hiltz. "It's amazing how an audience, a plaque and a \$100 can be such a boost."

The quartet will sing at the fair Saturday and Sunday in the beer tent. They'll be selling the final copies of their independently produced tape, *The Simple Tones A Cappella*.

In the interim, the group has worked their way into gigs which gained them a degree of notoriety in the Toronto area. For four summers they performed at Ontario Place, graduating to bigger and more prominent stages at the lakeside park.

"By last summer, which was the last time we did Ontario Place,

we were on the big stage," Hiltz said.

The exposure from Ontario Place earned them a contract with SkyDome, performing outside Gate 11. This summer, they entertained on a European cruise.

For now, each member has another daytime avocation. Rozen is a student at York University. Ho attends University of Toronto. Stavroff works with car audio systems and Hiltz is a filmmaker.

Their new manager, Corey Mandell, has an image change in the works. A CD, to be released in December, will feature pop and R'n'B tunes, most with instrumentation. They'll also be performing under a new name.

"I don't know what would have happened to us if we hadn't done the Markham Fair teen talent contest. It was a great forum for showing off a group, and gave us our first success," Hiltz said.