

Sun-Tribune

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LETTERS POLICY

The Sun-Tribune welcomes your letters. All submissions must be less than 400 words and must include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The Sun-Tribune reserves the right to publish or not publish and to edit for clarity and space.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Downtown needs more than farmers market

Re: All-local rule out at Stouffville farmers market, Aug. 4.

When the town first announced the opening of its downtown Stouffville farmers market two years ago, I voiced my opinion, calling it ridiculous.

During its three seasons, the market has never brought any business into the downtown core and it is not bringing any tourism into our town.

The controversy over telling vendors who can sell and who cannot sell products was crazy. What's next? Tupperware, cooking demos, Tai Chi (joke) yoga and more?

Come on, this is not the Ex. It would be far better to get merchants back in the downtown core. I cannot believe how many buildings are for rent or sale.

The so-called farmers mar-

ket does not do anything for me and others. Get the downtown going and don't waste money on non-productive matters.

TED CYBRUCH
STOUFFVILLE

Send gnome home

I'm the gnome that was stolen from Donna Lee Trail in east-end Stouffville.

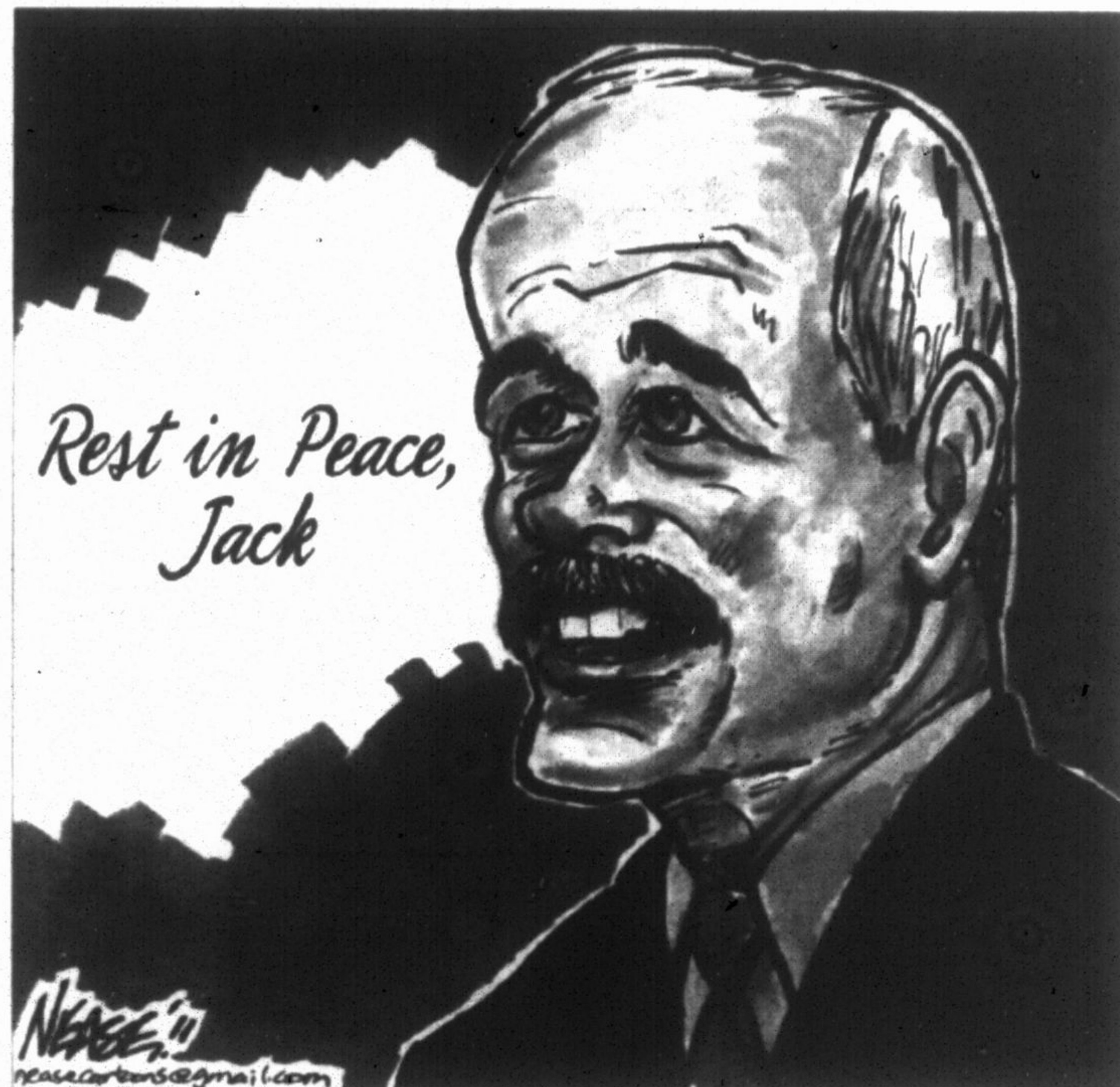
I know you thought I was exceptionally good looking, sitting on my bench smiling up at you all in white splendour cement, but, my mom thought so, too.

She lovingly carried me all the way from Salt Spring Island, B.C., where she will likely never go again.

I'd really like to go back home to be with mom and puppy. Please return me.

VALERIE STARR
STOUFFVILLE

You can read letters, columns and stories from The Sun-Tribune on yorkregion.com



Painful racism isn't found just in Deep South

If you're looking for reading inspiration for the final stretch of summer, consider New York Times best-seller *The Help*.

I was of two minds when I starting reading the novel by Kathryn Stockett. A co-worker told me she was hooked from the first pages and loved it; while another said she didn't even finish reading it.

I was also put off by the bold promo declaring: "This could be one of the most important pieces of fiction since *To Kill a Mockingbird*."

C'mon, really?

Focusing on the lives of poor black maids in rich white homes of Mississippi and set against the wider backdrop of Martin Luther King's 1960s revolts against inequality, I found *The Help* was a great read. It captured my attention and involved me in the characters' lives.

But more importantly, the book has something to say about getting along with your neighbours of any culture and colour in today's multi-ethnic communities of York Region.

The Help depicted the terrible, painful and oxymoronic realities of segregated society.

Blacks couldn't use the same bath-



Marney Beck

rooms or water fountains as whites, for fear of "diseases", yet the white families brought to life in the pages celebrated the great cooking skills of their personal maids.

As I read each chapter I couldn't help shaking my head over the dichotomy of these two "truths" of those days in the American Deep South.

Very few whites could see how ironic and ridiculous it was that the very maids cooking their breakfasts and slicing fruit for delicious desserts were banished to a separate bathroom, sometimes in a back shed, because of their "germs".

Not all whites in *The Help* were racist. Some were kind and fair, treating their maids as members of the family. But the injustices of segregation seeped out of every page.

All in the past, right? Could never happened here?

Just a few months ago, I had a passionate, emotional discussion that was sparked by Black History Month with a black friend who lives in Richmond Hill.

She outlined blatant racism her daughter had faced in a York Region school and described the bigoted comments of a white man made to her while at work.

I wish I could say I was shocked, but I was just saddened.

If you need reminding that our comfortable communities have our own racism challenges to overcome, how about the "too-Asian" debate, the Georgina man convicted of aggravated assault in an incident sparked by a dispute with Asian-Canadian anglers, and anti-Semitic graffiti in Richmond Hill and Thornhill?

I sometimes — not often — receive letters to the editor that express racist views, not just against blacks, but sometimes that are anti-Jewish, anti-Italian, anti-Muslim, anti-Chinese ...

the list goes on.

Some are blatant rants, others far more subtle. Not surprisingly, many of these letters are anonymous, thus will never be printed (and don't deserve to be).

I would ask any reader who secretly or publicly says their neighbourhood is changing for the worse because a certain kind of people are moving in to consider the pivotal realization voiced by the central white character in *The Help* who develops a friendship with a black maid: "We are just two people. Not that much separates us. Not nearly as much as I'd thought."

Whatever culture or race or clothing custom gives you concern, just remember the people you fear love their kids as much as you do, care about their parents and worry about paying taxes and neighbourhood security the same way you do.

We are truly lucky to live in the secure, welcoming, nurturing climate that is York Region and the GTA, but in our own schools, workplaces and neighbourhoods, we must always walk the walk and talk the talk.

Marney Beck is a York Region Media Group editor.