

PEOPLE: Retired woodworker combining writing and travel in new careers

# Czech mate

BY SANDRA BOLAN  
sbolan@yrmg.com

When Don Wilkinson decided to pack up his benchdog and turn off the jig saw for the final time, the custom woodworker found being a man of leisure was not for him.

For the first six years of his 'retirement', the Stouffville resident remained in the woodworking business by regularly helping out at Century Mill Lumber on Stouffville Road.

But with the encouragement of his wife of 33 years, Kelly, Mr. Wilkinson decided it was time for yet another career change.

Prior to being a woodworker, Mr. Wilkinson was an energy program officer for the Yukon government, a gold miner and home builder. Now, he was going to be a teacher.

"I get bored not only with my location, but with what I do," he said.

In early 2005, Mr. Wilkinson, who turned 55 in September, decided to take a course in how to teach English as a second language - in Prague.

"Primarily (I did it) because it was in a foreign country," Mr. Wilkinson said. "I wanted to travel and that was a great excuse to do it."

"If any of my (Stouffville District Secondary School) teachers exist, they'd be amazed I became a teacher," he said.

After completing the course, Mr. Wilkinson returned to Canada and pattered around a bit deciding his next move. A creative writing course in Uxbridge caught his eye.

"That got me really interested in writing," he said.

But Mr. Wilkinson also wanted to utilize his newfound teaching skills.

In early 2007, Mr. Wilkinson headed back to Prague to teach.

While in Prague, Mr. Wilkinson made time to do some sightseeing and having completed the writing course, he decided to write a travel book on Prague.

*Daytrips: Prague and the Czech Republic* was released in July.

"It's probably one of the most

**'If any of my (Stouffville District Secondary School) teachers exist, they'd be amazed I became a teacher.'**

Don Wilkinson  
Stouffville resident

beautiful cities I have been to," he said. "It's a safe city, it's a clean city. It has so much history and architecturally, it's just exquisite and it's inexpensive to visit."

From May to June of 2007, Mr. Wilkinson travelled around Prague and the Czech Republic by RV.

"I picked places that had the most interest, that would keep the average tourist interested for at least a full day," he said.

Cesky Krumlov, in the south Bohemian region of the Czech Republic, quickly became Mr. Wilkinson's favourite destination because there was very little development, despite it being hundreds of years old.

Cesky Krumlov is also home to the Czech Republic's second largest castle - the Cesky Krumlov castle, which still has its 1766 baroque theatre, complete with original stage machinery, scenery and props.

"It's beautifully maintained and restored," Mr. Wilkinson said.

Carlsbad Karlovy Vary in the western Bohemian portion of the country was another favourite location for Mr. Wilkinson.

Carlsbad Karlovy Vary is known as the spa city because of its natural hot mineral spring in the middle of town.

"Kings and other royalty from all of Europe have been going there for hundreds of years," he said.

This was also where Daniel Craig filmed his first James Bond movie, *Casino Royale*.

For every one of the 57 day trips in the book, Mr. Wilkinson details the area's history, how to get there, indigenous food and drink, as well as providing suggested itineraries.

"It's for people who like to wander around the town looking for the



From May to June of 2007, Don Wilkinson travelled around Prague and the Czech Republic by RV. His travel advice is in a book released this fall.

unique aspects that most tourists aren't going to spot," he said of the book that took about 13 months to write.

"I applied myself to it as if it was a full-time job," Mr. Wilkinson said. "It was like a full-time job, but a very enjoyable one."

When Mr. Wilkinson set out on his mission to write *Daytrips*, he had no publisher for it, but thanks to some key information gleaned from his writing class, Mr. Wilkinson was able to source out a publisher - Hasting House Books.

Mr. Wilkinson has another project

already completed - a Bill Bryson-like book on the Nazi occupation of the Czech Republic. He also has two other books in the works - one is a travel log to Germany and the Czech Republic and the other is a humour book.

Throughout all of his travelling to Prague, Mr. Wilkinson never strayed far from his woodworking roots. Since 2007, he has been a regular columnist for Canadian Woodworking.

*Daytrips: Prague and the Czech Republic* is available at amazon.com.

## Whitchurch-Stouffville News Digest

Visit [yorkregion.com](http://yorkregion.com) for more on these and other stories

### Crime Stoppers seeking Gormley golf course thieves

Do you know who cracked the safe at a Gormley golf course last summer?

Crime Stoppers would like to know.

Four suspects broke into the Station Creek Golf Club at about 11 p.m. on July 23. While inside the club, at 12657 Woodbine Ave., the suspects removed a safe, opened it and removed a small amount of cash.

Images of the suspects can be viewed at [www.1800222TIPS.com](http://www.1800222TIPS.com).

If you have any information about this or any other crime, contact Crime Stoppers anonymously at 1-800-222-TIPS, [www.1800222TIPS.com](http://www.1800222TIPS.com) or text TIPYORK and your message to 274637.

### Idol performer at church

Guitarist Jay Leach, who has appeared on American Idol and 100 Huntley St., performs at Stouffville Pentecostal Church, 6853 Main St., Wednesday at 7 p.m. Call 905-640-5696 for more information.

### CORRECTION Patients weren't without doctor at Stouffville clinic

A story in last Saturday's Sun-Tribune on the recruitment of new doctors to Stouffville contained an error.

One of two new physicians at the Stouffville Medical Centre arrived at the time of Dr. Don Petrie's retirement last spring. Patients did not have "to look elsewhere for medical attention".

The Sun-Tribune regrets the error.

### SOUND OFF

Have something to say about these or other stories?

E-mail us at [jmason@yrmg.com](mailto:jmason@yrmg.com)

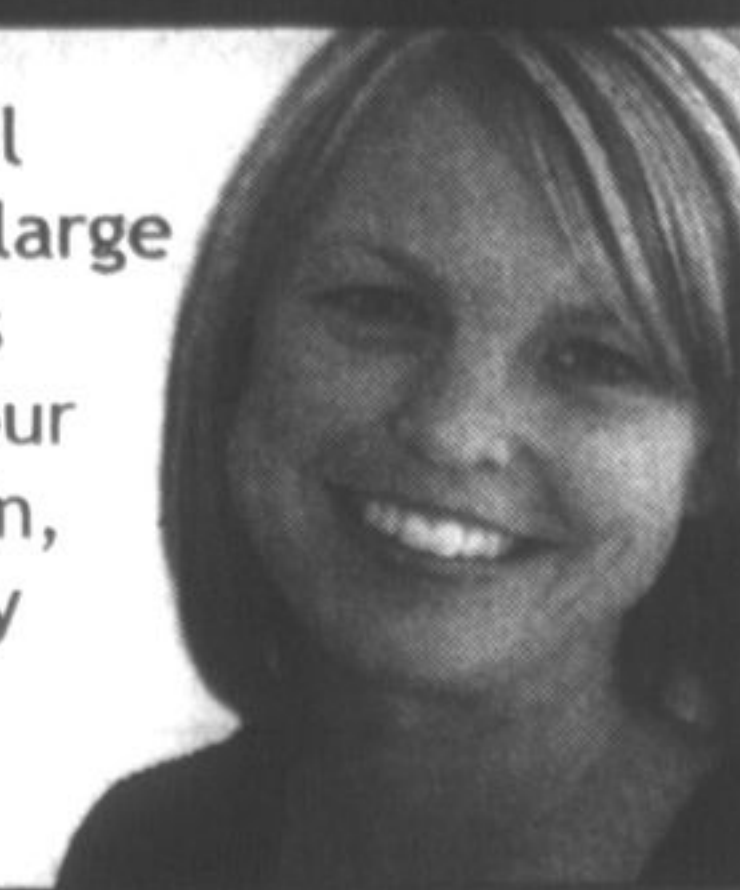
## Laser Hair Removal

Painless hair removal? That's what our clients report after being treated with the latest technology. We use state-of-the-art Soprano™ and Harmony™ laser equipment. At The Laser Clinic we have great success in removing unwanted facial and body hair. Trust our expert staff, which includes a medical practitioner, registered nurse and medical aestheticians, who have many years experience and knowledge in the aesthetic laser industry. **SPECIAL - Buy 4 laser sessions and get 2 at half price**

The Laser Clinic

## Rejuvenate your skin with noticeable results

Improve the visible appearance of your skin and bring back a more youthful look. If you have sun damage, visible facial veins, age spots, brown spots, large pores, uneven pigmentation or dull skin, our 30 minute procedure provides noticeable results with no down time! The state-of-the-art technology at our clinic uses gentle but intense pulses of light to penetrate deep into the skin, reversing the damage caused by the sun, or by environmental or hereditary factors. Call for your no-obligation consultation today. **SPECIAL - Photofacial / IPL \$175 / treatment (reg \$350)**



The Sarum Room Salon and Spa

905.640.0092