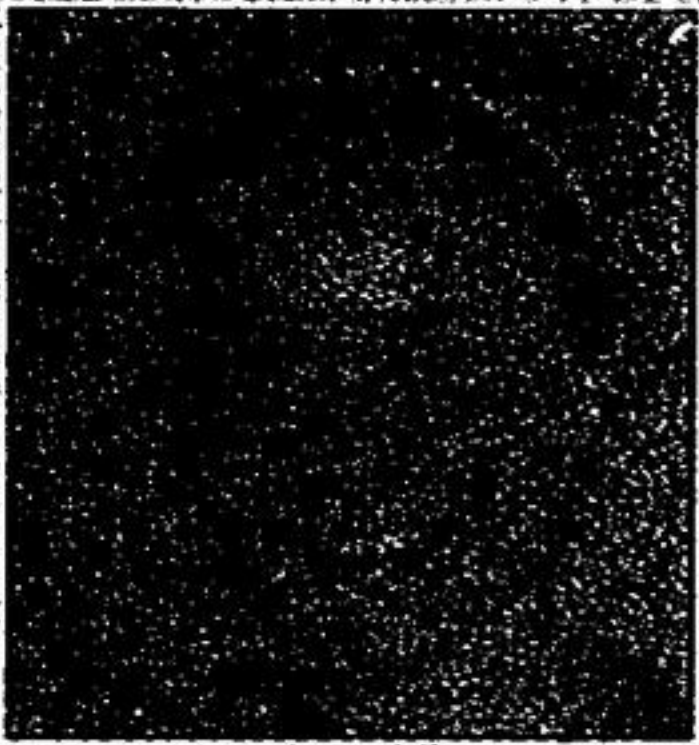


Stouffville Says

By Jennifer Anderson

"How do you feel about going to high school next year?" (asked of Summitview School grads)



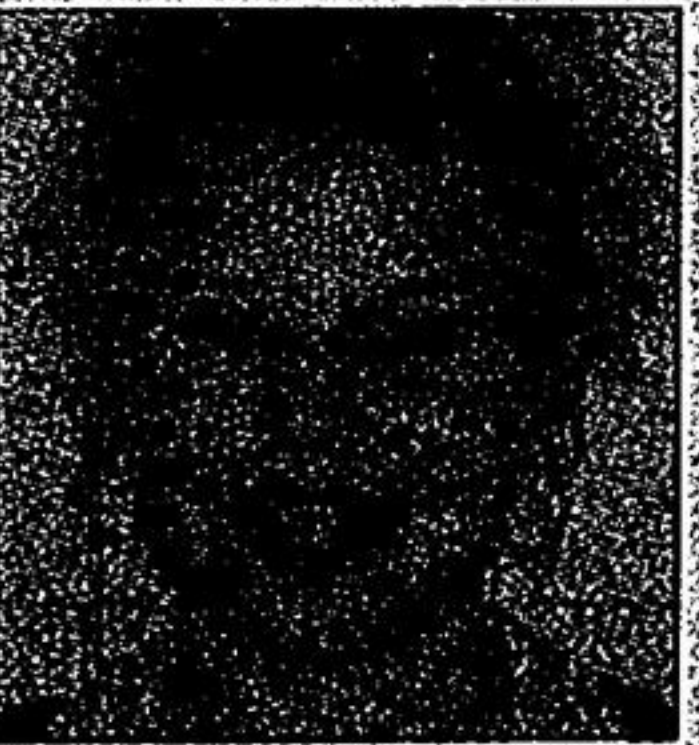
CAITLIN COPETTI

"I'm worried about teachers. I'm nervous about high school exams."



TYLER NEIL

"The classes may be too hard to keep up with. I think the spares and free time will be a plus for me and I'm looking forward to meeting new friends."



CHELSEA MCARDLE

"I'm excited about meeting new people. I'm not looking forward to exams."



KEN CZERWINSKI

"I'm scared about initiations and the school work, especially in some of the classes I may not do well in. I'm concerned about peer pressure to skip classes."



Gone fishin'

Harold Wardlaw, 82, waits for the big catch during the Stouffville Lions Fishing Derby for seniors and the disabled at Burd's Trout Ponds Saturday.

BILL ROBERTS PHOTO

Fraud artist wants out of jail

BY KATHLEEN GRIFFIN
Staff Writer

Fraud artist Steven Peck broke down in tears on the witness stand yesterday as he talked about missing his two young children after spending 19 months in jail.

The Markham man and former Stouffville resident pleaded guilty June 2 to two counts of fraud over \$5,000 after bilking fellow Rotary Club members of more than \$500,000 in a land-investment scam.

Mr. Peck, 53, will have to wait until next week to learn if he'll receive a conditional sentence, to be served in his mother's Mississauga home, or if he'll be handed additional jail time.

Justice M. Fuerst reserved her decision after hearing close to three hours of evidence.

Mr. Peck's wife and mother were in the Newmarket courtroom for the hearing, and watched carefully as Mr. Peck arrived from the Metro West Detention Centre wearing a dark grey shirt, slacks and handcuffs. He gave them a brief nod.

During his testimony, Mr. Peck became emotional only when speaking of his two children, a boy aged 8 and a girl, 11. "I understand you haven't seen your children very frequently since you've been in custody?" asked his lawyer, Adam Bernstein.

Mr. Peck began sobbing, removing his glasses and taking a few minutes to compose himself before answering.

"No, I haven't seen them for

quite awhile," he said.

"Has that had a devastating effect?"

"Very much so," Mr. Peck responded.

But Crown attorney Jason Gorda argued a conditional sentence, one in which Mr. Peck would be essentially under house arrest but not in jail, is not appropriate, especially considering his criminal record.

"I think the public would have serious concerns, not only about the fact Mr. Peck has a prior conviction, but that he committed this crime while on probation," he said.

PREVIOUS CONVICTIONS

Court heard Mr. Peck was convicted of two counts of theft over \$5,000 in 1997, worth \$1.7 million, and was sentenced to three years. Although three restitution orders were sworn, Mr. Peck has not made any payments. He was also in breach of the Ontario Securities Commission Act in 2002 and was sentenced to 90 days in jail.

The York Regional Police fraud squad began a six-month investigation into the most recent charges in June, 2001 while he was still on parole, accusing him of using his membership in the Rotary Club to convince several Markham residents to invest \$400,000 in a real estate venture in Minden.

Mr. Peck told investors the money would be used to buy the property, then a mortgage would be obtained. Once the money was freed up, it would be rein-

vested in a debenture program to finance the development of the property as a resort.

Mr. Peck, however, took the money for his own use.

After Mr. Peck's arrest, which was well publicized, several other victims came forward, claiming Mr. Peck persuaded them to invest in a similar scam involving property in Peterborough.

Mr. Peck was committed to trial on five counts of fraud and pleaded guilty to two counts. He has been jailed since his arrest, the bulk of that time serving in a "privileged" cell block where inmates are allowed to work for part of the day.

But Mr. Bernstein argued conditions at Metro West are less than ideal and Mr. Peck should be afforded enhanced credit for time served, which is usually on a two-for-one basis, and complete his sentence under house arrest.

"He will be able to enjoy renewing the relationship he has with his kids. That's going to make Mr. Peck a better person," he said.

Mr. Peck described jail conditions for Justice Fuerst.

"It's living in a room the size of a bathroom with two other fellows. You get along well or you bite your lip. It's a lot of stress," he said.

Mr. Gorda asked Mr. Peck be sentenced to two years on top of the time he has already served.

Justice Fuerst will impose sentence June 20.

Briefly

Last chance to nominate top citizen, best sport

Deadline day is Sunday for nominations for Whitchurch-Stouffville's citizen of the year and sports personality of the year awards.

The awards, sponsored by the Sun-Tribune, will be presented June 26 at the Whitchurch-Stouffville Strawberry Festival.

"Our town spirit is built on volunteerism," Sun-Tribune editor Jim Mason said. "This is the community's opportunity to honour the best of our volunteers every year."

Nominations can be e-mailed to jmason@yrng.com. For more information, call 905-640-2612.

Elvis invasion begins tomorrow evening

More than 25 Elvis tribute artists will swagger along Stouffville's Main Street tomorrow night and most of Saturday for the Stouffville BIA's second annual Tribute to the King.

Elvises in white sports coats or high collars and bejewelled bell bottoms will be at the Stouffville Train Station from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. Friday. A parade of Elvis tribute artists, 50s dancers and classic cars starts from the train station at 11 a.m. Saturday. Afterwards, the entertainers will head to both the town square and train station to give their favourite renditions of The King's songs.

Elvisfest's major sponsor this year is www.stouffville.biz.

Residents are invited to come out to vie for the King and Queen of the Twist dance contest and take part in Elvis trivia contests.

Barbecued hamburgers, sausages and other foods, as well as Elvis memorabilia will be available at the event.

Quoteworthy

"I'm not suggesting people wear snowmobile suits or live in a bubble."

Whitchurch-Stouffville Mayor Wayne Emerson on the threat of West Nile virus. See story on page 1.

Contacting Us

Have a news tip? Please:

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Tel. (905) 477-5524
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sales@almira.com

Store Hours:

Mon. - Wed.: 10 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
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Saturday: 10 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.
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