

How the Blue Jays can win back fans

Yes, I'm a ball fan. No, not a football or basketball fan. During my high school years, those sports weren't played.

But baseball was. Fastball (or softball), too. I enjoyed and still enjoy both with a passion.

Who among us can recall Bob Hassard, Earl Cook, Les Clarke, Ted Cadieux and the Schell brothers, Ken and Lorne, members of the champion Stouffville Red Sox?

I can.

Who among us can forget Don Haynes, Harry Barber, Ted Suzuki, Gord Eckardt, Ross Madill and Bob Stover, members of the champion Stouffville Cardinals?

I can't.

Those were baseball's glory years when Stouffville ruled the roost and spectators filled the stands.

Nor did our women play secondary roles. The skills of Helen Snowball, Marg Brignall, Helen Paisley, Joan Haynes, Helen Goudie and Barb Hare are well recorded.

Similarly, today's Stouffville Mennos, managed by Howie and Art Burkholder, can hold their own with any team in their league.

These thoughts coursed through my mind last week while seated in the VIP section of Toronto's Rogers Centre. It was a game between my beloved Blue Jays and the Kansas City Royals.

This opportunity occurred unexpectedly, thanks to the generosity of Patrick Leblanc, director of Stouffville's O'Neill Funeral Home.

I took son Paul along.

While I'd been to the site before, this particular evening was special. For we were truly treated like Very Important People, on a par with a premier or prime minister.

Examples? A receptionist accompanied us to an elevator. An usherette brought us popcorn and hotdogs and an usher called me "sir".

Not the red carpet treatment 'two country guys close to the city' expected.

But we gladly accepted with thanks. Also the free parking. But that's another story.

While not a big-city lover, a Rogers Centre



Roaming Around

with Jim Thomas

visit is, for me, a highlight of any baseball season.

Why? Three reasons.

First, I love the location. Roof open or closed, it's a marvelous site. Toronto should be so fortunate.

Second, I love baseball. I enjoy the game.

Third, I love the Blue Jays, even when they lose.

Unfortunately, Toronto's fan base lacks enthusiasm. They don't cheer, they applaud, much like audience reaction to an opera.

The loudest hurrah came when a man seated in the second deck and wearing a glove, dropped a routine foul ball. Even a "make noise" appeal via the Jumbotron, failed to stir emotions. Most in our section seemed more interested in drinking beer and eating pizza.

Despite the closeness of the contest, some left early, maybe to visit a washroom or perhaps to beat the traffic.

The Jays' organization, too, has its faults. I say take a page out of the Raptors' book and add some razzmatazz to the seventh inning stretch. The bird mascots would be no match for a dozen attractive cheerleaders.

Last, but not least, let's speed things up. People don't pay big bucks to watch a pitcher paw the turf, yank at cap, pull up his pants, then throw the ball in the dirt.

And the umpires, much like watching four tired men challenged by a game of chess. The result - yawn ball, not baseball.

Fans today enjoy sports with speed. That's why Sidney Crosby and Alex Ovechkin pack arenas everywhere they play. Energized ball players could do the same.

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

IT'S HOMECOMING WEEK

.....and what we're doing to welcome your students home from University is provide a whole bunch of Home Cooking, unlike the mealplan offerings of the school year. Parents, don't forget to adjust your clocks to 'Student Nocturnal Time', or you'll miss out on a lot of the best bonding and convo time. I also know that they'll be eager to help with your yard clean-up and early plantings, if you haven't done it already, so we've made sure that we've got not just the soil you'll need, but a lot of the plants, as well. Also, we've got great Jubes, and knowing that kids love them and can sense from a great distance when you are secretly scoffing them, we'll have the Family Pack size so that there will be enough to share, if you are caught with your hand in the jar.

PORK CHOPS

These are my fave pork chops, because they are from the end of the loin which is the most tender and flavourful. We cut them a bit thicker than usual (they can be easily flattened if need be) for grilling, something which should be done on a medium heat. You can get these either already seasoned with Montreal Steak Spice, a Cajun Rub or au Naturel. The supply will be on the smaller side as there are only 3 of these per pork loin, so if these appeal, shop early. Regular \$7.95 lb

25% OFF THIS WEEK

CANADA PRIME RIB EYES

We have a few 'Prime' Rib Eyes if you're thinking of a cookout this weekend. Your kids probably won't have seen these on their meal plan either. We'll have these at the same price as our usual rib eye steaks, so come early if these would be your choice.

PACIFIC SNAPPER

This Snapper (or rockfish) has a delicate, nutty, sweet flavour. The meat is lean and medium-firm in texture, with a fine flake. These are suited well to baking rather than grilling, and will remain moist when cooked. Recipes will be available as usual. **\$8.95 LB THIS WEEK**

WHAT'S COOKIN' AT THE DELI.....

The kitchen folk will be making groaning trays of our Jack Daniel BBQ Ribs. These are pork back ribs that we slow-roast at the deli, then slather with our own sauce (which will be packaged and available for sale shortly). The ribs can be had in whole or 1/2 racks at..... **25% OFF THIS WEEK**

Also..... Louie will be making very large bowls of our Red Potato and Egg Salad, our #1 seller at the deli, and it will be **1/2 OFF THIS WEEK** It's made with both red and white new potatoes, lots of hard-boiled eggs, chopped celery and green onions, and the dressing, of course. If you don't like crowds too much, we'll have some packed self-serve at the side counter, too.

WHAT'S HAPPENIN' OUTSIDE!

Spring is in full swing and we're taking full advantage of the warmer weather. We're getting loads of new product in daily: Kimberly (sunshine) ferns, hibiscus bushes (standards and 6"pots), mandevilla, Boston (shade) ferns, geranium hanging baskets and hundreds of mixed hanging baskets and planter pots are all in this week, not to mention a nice selection of the hardier flowering plants and greens for your container planting needs. We're still advising everyone to watch the forecast for frost and bring in or cover your tender plants as needed. However, most of what we have at this point is absolutely fine as long as the temperature doesn't actually drop below freezing. This week we have our popular 7" Mixed Bulb Pot on special for \$4.99 each. They are a mix of tulips, hyacinth and daffodils and are perfect as a gift or simply to brighten up a room. And if you are a herbivore, we have some herbs in individual pots and some mixed herb planters, as well as the big pots of rosemary!

APPLE PIES

These are really nice to come home to.....and not like what you'd have on the meal plan. We've made this in the traditional format this week (not the deep-dish style) and they are available with either pastry top or streusel, either baked or unbaked, if you like that apple pie aroma at home. 9" size, reg. \$10.95 each **25% OFF THIS WEEK**

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. Reg. \$4.99/lb **25% OFF THIS WEEK**

CHICKEN NOODLE SOUP

Our feature in the soup department will be our Chicken Noodle. You might be forgiven for thinking that, since it's just soup, we could be using the cheap chicken to make this — and that we would save a lot of money because we use lots of chicken — but we use our really nice air-chilled chicken that we pay a premium to get — and to cook with. The result will be proof enough of our quality thinking. Reg. \$6.99 each **25% LB OFF THIS WEEK**

MAC & CHEESE

When Cathy asks, as she always does, "what do you want for dinner?" I invariably reply "Mac & Cheese — or anything else", hoping against hope that more often than not I'll actually get Doreen's Mac and Cheese. It's a 'curl up in my easy chair' type of meal that is the fitting end to a long and full day, or year of school. Comfort food at its finest. Reg. \$10.95 each **25% OFF THIS WEEK**

WHAT'S BAKING! THIS WEEK

It's cupcake week in our little bakery this week. We'll be making an 'Adult Series', not X-rated, but adventurous flavours nonetheless, and a 'Kid Series' as well. The Adult Series are a larger size (adults are larger, it was a no-brainer) in the following flavours.....

BLACK AND WHITE.....this is a chocolate cupcake injected with white chocolate mousse and glazed with dark chocolate ganache. **CARROT.....**just a smaller version of our carrot cakes, with a crown of cream cheese icing. **FLOURLESS CHOCOLATE.....**similar to our flourless chocolate cake, but topped with a dollop of whipped sour cream. **COCONUT CREAM.....**coconut batter topped with fresh whipped cream and flakes of coconut. **LEMON MERINGUE.....**it's a white cupcake that's been injected with lemon curd and topped with Italian Meringue.these all have a regular retail of **\$3.49 each**

The following will be the **\$2.49 each**
VANILLA FROSTED.....it's a white cupcake with vanilla icing, garnished with an edible butterfly. **CHOCOLATE FROSTED.....**this will be chocolate with chocolate frosting, all weighted down with a load of jelly beans. **BANANA.....**a spiced banana cupcake with cream cheese icing. **STRAWBERRY.....**this would be a vanilla batter with a strawberry buttercream icing.

.....all of these will be featured at..... **25% OFF THIS WEEK**

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