

# DRIVING TO WHO KNOWS WHERE

Plenty of routes in York for scenic spring tour

BY MITCHELL BROWN  
Staff Writer

**T**here is no way to accurately tally how many miles his licence plates have seen, so we'll just go with "a lot".

"They're conversation pieces; they give people something to talk about when they come in," said Frank Cassima, co-owner of Da Classic Scoop Diner in Stouffville, as he points to the collection of Ontario licence plates on his walls.

"Yeah, we have almost every year, except for '44... they didn't have plates that year, just a sticker because of a shortage of metal during the war."

The rusting roadway reminders, some from as far back as 1919, somehow fit right in at this diner and ice cream shop at Hwy. 48 and Stouffville Road, where posters of Ford Thunderbirds, Corvettes and the iconic '57 Chevy cover the walls.

Cars, in other words, that once defined the Golden Era of Summertime Cruising.

If you remember those days of long summer drives with the windows down, the radio up and no real destination in mind, then take heart; they're not quite over yet.

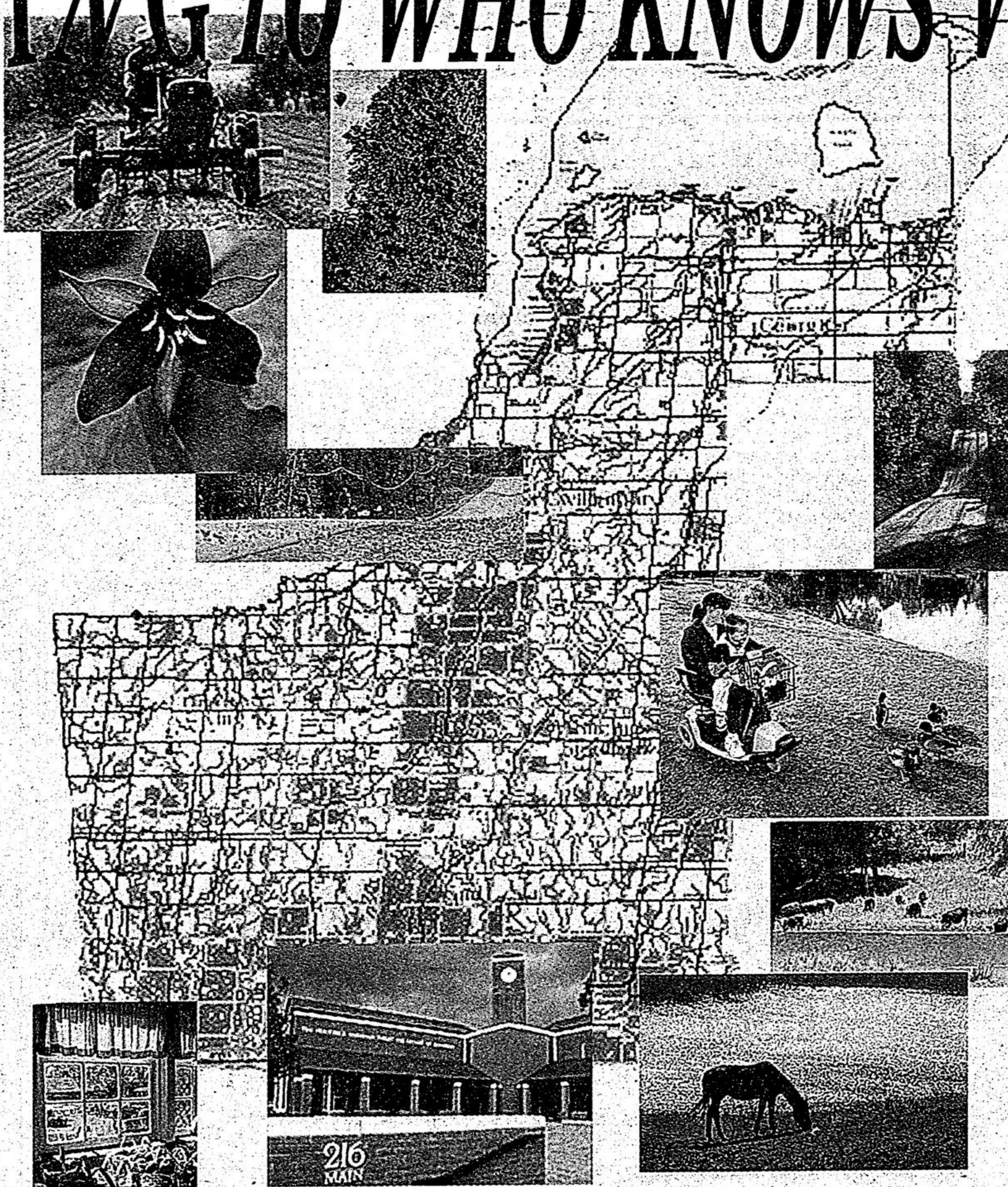
"Right now, yeah, I do get people coming up from the city, coming out for breakfast because they want to get out for a Sunday drive," Mr. Cassima said.

"Some years, it's usually really good, especially going up 48 with people going to their cottages or when they come into town and want to come to the flea market. It's a good corner for that."

With rumours of warmer weather on the way, now's as good a time as any to take stock of what's available in terms of affordable summer outings.

And while the climbing cost of gas might preclude long-distance road trips for the foreseeable future, York Region residents are fortunate since there are plenty of pretty places closer to home, sometimes literally right around the corner.

"Warden Avenue, from Keswick all the way down to Thornhill, is just a beautiful road," said Scott McCrady, a member of the Southern Cruisers Bike Club, a Newmarket-based club for motor-



cycle enthusiasts.

"It's hilly, it's got great scenery and it's a good safe road."

The Udora resident is also a fan of the roads criss-crossing the upper northwest part of the region, especially the ones off the main highways.

"We could take you from

Newmarket to Barrie without getting on the 400 or Hwy. 11," he said.

"There are beautiful roads on either sides of the 400... there's really no shortage of them in York Region."

During the warmer months, Mr. McCrady and his fellow riders take

off every Sunday in search of scenery, good roads and a nice spot for lunch.

Meeting at a coffee shop in Sharon, their travel routes are rarely planned in detail, allowing for some spontaneity when they hit the road in search of pleasant landscapes and "twisties" (challenging twists in the road that break up the monotony of straight stretches).

Asking them to list some of their favourite routes inspires a flurry of names and numbers of roads heading to places as far-flung as Collingwood and Bobcaygeon, but they reserve a place of pride for their home turf's less-travelled trails.

"There's Catering Road up in Keswick; it's like a canopy almost all the way with the trees," said

Newmarket's Mike Langevin, the riding club's first officer.

"You can go to Belhaven on any given afternoon on a nice day, put out a lawn chair, and you're guaranteed to see 300 to 500 bikes go by."

Finding these roads, said fellow rider Gord McKay, isn't easy, which is why his group has road captains who sometimes scout the terrain in advance.

"A lot of it is just trial and error," he said, adding he and his wife spent their honeymoon exploring 16 American states.

"You just have to find those roads, so you just go spend a day just driving around."

Despite the abundance of ride-worthy roads in our area, the members of the riding club understand how not everyone these days would be eager to pile in the kids for a Sunday drive to destinations unknown.

"You know what happened to it? Everyone got too busy," Mr. McKay said.

"They've got way too much going on in their life that they just don't have time for that anymore."

Mr. Langevin agreed, adding the region's traffic woes haven't done much to endear the car to weekenders, either.

"A lot of people, with all the traffic and congestion, the last place they want to be on a Sunday is in their car," Mr. Langevin said.

"But I suspect that it would be pretty soothing, after a week of road rage and finger gestures and line-ups at Wal-Mart."

"A drive with the windows down on any given Sunday on the roads we've been on would be a treat."

Finding those roads is the first order of business and the men have a few opinions on that.

For starters, they "avoid the 400 series highways like the plague" in favour of roads away from congestion and more urbanized areas.

They tend to target specific communities as destinations, then look at all the possible routes leading there.

And... that's pretty much it, really. Given that one of the joys of Sunday rides is you're never quite sure how you'll get there, it doesn't seem logical to spend too much time fussing with a map.

"My uncle lives in Stratford and it takes him eight hours to get here," Mr. McKay said.

"He never drives the same road twice, he just drives all, 'Oh, I'll turn left here and see where it takes me.' And he loves it."

## RECOMMENDED ROUTES

• Lake Drive, Keswick to Jackson's Point. Plenty of twists and turns, with spectacular views of Lake Simcoe.

• Kleinburg-Nobleton-Schomberg, via Hwy. 27, King Road and 10th Concession. Or in reverse. Either way, a stop at the McMichael Art Gallery is in order.

• Hwy. 48, starting at Hwy. 7, all the way up to Pefferlaw. With a stop for ice

cream at Da Classic Scoop in Stouffville.

• Kettleby-King City-Oak Ridges, via Keele Street and King Road. Did someone say "horse country"?

• Yonge Street, from Steeles Avenue to...? Sure, there will be a few tight intersections, but haven't you always wondered where the world's longest street goes?

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