

In search of the perfect brown suit

Why is it that men, particularly married men, dislike shopping for clothes? When it comes to male apparel purchases, most are done by the wife. At least this male's wife.



Roaming Around
with Jim Thomas

And I doubt I'm an exception. It would seem to apply to my gender, which, rightly or wrongly, places the blame solely on a seductive "first lady" called Eve, a temporary tenant in God's Garden of Eden. She, under the persuasive illusions of a wily snake, took a bite from a forbidden fruit and immediately stripped Adam of his dignity. Sadly, his virile progenies have been bowing to the dress whims of their spouses ever since.

Perhaps, in hindsight, it's a good thing, otherwise we male mates might still be cloaked in camel hair and fig leaves.

So, men, when was the last time you ventured out on your own and purchased a pair of socks. Fruit of the Looms or boxer shorts? When was the last time you took control of your own façade and picked out a Sunday shirt and tie?

If you're like me (and most probably are), you continually leave it up to the wife to fill the void.

This concern has come to the fore due to the fact I need a new suit. Not any kind of suit but a three-piece brown suit.

The two-piece black ensemble I'm currently wearing has seen better days - 4,745 better days. And so has my waistline. It's gone from a slim 30 inches to an expanded 42, a statistic of which I'm not proud. But an observable statistic just the same.

So where does one find a three-piece suit in Stouffville?

Worse still, where does one find a brown three-piece suit anywhere? I've searched and searched but all in vain.

Admittedly, a black suit is nice - for ministers, senators and funeral directors. But I want something more colourful. I'm calling it my lay-away suit, anticipating the certainty I'll never need another.

However, as my last will and testament decrees I'll not be available, brown suit or black, for public viewing. So it really doesn't matter what attire my kinfolk select. I won't see it and neither will you.

At Stouffville's O'Neill Funeral Home where I'm occasionally employed as a greeter, black is the colour of choice. Everyone wears black and, let's face it,

all members of staff look exceptionally sharp. So does the Cadillac hearse and an accompanying Chrysler 300. They, too, are black.

But brown! I'll stand out like an over-done hotdog. Maybe, just maybe I can still squeeze into my old black togs for short-term duties.

But the question remains, where do I go to fulfill my need?

I've tried Stouffville's Care and Share Thrift Shop, but they deal mainly in sports attire, the mix-and-match sort of thing.

The same goes for Walmart and Honest Ed's. Tip Top Tailors and Moore's exhibit outstanding displays plus excellent quality but nothing in brown. At least not the last time I checked.

Their prices, too, are a bit above the income of a part-time crossing guard.

Jean, my wife, is an expert when related to tones. While she personally prefers hues that are somewhat subdued, she can't understand why I employ tunnel vision when it comes to colours.

What's wrong with green, or grey, or blue or even black? she asks. Nothing, I reply, but it's my final wish, my last request. To this response, she offers no argument.

However, in all honesty, there's more to buying a suit than selecting the shade. It's the trying on that drives one crazy.

Have you ever entered one of those silly little garment cubicles to make the switch from old to new? While Clark Kent of Superman fame has no hang-ups in a telephone booth, I'm like a deep-sea octopus in a tropical fish tank. No room to manoeuvre.

So what comes out? A human mannequin wearing a tent-sized jacket with accompanying pant legs dragging across the floor.

"It's made for you," says a positive-minded clerk. "A few tucks here and a few tucks there and all will be fine."

A head-to-toe mirror conveys a different tale but you want to believe he's telling the truth.

However, for me, the significant test will eventually occur on an upcoming Sunday when a redefined me enters church for a very first time.

The anticipated greeting will likely go something like this: "Wow, a brand new suit. You look pretty neat but I still liked you better in black."

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

More to the east, please

What does your Stouffville of the future look like, neighbour?

The flying cars The Jetsons said were on the horizon zooming over the four lanes of the Ninth Line?

Moving sidewalks. And not just at Pearson International, but along Main Street and Hoover Park Drive.

Eloquent and frequent letter writer Arnold Neufeldt-Fast advanced the conversation more reasonably in Saturday's paper, discussing "the next 17 years (when) we will be welcoming on average 1,000 newcomers..."

It's a staggering number, especially for those of you who grew up here, in a place that was more Mayberry than modern-day Markham.

It's a big number, even for those of you who were part of Stouffville's population boom of the past decade.

It's a large job for the town, planners, consultants and politicians.

By 2030, here's hoping for positive change.

Stouffville is now tilted, with so much of our business - see all three grocery stores - and services on the west side.

The eventual redevelopment of the Stouffville Country Market lands will, hopefully, add to the commercial mix in the east end.

How about a coffee shop? They're more than places of businesses. They're gathering spots and community centres.

I don't locate stores for Tim Hortons or Starbucks, but one



Off The Top
with Jim Mason

would seem like a gold mine on the east side, given the nearby Eastern and Northern gate retirement communities alone.

Check a coffee shop out for yourself, but only in west-end Stouffville.

It's all about making this a more walkable, accessible place.

You can see it taking shape. Visualize houses, modern parks, schools and trails stretching to the Lincolnville GO station and Bethesda Park that now appear so distant - just as our library/fitness centre once did.

See commuters cycling from home and jumping on a train or bus for Union Station. See families walking to soccer and ball games.

For now, there's no shutting off the growth machine. Embrace our future. Have your say.

What do you think, Stouffville?

Jim Mason is editor of The Sun Tribune. Follow him on Twitter @stouffeditor

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