

Work's labour of love for barber of Stouffville

S have and a haircut, two bits. For those who don't recall the cost of a clip back in the '40s, two bits was 25 cents.

Individually, a haircut was 15 cents and a shave was 10.

For we kids, even 15 cents was more than our father could afford. To eliminate the expense, dad would haul the cow clippers from the barn and cut our hair for free.

This operation, while economical, was indeed an ordeal. For the clippers pulled like crazy and the end result resembled a patch-work quilt.

Our farm neighbour had a more practical approach. He'd position a bowl atop each son's head and cut around it; the bigger the head, the bigger the bowl.

Admittedly, tonsorial artistry has come a long way since the cut-at-home kind. Or since the days of Stouffville's Bob Snowball and "Red" Forsyth. Barbershops back then were genuine meeting places where men dropped by for reasons other than shaves and haircuts. For it was there they could catch up on the news. Some even engaged in games of checkers, the results of which



Roaming Around

with Jim Thomas

often came close to fisticuffs.

That age is long gone. Everyone's now in a hurry. No time to talk.

But there's an exception. The location is Frank & Son Barber-shop at 6421 Main St., Stouffville. Here, Frank Frano and son Rosario work a six-day week, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday, 8:30 a.m. to five. They're closed Sundays.

But it's not work, at least not for Frank.

"I love the town; I love the people and I love the job," he says. "Work isn't work when you

enjoy it so much."

Frank, 67, is a native of Anzano, Italy, a town outside Naples. At age 10, his father, Francesco, arranged for his son to begin barber training at a local shop, "to keep me off the street," Frank says.

Four years later, he was ready to go it alone.

From Italy to Germany to England and then to Canada, Frank established a barbershop at Danforth Avenue and Main Street, Toronto. He would later expand his business to include three sites, one on Victoria Street, another at Yonge and Wellington streets, and another at McCowan Road and Hwy. 401.

It was while temporarily assisting another barber here in Stouffville that customers convinced him to remain.

"Don't go, stay in Stouffville," he remembers patrons saying. He accepted their advice. That was 25 years ago. He's been here ever since.

But for a moment, he contemplated leaving the profession for a job with General Motors. Then changed his mind.

"I'd fallen in love with the wonderful people and this beautiful town," he says.

While shave requests are at a premium, perhaps two a week,



STAFF PHOTO/JIM MASON

Frank Frano sometimes serenades customers at his barber shop.

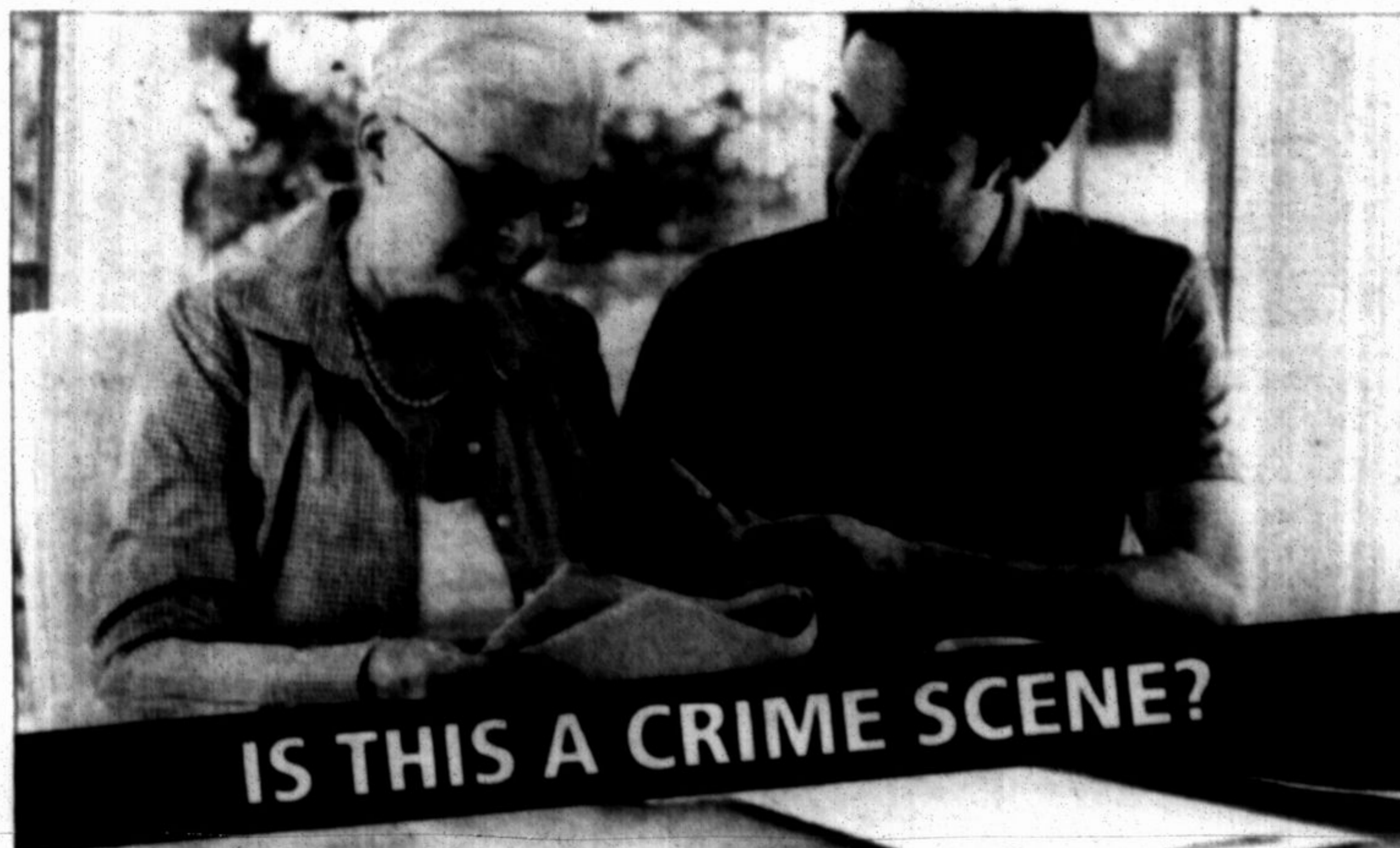
Frank accommodates as many as 30 haircut customers a day. Son Rosario is equally proficient. An older son, Francisco, and a daughter, Anna, also live in Stouffville. He has eight grandchildren. His wife, Guiseppa, died almost three years ago. He places bouquets of roses on her grave every Sunday.

"To me, she's still alive," he says. A framed photo hangs on his barbershop wall.

Aside from cutting hair, Frank has another skill — playing the accordion. During the past 25 years, he's entertained many people on many occasions.

And he'll do it for you in the middle of his barbershop floor. At no additional charge.

Jim Thomas is a Stouffville resident who has written for area newspapers for more than 60 years.



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