

Standing on guard for thee is a blast

Congratulations to me!

I celebrate my ninth month as a part-time school crossing guard this week.

In actual fact, I've only been on the job seven months, since my services weren't required during July and August. Truth is, if you subtract Christmas, weekends and PA days, I'm down to six months.

On top of that, since I'm only on call when one of six regulars isn't available, my time line is reduced to four months.

Regardless, I'm loving what I do and doing what I love, be it four months or four weeks. I only wish I'd embarked on this career a decade ago. I now know what I've missed.

So why didn't I? I feared failing the York Regional Police check because investigators might find an obscure skeleton rattling in my closet.

I was afraid the morning, noon and afternoon shifts would so break up the day, I would have no time for anything else.

And I wasn't sure I could endure the sleet, snow, wind and rain.

Fourth, I was hesitant, after all these years, to throw my lot in with the town. To become subject to municipal rules and regulations and censored by eagle-eyed critics while being paid taxpayer dollars and embarrassed by uncontrollable kids and complaining parents.

As well, I was concerned about impatient commuters and intolerant truckers.

You don't need the aggravation, a little voice kept repeating.

A few of my friends sustained these doubts with comments like: You'll freeze to death; you'll get yourself killed; you're way too old and the tax man will take everything you make.

Regardless, I submitted my application to the department of public works, passed the police test and completed four days of training.

It's been my most rewarding part-time tenure.

While my positioning could be any one of six locales, in recent weeks I've been at Ninth Line and Elm Road, filling in for veteran sign-toter Elwood Patten.

For me, morning and afternoon shifts are best because they're busiest. Noon hours can be a bit of a bore because most St. Mark and Glad Park students' lunch at school.

As for outerwear, the town keeps a step ahead of the weatherman with apparel to counter every climate.

I can't complain. On Monday, however, a pair of fleeced woolies under a shirt, a vest, four sweaters and a coat would have helped. My head



Roaming Around

with Jim Thomas

was protected by three toques and a hood.

The children I'm paid to protect are great. They're very patient and always polite.

The same goes for their parents. Even accompanying dogs are docile, more so than most I encounter on my paper routes.

High school guys and dolls are good, too, although most, I'm sure, could cope without assistance.

However, I reserve my heartiest applause to the oft-maligned gravel truckers whose mighty vehicles pound the pavement from morning till night.

While time for them is important, I've yet to be blasted, either vocally or mechanically. Nor would I tempt such fate, contending the life of a child is of greater importance than stopping a 40-ton Mack carrying 20 tons.

As with any new position, it's been a learning experience. For example, the crosswalk at the Ninth and Elm isn't legal.

Drivers aren't obliged to stop just because a pedestrian is standing at the curb. It's only when the guard, raises his or her sign and signals STOP that a motorist is obliged to obey.

Those who choose to brake on their own initiative, run the risk of having a truck stuck inside their trunk. It also gives pedestrians a false sense of security. Best, I say, to err on the side of safety.

The chamber of commerce should consider erecting an information booth at this site. Hardly a day goes by that someone doesn't stop to ask directions.

The most common question? Where's Wal-Mart?

What's a guard supposed to do should nature call? Should he run to the arena, a house or the closest thicket? For me, this catastrophe hasn't yet occurred, but it could and probably will. A portable toilet should be considered.

Regardless, the benefits far outweigh the detriments.

The next time you're by, say hello with a honk.

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

STUFFED CHICKEN BREASTS

We make these at the store with our air chilled chicken. You'll have a choice of three different seasonings — our bread stuffing with cranberry chutney, our old-fashioned sage and onion and our bread stuffing that has been enhanced with chopped assorted dried fruits. These are ready to roast (directions available) and they'll serve either 2 or 3 people.

25% OFF THIS WEEK

Reg. \$10.95

APPLEWOOD SMOKED CHEDDAR FROM ENGLAND

This is a white, medium cheddar that's been smoked in blocks over applewood — giving it a mild flavour enhancement which, to my mind, would be great with a glass of Chardonnay!

1/3 OFF THIS WEEK

Reg. \$4.99/100g

WE'RE SMOKIN' THIS WEEK!

Truth is, we smoke a whole bunch of stuff every week, but these items we don't do weekly. We'll be making copious amounts of our smoked air chilled chickens — and our Brome Lake ducks. The chickens are great when you warm them somewhat and carve them at the table — my condiment of choice to have with them is our mild red pepper jelly. A few potatoes on the side and you're golden. One other preparation that I greatly enjoy — and sometimes had at the Bluestone Bistro in the past — is smoked chicken with penne. That's a good marriage of flavour. As mentioned we'll be smoking ducks as well. They can be had whole or half and can be used in the same way as the chickens — and perhaps cut into a salad as well. These will be available at the

Chickens **9.95 EACH**
Ducks **16.95 EACH**

FRESH BLUEBERRIES

These blues come from Chile at this time of the year — and they're nice looking — and nice eating — and there's lots of them because these are FULL pints.

FULL PINTS from Chile **2.99 EACH**

CREAM OF MUSHROOM SOUP WITH BRANDY

From our soup kitchen we'll be featuring our mushroom soup with brandy. We make this with an assortment of mushrooms, including Portobellas — which give this soup a darker colour — and a richer flavour. You'll find this a thicker soup, which can be served as is, or thinned with stock, cream, or heavens, perhaps more brandy! A nice soup for a chill evening.

Reg. \$7.95 Serves 3-4 **25% OFF THIS WEEK**

HIGH QUALITY CHOCOLATE CAKE



AGE 4

BLAKE PATTERSON

Our artwork this week has been done by my young friend Blake, who, as you'll notice, is 4. He's a regular at our cake counter and when he allowed one day that his fave was 'our high quality chocolate cake', I struck a deal with him. Blake provided the art, Evan supplied the biggest 'high quality chocolate cake' that he's ever seen.

— Seemed like a good deal to him —

in meringue hearts, amazing decorated sugar cookies in containers (24's), individual wrapped sugar cookies, pink meringues and sweet looking cupcakes — for your cupcake, who, no doubt, is also sweet looking.

WILD BLUEBERRY SAUSAGES

We make these with our wild summertime blueberries, a touch of maple, and lean coarse ground fresh pork. It's a great dinner sausage.

Reg. \$3.99/lb. **25% OFF THIS WEEK**

WHAT'S COOKING AT THE DELI ...

The big chef and I had a disagreement about the deli feature for this week. The first item, his chicken forestiere, which he makes with boneless thighs, is a no-brainer. The garnish is our diced bacon (good on its own), fresh mushrooms and diced potatoes. The contentious item was the breaded risotto balls. I'm thinking that there's so much else in the world, why would people bread rice balls? He looked at me as if I didn't know food, and calmly reassured me that it's a 'big item' and that we've made them before and customers loved them. So — being a push-over, I gave way. He'll be making breaded rice balls which are filled with sun-dried tomatoes, Provolone cheese and basil. Prove me wrong, folks!

Also, for Valentines, we'll be making our individual Beef Wellingtons — salmon too — as we have every year. Call 905-940-1770 to reserve.

SPECIALS IN EFFECT UNTIL CLOSING SUNDAY FEBRUARY 11TH

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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