

OPINION

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Birthday serenade keys reunion of half-century

By day, Sal Amenta is a retired teacher, community living advocate and serial writer of solid letters to the editor.

The rural Whitchurch-Stouffville resident is also a passionate member of this newspaper's Community Links Panel.

But by night, he has a mistress, an old flame he liaises with at a York Region eatery. He gets dressed up for her.

His wife fully endorses this behaviour. It gets him out of the house.

Amenta, 69, has been playing the accordion at Frankie Tomatto's, a popular all-you-can-eat Italian spot in south Markham, for three years. Spouse Kathy suggested he return to his neglected musical roots and pick up the instrument again.

He's loving it, donning traditional garb for his restaurant role as "Sal Gondola" and even playing weddings and other special affairs on the side.

Amenta invested in a new digital instrument, complete with synthesiser. He calls up music to more than 700 songs on his smartphone, which he mounts to the accordion.

From That's Amore and Volare, to Leonard Cohen's Hallelujah and the theme from *The Godfather*.

He's into it.

There might not be gondolier groupies, yet. But the tips, sing-alongs and appreciative smiles are abundant.

Amenta was flattered when a regular asked if he'd play a particular Sunday. It was her dad's 85th birthday and pops is big on the accordion.

Amenta played. The birthday boy, Franco Carrubba, loved it. The candles were all blown out.

End of story? Wrong.

You take it from here, Sal:

"The second time I went to the family's table, Franco asked me what part of Italy I was from, and I answered, 'Canicat-



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

tini Bagni' in the province of Siracusa.

He was delighted to hear it, and told me he came from a nearby town, Pachino (Sicily). 'Well,' I said, 'My dad had many friends from that town and I knew many of them, too. In fact,' I added, 'when I was a teenager I played for a band-leader from that town.'

Very excited to hear this, Franco asked me for his name, and I promptly replied, 'Sam Fronte.' Hearing this, he jumped from his seat to say, 'Sam Fronte? I played in his band, too. What's your name?'

It was at that very moment that it dawned on us who we were, despite the ravages of time. It didn't take us long to figure out that we hadn't seen each other for over 50 years since our group disbanded before 1964!"

Photos were taken and exchanged. Amenta sent a classic black-and-white of the boys in the band, Amenta and Carruba side by side, to the Carrubas, who live in Markham not far, coincidentally, from Amenta's old address. (See page 4.)

There is no storybook plan to get the band back together or release a CD of material recorded in '64.

But it is still magical the way two old bandmates reunited after 50 years.

By chance. By conversing.

Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.
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LETTER OF THE WEEK

Stop texting while driving and watch for school children

Well, after this past winter I'm sure everyone was hoping for a long hot summer, but old mother nature fooled us all again.

Even still, the school bus routes have been handed out, dry runs are happening right now and that can only mean one thing – school will start back up Sept 2.

And with that the roads will be filled again with bright yellow buses and smiling students' faces, and some not so smiley.

Once again, I am reminding all of our drivers out there to watch for and be aware of the kids and buses at the pickup and drop-off locations. Please remember that drivers and cyclists must stop for a school

bus when its red warning lights are activated and the stop arm is out.

Failure to do so could result in a hefty fine or worse, a student being hit. I'm pretty sure none of us wants that to happen.

As a local school bus driver, most of the red light runners I see on my route are either on the phone or texting, so let's all try and make a concerted effort to avoid these bad habits.

Also, please watch out for our numerous crossing guards and stop for them as they help our kids get across local streets and roads.

Have a safe school year, everyone and let's hope the polar vortex forgets where Stouffville is this winter.

DAVE BROOKS
STOUFFVILLE

Don't ignore rest of world and pick on Israel

Re: Canada, U.S. not helping end conflict in Middle East, letter to the editor by Gil Francis, Aug. 14

I am responding to the letter published regarding Israel (and that they only say they are being targeted by rockets).

First, there are many factual inaccuracies in the letter including the fact there are no Israeli settlements in Gaza and that Israel does not occupy Gaza. Israel withdrew in a "land for peace" deal, but instead got rockets in return.

But of more importance, is that while I have been reading letters in your paper for many years, perhaps I missed all the letters from this writer where he expressed similar indignation about other world issues.

This would be, for example, the killings of more than 150,000 people in Syria during the past three years. Or the 5.5 million killed in the Congo from 1998 to 2003.

And when he refers to an occupation, where is his letter about the illegal occupation of Tibet by China? I guess I missed that, too.

He notes in his letter that there may be those "chomping at the bit" to brand him "anti this or that". Well the word is anti-Semitic, which fits someone who chooses to be obsessed with supposed Israeli atrocities – from a country smaller than El Salvador that is threatened with annihilation by dozens of countries – but ignores all the other evil in the world.

ERIC SOLOMON
MARKHAM

Beware rude, dishonest garage sale shoppers

If you have a garage sale, beware that you may experience some rude and pushy customers.

I have lived in York Region for 20 years and

it has been a great place to raise a family.

A few weeks ago, I decided to have a garage sale.

I have had many garage sales over the years and manage them with no problems on my own.

However, the last two sales have left me questioning some people's integrity.

Last year, I had a framed oil painting stolen from my sale.

This year I had so many incidents of rudeness and dishonesty, I have decided to never have a garage sale again.

Behaviours that I experienced include short-changing me knowingly and leaving with the item or paying for one item then adding a few more items and pushing to pay the same amount.

I don't mind if people are fair and polite about bargaining, that used to be the fun part, but to be pushy and insistent is just plain rude and inconsiderate.

I price my items ridiculously low, from 25 cents to \$5 for new items, so they are already more than fair prices.

The most upsetting incident concerned a young woman who asked me the price of a leather Roots bag.

I told her \$5 and when I turned for a second to help someone else, I saw her out of the corner of my eye leaving quickly to her car and driving off.

I looked around and confirmed that she drove off with the purse without paying for it.

So, if you are a garage sale shopper, please be respectful so everyone can have an enjoyable day finding or selling treasures.

If you are the garage sale host, you may want to have another person with you to help.

I do want to say thank you to those at my sale who were gracious, with some sharing interesting stories.

B. TAN
RICHMOND HILL