

English visitors, locals bring down the house

The front door sign read "Sold Out!" But still they came. The inside ticket-taker re-emphasized the lack of seats. Still they came. By the hundreds, filling the sanctuary and balcony of Stouffville United Church to capacity. The centre of attraction was three-fold: the 40-voice, all-male chorus Men of Note, a 30-voice, all-male chorus The Dalesmen and soloist Susan Brown. Both separately and together, they reverberated the rafters like nothing heard here before. Ms Brown and the Men of Note are Stouffville's own, our town's contribution to the music world. The Dalesmen hail from Whitby, England. While most folks had the foresight to buy tickets early, some, like me, arrived with hat in hand, hoping to squeeze in. Most did, although had the fire chief arrived unannounced, the sardine situation might have been unceremoniously resolved.



Roaming Around

with Jim Thomas

For part of the program, I stood in the upper echelons of the sanctuary, close to the ceiling. As intermission approached, a sweet young thing took pity on my precarious perch and offered a chair. I accepted, with thanks. But aching limbs aside, I would have stayed even if suspended from a light fixture. The Men of Note were marvelous, particularly their presentations of Four Strong Winds, Steal Away and Ezekiel Saw the Wheel. The Dalesmen responded with Farmer's Boy and Take Me Home. The combined choirs raised the roof with When the Saints Go Marching In and When I Survey the Wondrous Cross. But the loudest applause was reserved for Ms Brown and her beautiful rendition of The Lord's Prayer, followed by Going Home in company with the chorus. Many were moved to tears. Steve Maltby, director of the visiting Dalesmen, described Ms Brown's contributions as "absolutely fantastic." They were. So was the entire evening, like something Stouffville may never see or hear again.

Bustling business at second-hand store

Stouffville's Care & Share Thrift Shop holds its annual general meeting Monday at 7:30 p.m. in the lower auditorium of St James Presbyterian Church. A report, prepared and presented by manager Elna Coetsee, will undoubtedly receive thumbs up from everyone in attendance. For, without doubt, it's a business with few equals. The store, operating under the umbrella of the Mennonite Central Committee, has a staff of 90 volunteers. These folks, representing several denominations, help out six days and one evening a week. With little storage space, donated items are quickly moved from a rear receiving area to store display racks, but not until all are closely checked. The shop grossed \$28,000 in September. During the last fiscal year, gross receipts totaled \$200,000. Net funds are forwarded to developing nations. In addition, 15 blankets are shipped out monthly, wherever there's a need, Ms Coetsee explained. During a pioneer relief sale at Black Creek Pioneer Village in Toronto, 23 quilts sold for \$6,600. While prices are vastly reduced, Ms Coetsee is quick to explain Care & Share is not a place for poor people, but for everyone. "Everything's in top condition," she says. "Any unusual drop-offs? I asked." One of the branch stores received a box of live kittens, Ms Coetsee said, "but nothing like that has ever come here, at least not yet." "One morning, we discovered nine pairs of men's pajamas and 39 ties," Ms Coetsee noted. "That was a little out of the ordinary." Stouffville's Care & Share has an arrangement with the York Region District School Board where Grade 5 students from six area schools are part of a program known as Global Neighbour Activity Centre. In addition to assisting on site, students pack health kits for refugees. Operating costs are reduced to a minimum, Ms Coetsee explained, with only two paid employees. An executive committee of seven is headed by Lloyd Hogg of Stouffville.

Jim Thomas is a Stouffville resident who has written for area newspapers for more than 50 years.

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