

House of love sends bear hugs to world

It's a house built of brick. It's a home filled with love. The location is the corner of William and Second streets in Stouffville. This is where love lives. No, this isn't the name of the owner. But it best describes the respect held for her by a wide circle of neighbours and friends. For inside this house is a room deeply immersed in devotion. Seated there is an 89-year-old woman surrounded by teddy bears. For Frances Vague, the creation of these comfort toys is a personal labour of love. She's been doing it for years.

The teddies are earmarked for distribution to boys and girls in developing countries, most confined to hospitals and orphanages. As one physician put it, "They (teddy bears) do children more good than all the medicines in the world."

It was Lillian Carr of Stouffville who wondered one day if Ms Vague might be interested in such a project. The two had become close friends through the Bethesda Women's Institute. Several women in the congregation of Melville United Church on Kennedy Road in northern Markham were involved as an assembling area for shipments overseas, Ms Carr said.



Roaming Around

with Jim Thomas

"Why not?" Ms Vague enthusiastically responded. "If what I'm able to do puts smiles on children's faces, why not?" "Besides," she said, "it'll keep me from being bored." Thus began a mission of mercy, resulting in hundreds upon hundreds of teddy bears going to wee ones all over the planet.

"When I've finished 25 or 30, I give Lillian a call and she picks them up," Ms Vague says. She endeavours to make one per day, often knitting to taped hymns by George Beverly Shea. In October alone, she completed 38.

Mrs. Vague, the former Frances Vague Filyer, was born in Toronto but moved with her parents to Ringwood at age seven, where she attended Ringwood Public School.

Later, she lived in Lemonville and Altona before moving to Stouffville in 1953. Her husband, Walter, died in 1996. They were married 58 years.

Prior to utilizing her knitting skills, Ms Vague was a quilter. She fondly recalls afternoon work bees in Gertrude Morgason's farmhouse near Goodwood. But it was Ms Carr, described by Ms Vague as "a wonderful lady", who rekindled a spark that quickly burst into flame.

"I get out of bed, have some breakfast, tidy up a bit, then begin knitting," she says. All the while, we talked, her needles never stopped.

"Once in a blue moon I drop a stitch, but always go back and pick it up," she explains. She never knits on Sundays.

"When growing up, we never did those things," she notes, "it was born into me."

Ms Vague knits boy and girl teddies, the boys get a bow tie and the girls a scarf. When each is finished, she stuffs it with batten and adds a smiling face.

Ms Vague's teddy-making skills have become so well known, she never has to purchase yarn. "People keep sending me huge balls of the stuff, some heavy and some fine," she said.

"At Christmas, my friends all know what I want and need," she laughs.

While most teddies travel overseas, Ms Vague does make exceptions. Recently, she gave several to Doris Kennedy's daughter, a Presbyterian minister at Toronto's Yonge Street Mission.

"If children there appreciate them, just think what they must mean to boys and girls who have nothing," she said.

Ms Vague calls it "my mission work." "I think it proves even a little old lady can be of some use in this world," she said.

Then she looks across the room at a chairful of teddies readied for shipment.

"If those teddy smiles create a few children's smiles, then it's all worthwhile," she concluded.

But her knitting never stops.

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

COD! FILLETS!

When we first had these two weeks ago, we were sold out on the day that our ad appeared in the economist. We were taken by surprise by the reception it received — even before people tried it. Those that got some were amazed at its flavour — and freshness; they just loved it. As promised, we've got another shipment for this week that we'll offer it at the same price of two weeks ago. Enjoy it!

9.95 OFF THIS WEEK

Organic

WINTER BLUES?

We'll have a good quantity of South American blueberries available. Judging by the recent pricing of these, you'll be happy to see a bit of moderation — so you won't need moderation at the table!

2.99 CONTAINER

DELI ROAST PORK

We'll be roasting lots of our deli stuffed and roasted pork loins this week. Not only will they be available cold to be sliced — but also warm every evening to take home for dinner if you're on the run — which I know most of you are.

25% OFF THIS WEEK

Either hot or cold...

CRISPS

We've made these for as long as I can remember. I think it was Cathy who made the first of what seems like millions over the years. They are so easy to prepare — just have them in your oven while you're eating dinner. A warm dessert is especially nice during this time of the year. The flavours available are apple, apple-blueberry, apple-cranberry, orchard-berry (apple and mixed berry), peach and lastly, sour cherry. They usually serve 4-5 folks, but not at our house!

1/3 OFF THIS WEEK

Reg. \$9.95 ea.

DOREEN'S FRUIT CAKE!

If you are new to the area, you may wonder who Doreen is — and what about fruitcake? Doreen is my mother-in-law, who has worked in our store for the past 18 years — a charter member, so-to-speak. It took awhile to convince her all those years ago to make her amazing fruit cake available in the necessary quantity to sell in the store — and she eventually did. The dark cake in now ready — the batches that we are now cutting were made in January of this year — close to a year old. If you could watch her at work on these, you'd fully understand the meaning of 'doting' — it's quite a sight and I'm sure that this is the only place you'd see it. The result of all that motherly doting?

Amazing fruit cake, the genuine article, in both light and dark!

SOMTHING NEW IN THE BAKERY!

We've made an eggnog custard flan which is garnished with half-sliced pears and cranberries. You may want to try one!

CUMBERLAND! SAUSAGES

These are a unique sausage from England. We use medium-ground fresh pork, a bit of lemon and orange zest, some cranberry and a touch of Port. It's a great dinner sausage.

25% OFF THIS WEEK

Reg. \$3.99 lb.

VEGETARIAN VEGETABLE SOUP

We make this using a whole bunch of fresh vegetables, season it on the mild side and let the flavour simmer through — and as a bonus it's virtually fat free, as well.

25% OFF THIS WEEK

Reg. \$5.49

Serves 3-4

ARTICHOKE AND ASIAGO DIP

This is a fairly new dip which has been very well received. I've made a study and my finding is that it's amazing with our Raincoast Crisps from B.C.

Reg. \$2.09/100g

1/3 OFF THIS WEEK

WHAT'S FOR DINNER?

Our frozen dinner entrée this week is pot roast in gravy. These are made with blade eye roasts, sliced and packed with enough gravy for your mashed potatoes — the natural accompaniment, it seems to me. This entrée will serve at least 3 and quite likely 4.

25% OFF THIS WEEK

Reg. 12.95 ea.

JAPANESE SEA BASS

It's unusual that we promote two fish in a week — but this is no ordinary week (none are at the V.G.) We've received a shipment of this amazing South Australian fish. According to Charlie (and his angles), "this fish is rich, sweet and full flavoured, comparable to Sole or Halibut." There is a limited supply.

WHAT'S HAPPENIN OUTSIDE?

Another shipment of boughs, wreaths and accents has arrived — and we do have a few urns and urns-stuffers as well!

For inside, we've got a quantity of oval planters (with bases) of a Poinsettia-Cyclamen mix in whites, pinks and reds.

A few extra-large Cyclamen in 8" pots at \$10.00 each (these last a long, long time and will re-bloom later).

We've got a good supply of 10" pots of huge Poinsettias in stright colour or mixes.

A CHANGE AT THE GROCER!

Change comes to the Grocer at what seems to be a glacial pace. After 8 years as our store manager, Robert has moved on — to run our Village Kitchen business. There we make all of our frozen products, we do most of our meat processing and selected bakery and preserve production for our store and selected wholesale accounts across southern Ontario. His replacement is Tom Brooks. He's the tall energetic fellow not yet in uniform because we didn't have one his size. We know Tom quite a while through his family I.G.A. business in Schomberg.

SPECIALS IN EFFECT UNTIL CLOSING SUNDAY NOVEMBER 28TH

Hours:

Mon. 11:00-7:00 ~ Tues.-Thurs. 9:00-7:00 ~ Fri. 9:00-8:00
Sat. 9:00-6:00 ~ Sun. 10:00-5:00

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