

Where public relations isn't given lip service

Ever walk into a store and patiently wait for the clerk to conclude a seemingly endless telephone conversation?



Roaming Around

with Jim Thomas

I have and it's irritating. Ever call a business and listen to a recording that goes: "Sorry, I'm presently away from my desk. If this is an emergency, please dial 0 for other options?"

I have. It's aggravating. Ever phone a company, only to have your call automatically placed on hold while music, not to your liking, beats in your eardrums?

I have. And it's annoying. Ever keep a scheduled appointment, only to have the receptionist coldly respond: "There must be some mistake. The party you wish to see is on vacation?"

I have. It's frustrating. Ever line up at a seven-item cashier counter only to observe the customer in front is pushing a cart containing sufficient groceries to feed an entire family?

I have. And its infuriating. Yes, I know what you're thinking. You've already concluded this is a negative summary of all that's amiss in today's business world.

Wrong. Quite the opposite. For a single day last week, I experienced all that's right with the business world. And I think it right to share my story.

My first stop was the Ashgrove Medical Centre at Hwy. 7 and Ninth Line in Markham. It was my annual blood check. Being the chicken I am when it comes to needles, I requested a bed rather than flop unconscious on the floor. This was provided without complaint, along with a cold glass of water.

I survived. Little wonder a recent communication satisfaction survey completed by DPR Canada gave five town departments honours standing.

Next call was Markham Stouffville Hospital. With \$565 obtained through community donations for our Main Street signboard, I went looking for an official in public relations. On reaching the correct area, I was greeted by director Lisa Joyce, whose welcoming smile pervaded her office.

While the source of my funds was important, Lisa appeared equally interested in all the hospital had done for me. I give the facility and its PR director an A-plus.

On to the Town of Whitchurch emporium on Sandiford Drive.

The reason? I went seeking information on a promised sign for Rupert Park, designating the area's toboggan slide as Hunt's Hill in honour of long-time town resident Mickey Hunt.

I also wanted to learn the future of the signboard at the former Bridon Motors site. For this information, I was directed by a welcoming receptionist to Cindy Elder in leisure services.

On the Mickey Hunt sign, Cindy said the project had been turned over to facilities manager Rob Raycroft. "We're acting quickly on this," she said. "We appreciate its importance."

Lo and behold, two hours later, when I returned to the park site, the project had been completed. My thanks to all involved.

But Cindy didn't stop there. The community signboard was her next assignment. "Follow me," she said, striking a path towards the planning department.

There I was met by not one, not two, but three staff employees, each anxious to obtain answers. The result? The very next day, Tom Parry, director of planning called our home.

"The former Bridon site's been sold," he said, "but nothing specific's proposed for the property until sometime next year. The present signboard should be OK until well into 2009."

What a relief. Like a stay of execution. The same afternoon, I received a letter by mail. It read in part: "I wish to take this opportunity to thank you for a job well done this past school year as our crossing guard. Have a safe and enjoyable summer - Paul Whitehouse, director of public works. His assistant, Lori Boyd, added her personal thanks.

So that's my story. Eight hours, eight contacts, eight positive replies. This is service with a capital S.

Little wonder a recent survey completed by DPR Canada gave five town departments honours standing. All earned.

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

DELI ROAST! STRIP LOIN!

We'll have deli roast beef on sale this week, but with a twist. Not only will this replace the Friday prime rib sandwich as the 'hot' sandwich, it will be available in the deli for slicing — and warm in the afternoon for dinner. It's the centre-cut only of a strip loin, trimmed nicely, and then seasoned with Montreal steak spice. **1/3 OFF THIS WEEK** Reg. \$3.99/100g

OUR CHEDDAR SAUSAGES

These are a thrill from the grill. They are made with nicely-seasoned coarse ground pork and lots of grated old cheddar. You may want to let them cool just a touch before digging in because I find that the cheddar retains more heat than you might think. Delicious! **25% OFF THIS WEEK** Reg. \$4.50 lb.

WHAT'S COOKIN' AT THE DELI ...

We'll be making lots and lots of our vegetable medley salad this week. It's made with a whole assortment of fresh veggies — mostly, if not all, from Ontario, — dressed with a beauty vinaigrette. — AND — We'll have a presentation of Frankie's Neanderthal Ribs, which are prime rib bones slow-cooked with a teriyaki glaze — really good. I tried to get them to do halibut and chips for this Friday, but it will need to be next week — so watch for it!

MARINATED CHICKEN BREASTS

We make our chicken breasts in a number of marinades, the most popular of which are zesty lemon, teriyaki and maple-mustard. What makes these so good is (a) we use only air-chilled chicken breasts, which we trim clean, (b) we buy larger chickens so that the breasts are substantial: meal-size to be sure, (c) we make all of our marinades ourselves — nothing pre-made from a bottle, and (d) we don't 'tumble' the chicken to moisture-enhance it. With us, all you get is the real thing. **25% OFF THIS WEEK** Reg. \$10.95

WHAT'S FOR DINNER!

In our big kitchen we've been making copious amounts of our beautiful beef stroganoff. This to me is big-time comfort food. It's great with mashed potatoes, egg noodles or spaetzle, or with rice — all you need to do is thaw it and warm it. All the work's done! Serves 3 - 4 **25% OFF THIS WEEK** Reg. \$17.95

WILD STRIPED BASS

What we have here is long-line-caught striped bass which has been filleted. What makes 'em really good is that they eat crab, gray fish and elf lobsters, something that would make anyone delectable, I think. It will be arriving Friday and we should have enough for both Friday and Saturday, all going well. We'll have recipes. From Maine. **19.95 LB THIS WEEK**

ENGLISH CHEDDAR WITH CARAMELIZED ONION

We'll be featuring this delicious little cheese for the week. As I'm sitting nibbling on it and writing this ad, I'm thinking that it's not so much a cheese to go with wine, but with beer. It's got a nice, long flavour. **1/3 OFF THIS WEEK** Reg. \$5.49/100g

WHAT'S BAKING? THIS WEEK ...

We've got limes happening this week, and we'll be making ... **KEY LIME PIES** - We make a graham crust and then make the beauty filling with freshly squeezed juice and all. I don't know if these are better than you will get in the Keys, but they're better than anywhere else in Florida that I've been Reg. \$12.95 ea. **LIME-COCONUT CUPCAKES** - These are fluffy white cupcakes with shredded coconut baked in. We ice them with lots of lime frosting and garnish them with crunchy toasted coconut. Reg \$2.49 ea. **LIME CURD TARTS** - Made with our flaky pastry shells filled with tart lime curd and garnished with whipped cream and a fresh lime slice Reg \$2.29 ea. **LIME SUGAR COOKIES** - These are large sugar cookies painted by hand in the image of the venerable lime..... Reg \$2.99 ea. **LIME MOUSSE CAKE** - Made with layers of white cake and lime mousse. These are refreshing and so good. One size only \$22.95

While Supplies last. **25% OFF THIS WEEK**

LOCAL CANTALOUPE

We've got some nice fresh local 'lopes for this week. They are size 9's, which are big enough to cut and serve a small family. **1.99 EACH THIS WEEK** Product of Ontario.

BEAUTY - CALIFORNIA GRAPES

These are a large size green grape from California. Not only are they really large, they are also really sweet. California, Sugar One variety. **1.99 LB THIS WEEK**

WHAT'S NEW IN PRODUCE!

Wild blues are now in, a little pricey still, but things will get better as we go along. Corn is just beginning, not as good as it will be soon. Local 'lopes are good, and we'll have a feature on them. Local raspberries are really nice — and peaches start next Thursday — Garnet Beauty is the variety.



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