

Murder shocked community in 1970

From page 1

Albert were married for eight years. Preferring a country lifestyle, the couple lived on Bethesda Road for six years. Albert taught school in Richmond Hill, while Doreen took a break from her nursing career to raise their child. Life was good until Doreen opened the door sometime in the afternoon of May 6, 1970.

During most of the month of the spring of 1970, Whichchurch-Stouffville held its breath, wait-

ing for an arrest. Little did the people know, the wait would span three decades.

Last summer, long-time residents of Whichchurch-Stouffville were stunned and relieved to learn that West, a one-time Toronto cop and drifter had been charged with the sex slayings of both the Stouffville woman and a 38-year old nurse from Palgrave.

West is presently serving an eight-year jail term at Maplehurst Detention Centre for armed robbery

DNA evidence and the long

memory of a Ontario Provincial Police criminal investigator, linked West to the nurses' murders.

This is one of the oldest "cold case" arrest in Canada, OPP deputy Superintendent Larry Edgar said. "The OPP never closes the file on an unsolved murder."

Since 1970, the case of the two homicides has remained active and different investigators have assumed management of it during the 30-year period, Supt. Edgar stressed.

Residents turning in guns

From page 1

tested a new light-weight pellet which exceeded this speed and now the guns have gone up in status.

But Binions noted these new pellets are hard to come by. It's inconceivable to him that children who own a pellet gun may now face charges of up to five years in prison for not having a licence.

He said the government is making criminals of the five to seven million people in Canada who legally own guns. He believes the guns most people own are rifles, many of them old or historic.

"Criminals use mostly illegal handguns and they wouldn't register them anyway," Binions explained.

All firearm owners must have applied for a possession licence by Dec. 31, and the firearms must be registered by Jan. 1, 2003. But the justice department recently introduced a six-month grace period in which gun owners are free from legal trouble so long as they have applied for a licence by the deadline.

"This extension is in response to firearm owners who have told us it will give those in possession of prohibited or unregistered, restricted firearms more time to take appropriate action," said federal justice minister Anne McLellan in a Dec. 22 press release. "Our goal is to work with firearm users while ensuring public safety."

Anyone wishing to purchase a gun as of the new year must first acquire a possession and acquisition licence. That requires passing a Canadian Firearms Safety Course test.

Those who do not comply with these rules could face penalties of fines up to \$2,000 or six months in jail.

Gun owners who don't want to register their firearms may turn them over to police.

York Region Const. David Purghart said "there's been a regular stream of people handing guns in," although he couldn't give a specific number.

Purghart added that police likely won't go after those who haven't applied for a licence after the deadline.

But Binions wasn't impressed, calling the turning in of firearms a confiscation of legally owned property. "We shouldn't have to give it up for free. There should have been a viable buy-back program."

Such a program would have saved tax-payers a lot of money, he claimed, saying taxpayers are now paying up to \$5,000 a head to cover the costs of registering all firearms.

Wilfert acknowledged the new law is not perfect, so "that's why we've listened to firearm owners" in granting the six-month grace period. "We're not trying to be unduly bureaucratic."

A few days ago, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters asked the federal government to rescind its current gun control laws. Executive Vice-President Rick Morgan said the government needs to develop a new law that "targets criminals, not law-abiding citizens."

Anyone still needing a firearm possession licence may pick up an application form at any post office or phone 1-800-731-4000.

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