

Stouffville Says

by Hannelore Volpe

"How do you think the Maple Leafs will do in this year's playoffs?"



GAIL NEARY

"I don't know if they will make it all the way, but they are motivated. I think Doug Gilmour will heal. Even if he is not playing, he can advise them and lend his experience."



ALEC MCFARLANE

"I think they will win this year. They have some good players they have bought — and Doug Gilmour. They still have a fantastic team to win. The two goalkeepers are fantastic."



FRANCINE CLUNE

"I think they'll do well. They surely will win. At our house, the TVs are always on to catch all the sports. We are sports enthusiasts."



BILL CLARK

"I don't know and I don't care. I think the whole sports scene is a horrendous waste of money. While people in Third World countries are starving, look at the billions we spend on sports here in North America."



Heading for the book sale

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library is preparing for its annual Giant Book Sale, March 27-30 at the library. Volunteers helping set up for the sale posed for a photo recently. From left: Pat Tipson, book sale committee chairperson, Stouffville Lions Barbara St. John and Ivan Harris, Stouffville Kinsmen Frank McGillan, Gary Gornick and Bruce Smith. The Stouffville Richardson Lodge Masons and the Stouffville Volunteer Firefighters are also helping.

SIDERD WITTEVEEN PHOTO

Muslims find serenity in Gormley

BY PEP PHILPOTT
Special

Now is a difficult time to be a Muslim in the United States. Zafar Bangash would agree and for that reason is glad to call Canada home.

Mr. Bangash, 52, is president of the Gormley-based York Region Islamic Society and editor of Crescent International, a York Region newsmagazine of the Islamic movement.

Recent media reports tell of Canadian immigration officials at U.S. border crossings being overwhelmed with the influx of Muslims, mostly Pakistanis residing in America but without permanent status or citizenship. They are seeking safe haven in Canada from new American regulations requiring special registration with the department of justice.

Mr. Bangash came to Canada from Pakistan in 1974, making a conscious decision not to seek residency in the U.S. He remembers being a university student in England and noticing the differences between Canada and the U.S. while travelling through North America. "It was very striking. I thought if there was any place where I'd like to live, I think Canada would be the place."

But Canadians are not without blemish. In relating the experience of other York Region Muslim immigrants following the Sept. 11, 2001 U.S. terrorist attacks, he recalls the sense that

Muslims have been "under greater scrutiny."

There were episodes of school children and women, distinguishable by their Islamic attire, being taunted. Attendance dropped at his mosque on Stouffville Road in Whitchurch-Stouffville "because people were scared, there was no doubt about it." But he sees this more as a passing influence of the American media.

"We had a very different experience" in Canada after an initial fear, he said.

"People came forward to express sympathy with us, without knowing us. It was very touching. Very moving."

STOUFFVILLE CHURCHES VISIT

After the terrorist attacks, the society was approached by Community Mennonite Church of Stouffville and Stouffville United Church. "They invited us to come to their church to speak to them. And we invited them to come to our centre, the congregations mixed with each other. I must say, for us as a community, it was a new and very inspiring experience."

But the serenity it would appear, is not permanent. As war in Iraq appears inevitable, fears of the past are surfacing among some in the Muslim community.

Those residing in the Greater Toronto Area during the Gulf war of 1991 are now remembering how some Muslims of Arab

background were treated then, says Mr. Bangash. "Their businesses were raided — openly done by the RCMP," he said.

But any sense of isolation appears to be dissipating as opposition to war in Iraq increases in Canada and around the world. Mr. Bangash is overwhelmed and reflective on this growing movement.

"We were talking among ourselves and telling each other 'Isn't it a great shame Iraq is a Muslim country and yet Muslims are so lethargic?' They don't care."

"Yet it is the Christian church and other groups that are on the forefront of this movement to prevent war. Isn't it a disgrace for us that Muslims are the ones who should be upholding the banner of justice, but we're absent from the scene," says Mr. Bangash.

Some of this absence can be explained by past experiences of the members of the Islamic society. Many have come from countries where political expression is forbidden. Some, says Mr. Bangash, are afraid if they did state their opinion, they might be targeted by authorities.

Mr. Bangash is confident there will not be negative repercussions for Muslims in York Region. The peace rallies "have been quite an eye-opener. The average person is more concerned than we are and that gives us comfort that we are not on our own as a small community."

Briefly

GO train back after flooding subsides

Flooding on the tracks stopped the GO train from making its way from Markham to Stouffville earlier this week.

For two days, GO Transit provided bus service to about 200 passengers who normally take the six trains to and from Stouffville.

Service to Stouffville was to resume last night after the tracks were cleared in the afternoon.

"Our first concern was safety," GO Transit spokesperson Ed Shea said.

Flooding between Stouffville and Markham Tuesday caused the disruption of GO train service at the new Mount Joy stop in northern Markham.

Water on the tracks was so severe that the train was forced to stop operating about 6 p.m. Tuesday. GO sent buses to rescue the passengers.

The passengers were loaded on to the buses for the return trip to Stouffville, while arrangements were made for bus service to continue throughout Wednesday at both the Stouffville and the Mount Joy stations.

The bus service will continue as long as it is needed, Mr. Shea added.

Library to your home

Like to read but can't make it to the library?

People 55 years and older, who are unable to come to the library, can have books delivered to their homes through the CHATS "Books to Go" program. Staff and volunteers of CHATS and the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library work together to bring library materials to your home.

Call CHATS at 1-877-452-4287 for more information.

Quoteworthy

"I only get to ski on Saturdays and Sundays."

Brian Lock, nationally-ranked nordic skier on living in trail-less Stouffville.

See story on page 28.

Contacting Us

Have a news tip? Please:

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• go to www.stouffvillesun.com to let us know what you think

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