

Edward Street bakery was 'a little part of Europe'

BY HANNELORE VOLPE
Staff Writer

After 28 years of getting up in the dead of night to start work at 2 or 3 a.m., Frank and Ross Cassano closed their Villa Italian Bakery on Edward Street have closed their doors for good.

The Stouffville residents got their training the best way: their parents were bakers in a small town near Cosenza, Italy and they learned as they

helped out in the business. "It is about time to retire," Frank Cassano said. "It was getting too much for us."

The bakery has been a part of daily life for many people, including Stouffville resident Sharon Kozak-Holland who has gone there for about 16 years since she moved back to Canada.

The bakery was a "little part of Europe" where she got a friendly smile, she said.

She remembers her children, as they were growing up, often receiving a free bun or other treat when the family visited the bakery.

The bakery produced a wide variety of buns, breads, pastries and specialty cakes.

Food Town, a small grocery store, became part of the business in 1991.

The family also ran the Amaretto restaurant at the same location. It became

famous for its Pasta Festival, where diners could choose the pasta, toppings and sauces they preferred and have it all cooked while they watched.

"(The bakery) used to supply about 40 golf courses, 20 restaurants and five or six banquet halls," Frank's son, Michael, said.

The Cassanos, including Frank, Ross, Michael, Robert and Marco, got to know

their long-time customers, who often "became friends", Frank Cassano said.

While the Stouffville location has closed and the property sold, a younger generation, Frank's son, Robert, is

running the Annina Bake Shop and Cafe in Goodwood, along with long-time pastry chef David Wilcox.

The Cassanos have owned the shop for a number of years.

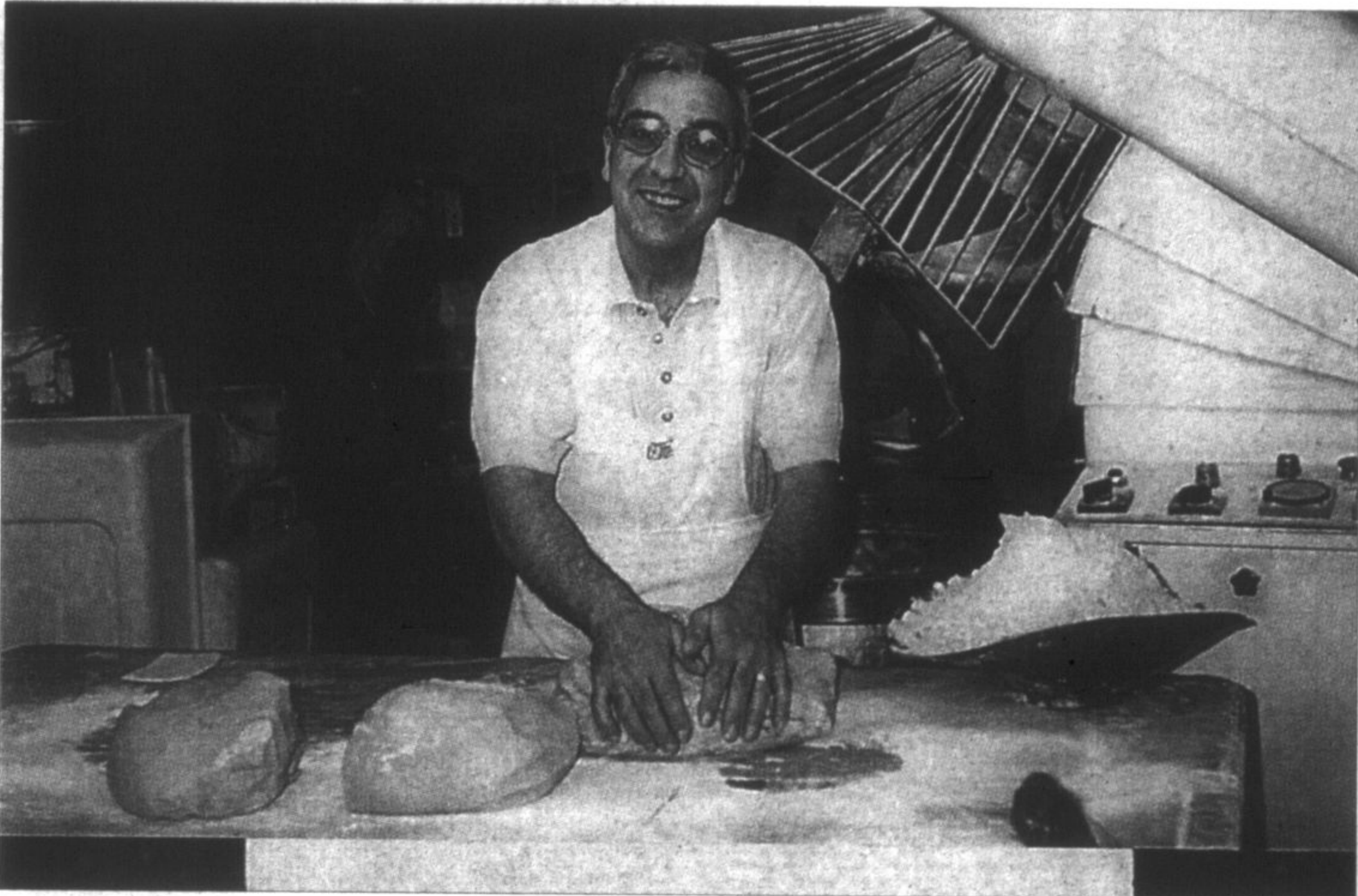


PHOTO COURTESY CASSANO FAMILY

Frank Cassano at work at Villa Italian Bakery in Stouffville in the 1990s. The shop closed this month.

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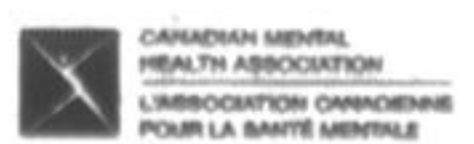
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