

**Sun-Tribune**

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# OPINION

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## LETTERS to the EDITOR

### Injured one-in-a-million teacher inspiration to students

We students from St. Matthew Catholic School in Unionville want everyone to know of a great person who has recently been in a serious accident.

Raoul Baumgartner is a Grade 5 teacher at St. Matthew. He was our teacher last year and is our gym teacher this year.

He is a founder of Conquest Basketball Camp and organizer of the annual cross-country meet for the school board.

He also produces a musical every year with his Grade 5 class, as well as coaching the girls basketball team and the track and field team.

Mr. Baumgartner is a one-in-a-million teacher. He has helped us get over stage fright and taught us to think for ourselves.

Every lesson he does is interesting and fun and, yet, he is still able to keep discipline in the class.

He makes everyone feel comfortable and able to approach him with anything. He doesn't speak to us like we are children and he has a great sense of humour.

During lunch hour Dec. 18, Mr. Baumgartner was in a car accident that has left him with very serious injuries.

Unfortunately, he won't be with his wife and young son for Christmas because he is in Sunnybrook hospital undergoing surgery.

Please keep Mr. Baumgartner and his family in your prayers this Christmas, as he will be in ours.

**ROBYN HUGHES, ANNA MARIE OLAN,  
SARAH LANNIGAN & ELAINE WHILLIER  
UNIONVILLE**

### Markham's Bowman great humanitarian, activist

This year saw the loss of a great humanitarian in the Markham community, Samuel Bowman.

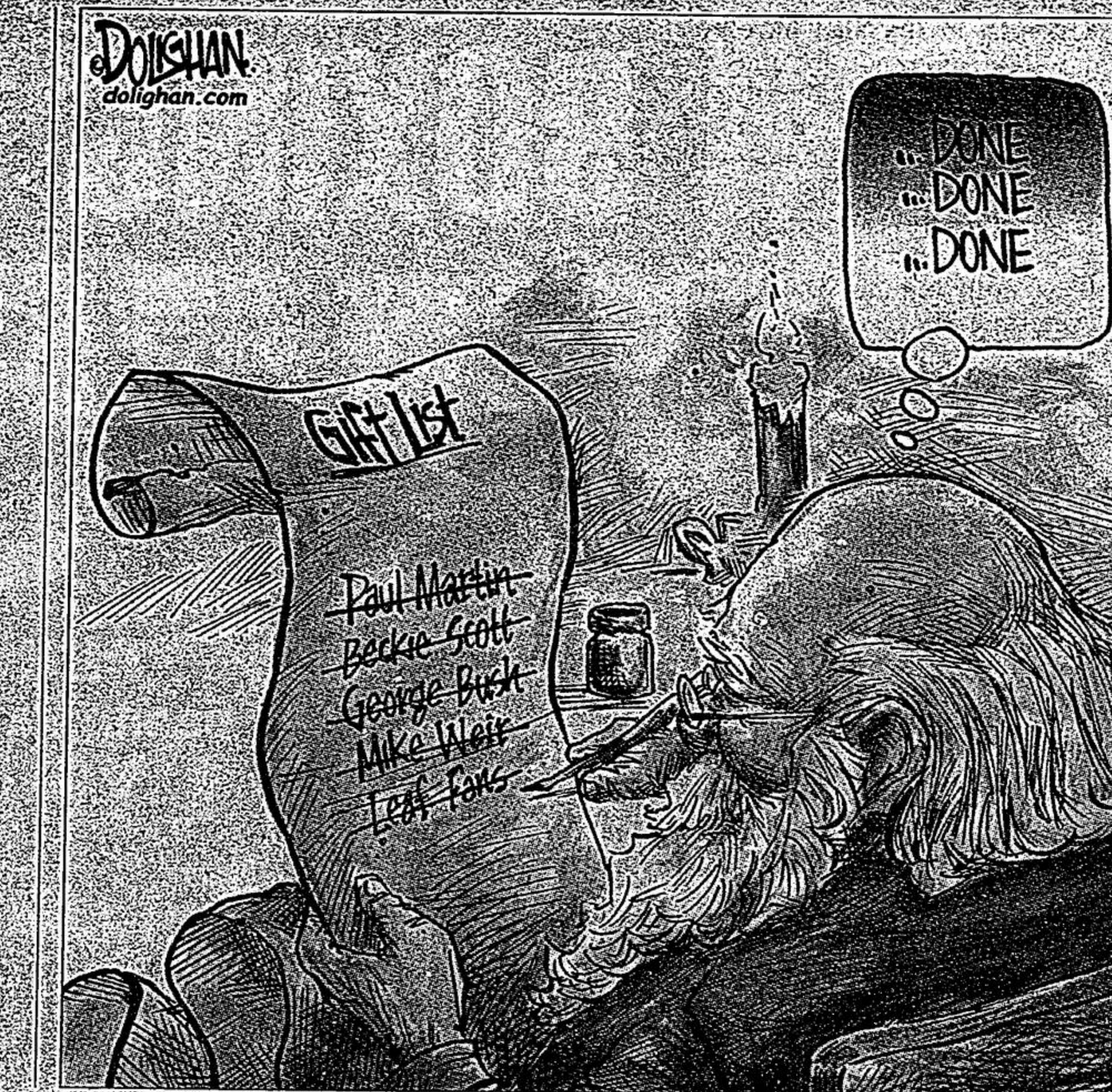
As a colleague who worked with Sam locally, provincially and globally, I would like to add insight and memories many in Markham will enjoy and appreciate.

Sam's life and philosophy were summed up well in a 1991 Economist & Sun profile when he concluded, with all the serious issues going on in the community around us, that in retirement he should "get up and do something."

And so he did, by attending as many as three board meetings a day, founding or encouraging new organizations and/or co-ordinating low-income housing.

His favourite activity was being the grandfather role model at a local school.

In the process, he had a most enjoyable



## LETTERS POLICY

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time and became an expert on his community (local to global), often called upon by the mayor or others to solve critical situations.

Sam had a specific, cheerful, persistent, yet polite style, goal-oriented, yet inclusive and always learning himself while educating and mentoring others.

He could readily see the commonalities in diverse situations and the linkages between community issues.

In a democracy, we have institutions and organizations to use in the process of community building and Sam did this with humour, humility and efficiency.

He was a gregarious networker and activist, often talking family history with new acquaintances, but strangely arriving

back at committee meetings with knowledge of key missing elements in our formal discussions, thus giving fresh perspective and energy to our work by defining problems in fuller terms.

Sam's longevity will also be missed because lack of institutional memory is often an impediment to real progress in today's hectic world. Files are discarded, volunteers generally stay only about three years and staff changes are frequent.

I particularly recall how all these characteristics, persistence, breadth of knowledge and longevity, came to bear on our work as observers and lobbyists for the World Conference on Habitat in 1996.

Intensely focused on cities and urbanization, the conference documents rarely acknowledged a connection to surrounding rural lands.

During the preparatory meetings in New York, Sam insisted cities must remember their dependency on rural lands and farmers. Ultimately, this concept became integral to the wording in the conference's closing report.

He was welcomed as a friend and colleague everywhere and would advise us all "just get up and do something."

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