

# Blast from past alive and touring

When I was a kid back in the Senior Fourth class at S.S. 19 in Markham, a quartet called The Chuck Wagon Gang was considered the best in America.



**Roaming  
Around**

with Jim Thomas

My brother, Don, and I would tune them in every night over radio station WSM from Wheeling, WV.

Our DeForest Crosley had no problem picking up the sound in evening hours.

It was while doing night-time chores in the barn or huddled for warmth around the kitchen stove in the house when we enjoyed their music the most.

Thinking back, I honestly believe the cows liked it, too.

Our parents enjoyed it also. They'd always stop whatever they were doing to listen. Truth is, The Chuck Wagon Gang were just about everyone's favourite, everyone appreciating southern gospel music, that is.

A lot of water has flowed under the bridge since then. The barn's gone. The farm's gone. My parents are gone. And, I assumed, The Chuck Wagon Gang was also gone.

How wrong I was. Last fall, during a stay in Simcoe, Ont., wife Jean and I dropped into a Christian book store.

There, to my surprise, among dozens of gospel CDs, was a lone recording by, guess who, my favourite group.

Ignoring the attached price tag, I snapped it up quickly. We played it all the way home.

However, the biggest revelation was yet to come.

On a hunch I'd stumbled onto something unique, I went to their website and discovered The Chuck Wagon Gang to be very much alive, part of a second generation family working out of Pigeon Forge, Tenn.

Included in the information package was a schedule of appearances, one in Lebanon, Penn.

The very next day I was on the phone.

"I'm calling from Stouffville, Ontario, Canada," I informed the receptionist. "I'd like to reserve two tickets for Aug. 31. I understand The Chuck Wagon Gang is coming."

"Yes, they are," she responded like she'd known me all my life, "and five other groups as well." She said the concert is part of what is known as The Blue Mountain Gospel Music Festival.

"You'll love it," she continued, "and you'll love the location too. I'll send you a brochure."

Four days later, the program arrived, outlining everything she'd said and more, including available accommodation.

Our tickets are ready and waiting. And so are we, well, waiting but not ready. We still have seven months to pack.

As I've said many times, we love Pennsylvania, anywhere in Pennsylvania. The mountains, the valleys, the farms and the towns are, to us a sort of heaven on earth.

Not to speak of the people, the friendliest folk you'll ever find, except maybe in Stouffville.

There are two ways to go. Crossing into the U.S. at Ft. Erie, the distance is 700 kilometres. Via Gananoque, it's 80 kilometres further, but that's our choice. There is less hassle that way.

Since we don't possess passports, we're trusting a driver's licence will do.

The fact neither of us look like terrorists, (whatever terrorists look like), the passage should be peaceful. A lot depends on who is on border duty that day.

In all likelihood, this will be our last trip south. My wife, Jean, much prefers souvenir shopping in small town Ontario and I'm no longer a fan of 18-wheelers on the 401. We expect to make it our last hurrah.

Our first stop-over will be Wilkes-Barre, Pa., then Lebanon the following night.

Since Jean's adverse to sleeping in the back seat, reservations will be made in advance.

We'll pack a picnic lunch and eat out, weather permitting, at a look-out rest area, south of Syracuse.

Since our decision to take the trip, I've e-mailed David Emery of the Chuck Wagon Gang so many times, he's kindly agreed to provide autographs, likely for no other reason than to get me off his back.

As partial payment, I'll probably buy more CDs.

To those who, for business or pleasure, travel overseas like I drive to Ringwood, a three-day, 750-kilometre jaunt is no big deal.

But it is for me, a trip to which I'm looking forward with great anticipation.

As for Jean, I sense she would just as soon go window shopping on Main Street, Elmira.

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

# SMOKED PORK HOCKS

As you know by now, we have copious amounts of these beauties prior to the holidays, because for every ham that we make, there's a hock. They're meatier than usual, slow-smoked over oak and delicious as can be!

While quantities last.

**.99** LB.

# WHAT'S FOR DINNER!

Our frozen entrée feature of the week is our beef stroganoff. We make it with julienne strips of sirloin which have been browned and simmered in the amazing gravy that makes this dish. What to serve with it? Try some of the Cipriani Pasta — it's amazing too.

Reg. \$15.95 **25% OFF THIS WEEK**  
Serves 3-4

# CREAM OF ASPARAGUS SOUP

This is made with fresh asparagus, chicken stock which we make, sweet Spanish onions, celery and dry white wine. It's yummy!

Reg. \$5.99 ea. **25% OFF THIS WEEK**  
Serves 4

# WHAT'S NEW? AT OUR STORE

Most of you know that we've been making some spiced almonds and pecans for a while, but we've begun making some savoury pecans in two varieties. One is a bit sweet and hot, and the other is just a little warm. All of these are good to eat just as you get them, but if you want to perk up a salad use these in place of croutons. Also, after so many years, we've bought a 'silent cutter', which is a meat processing machine capable of chopping meat very fine. It enables us to make beautiful bologna, pates and wieners, all in an efficient and high quality manner. Be looking for our meaty bologna, our ham sausage, some European sausages of which Weisswurst are the first, and eventually a selection of pates.

— And, we'll have homemade hot cross buns. They'll be available at the bakery counter starting later this week, as well as some from Ace Bakery.

# WHAT'S COOKIN' AT THE DELI!

We'll be making copious amounts of Chicken Cordon Bleu. These are made with our air-chilled chicken breasts which have been flattened, seasoned, stuffed with our Black Forest Ham and Swiss Cheese, breaded and then cooked till they are golden. They'll be available at the prepared dinner counter. We'll also be making a whole bunch of our broccoli and cauliflower salad. If you haven't had it yet, you'll find crunchy bite size pieces of broccoli and cauliflower (hence the name) with a mayo-based dressing with our homemade bacon bits. Real good.

We make these with Paul Prudhomme's spice, as well as a few of our own. The result is New Orleans character with a delicious twist!

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

# CAJUN SAUSAGES

**VILLAGE  
GROCER**  
QUALITY FOODS

# THE HOSPITAL GALA

Many of you know that we are a supporter of the Markham Stouffville Hospital Gala. This year the big party is at the Hilton Suites, on April 13th. If you don't have your tickets yet, it's time to get them! Call the Foundation office at 905-472-7395. This year, just like the last two years, my pal Kevin Thistle (of Angus Glen) and I are co-chairs of the auction committee.

What that means is that it's our job to relieve you of as much money as possible, on the said evening. To do that, we'll have our 'Mystery Bag' event happening, but rather than one huge overwhelming bag that's too big to handle, we'll have three or four of a more manageable size, each formulated around a particular theme. If you have an item which you'd like to put into this very worthwhile cause, give either Kevin or me a call. Your contribution can be either crazy or practical — we can do either. Late-breaking news is that Don Valley North Lexus Toyota has very generously donated a 2007 Toyota Matrix! Very very special thanks to Amin Tijani and Dave LaLonde.

# DOUBLE ICED LEMON LOAVES

Many of you who know me would also know that I eat dessert first — just in case ... That's also the reason that we only bake desserts in our bakery (since space didn't allow us to bake everything, we had to choose).

It will come as no surprise then that my favourite part of our lemon loaf is the icing. In fact, when I have a lemon loaf, I have them split it horizontally, and put in another layer of icing — just to be sure ...

We'll have these loaves on sale this week — they've become public for the third time!

Reg. \$5.99 ea. **1/3 OFF THIS WEEK**

# WHAT'S BAKING THIS WEEK!

Lemon will be happening this week in our bakery. We'll be making .....

**OUR LEMON SQUARES** - there will be two types available, one with an iced topping and the other with the soft and chewy toasted coconut. Regular **\$2.49** Ea.

**LEMON MERINGUE PIES** - this is like no other lemon pie, unless you make them at home, from scratch — including juicing the lemons, making the pastry, separating the egg whites, whipping the meringue (without powder) — sounds like a lot of work.

We make them in two sizes **\$4.95 & \$10.95**

**LEMON DROP COOKIES** - thinking back, the idea for these came from the overflow drips that result when we make lemon loaves — the little toasted bits are delicious, so we started to make these on their own. They are melt-in-your-mouth good — especially with the chocolate — it's all good.

Regular **\$6.95** Container

**GINGERBREAD CAKE with LEMON** - this is a light and fluffy gingerbread coffee cake made in a bundt form and drizzled with a lemon glaze created specifically for

this cake. Regular **\$8.95** Ea.

All these items will be featured this week at..... **25% OFF THIS WEEK**

SPECIALS IN EFFECT UNTIL CLOSING SUNDAY MARCH 11<sup>TH</sup>

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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