

To List... Is Divine

By Hannelore Volpe

Is there a connection among Whitchurch-Stouffville's moo-ers, music and the museum?

You bet! Believe it or not, they have one thing in common. They all depend on a humble activity: making lists.

Ah, those wonderful lists! There are the infamous to-do lists dreaded by husbands everywhere, the lists farmers use to help them manage livestock and crops, lists of words in the dictionary and the daily list that helps get you through the day. There's a satisfied feeling that comes with putting big, bold check marks beside those 'to-do' items on your daily list.

When it came to making lists, the clay tablet was the latest in technology for people in ancient Syria around 4,500 years ago. In the old city of Ebla, now modern-day Tell Mardikh, more than 1,800 complete clay tablets and a whole lot of fragments were found by archaeologists in the mid-1970s. The tablets contain lists of local beers and other products the Eblaites traded with cities around them. Shelves in the palace

library were stacked with Sumerian-Eblaite dictionaries, records of state revenues and lists of livestock, preserving in cuneiform writing the fact that at one time the inhabitants owned 200,000 head of sheep, goats and cows.

Fast forward to local farmer Paul Hulshof in present day Whitchurch-Stouffville, who would have a difficult time running the family farm without lists. A life long farmer, Paul was joined on the farm a few years ago by his son Bradley and his wife Lieka.

They milk around 52 cows daily and have a herd of around 140. About a year ago, the Hulshofs made the switch from manual record-keeping to the computer. They use lists to keep track of milk production and butterfat content. (We can only hope there is no jealousy between Bessy and Daisy when the numbers are out.)

Livestock records show each animal's parentage and who they are bred to. The Hulshofs also keep track of all their machinery, and the costs and incomes associated with crops on several fields on the farm and at other locations.

"We have to do a daily list," Paul Hulshof said, "but a moment's notice will change what you plan to do for the day!"

When it comes to

Stouffville's music scene, Larry Goguen can be considered a master list-maker as well as a seasoned performer. When he looks through his files, he finds set lists covering 40 years of music-making. He didn't start out with the intention of keeping them all, but there they are. They chronicle the country, rock and roll, blues and Beatles tunes he's performed with numerous bands.

The lists have plenty of notations on the songs he's played, often accompanied by his wife Maura. They include who wrote and performed them, when they were first released, chord tabs, drum beats and more - and they're all hand-written. Particularly precious are those written by his late friend Tim Hewie.

They are "like a time machine," Larry said. "This is what my buddy wrote."

When Larry pulls out the older lists, he remembers how he would listen to a record over and over again - and write down the lyrics. Then he'd play it some more to get the chords down.

About two months ago, he started up Stouffville's newest open stage which runs every Sunday from 2 to 6 p.m. at The Lion of Stouffville Pub at 5917 Main Street. Bring your guitar, put your name on the list and play - or just come in to listen.

As you might expect, lists are particularly useful at the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum

and Community Centre in Vandorf. The museum's entire collection of over 15,000 items is listed on a master database. It includes everything from children's toys to furniture and farm machinery. Among the treasures are a land grant document signed by General Isaac Brock in 1812, a math notebook from the 1850s which its young owner decorated elaborately, and colourful carpet balls. Carpet bowling with balls made from bone, pottery and other materials was a popular Victorian parlour game.

If you want to look up your local family history or find out about your older home, the museum is the place to go. The Heritage Inventory, lists of family names for genealogical research and lists of local research topics will help you find what you're looking for. Call 905-727-8954 or 1-888-290-0337 for an appointment.

Just as everyone sees life differently, everyone makes lists differently. Some might write them on the back of an envelope or on a serviette at a local coffee shop. Some have special notepads bearing their name to make sure it really is their list, in case they have a sudden attack of doubt.

And then there are the smart phones which let you carry way too many lists conveniently. This can only mean one thing: lists are here to stay!



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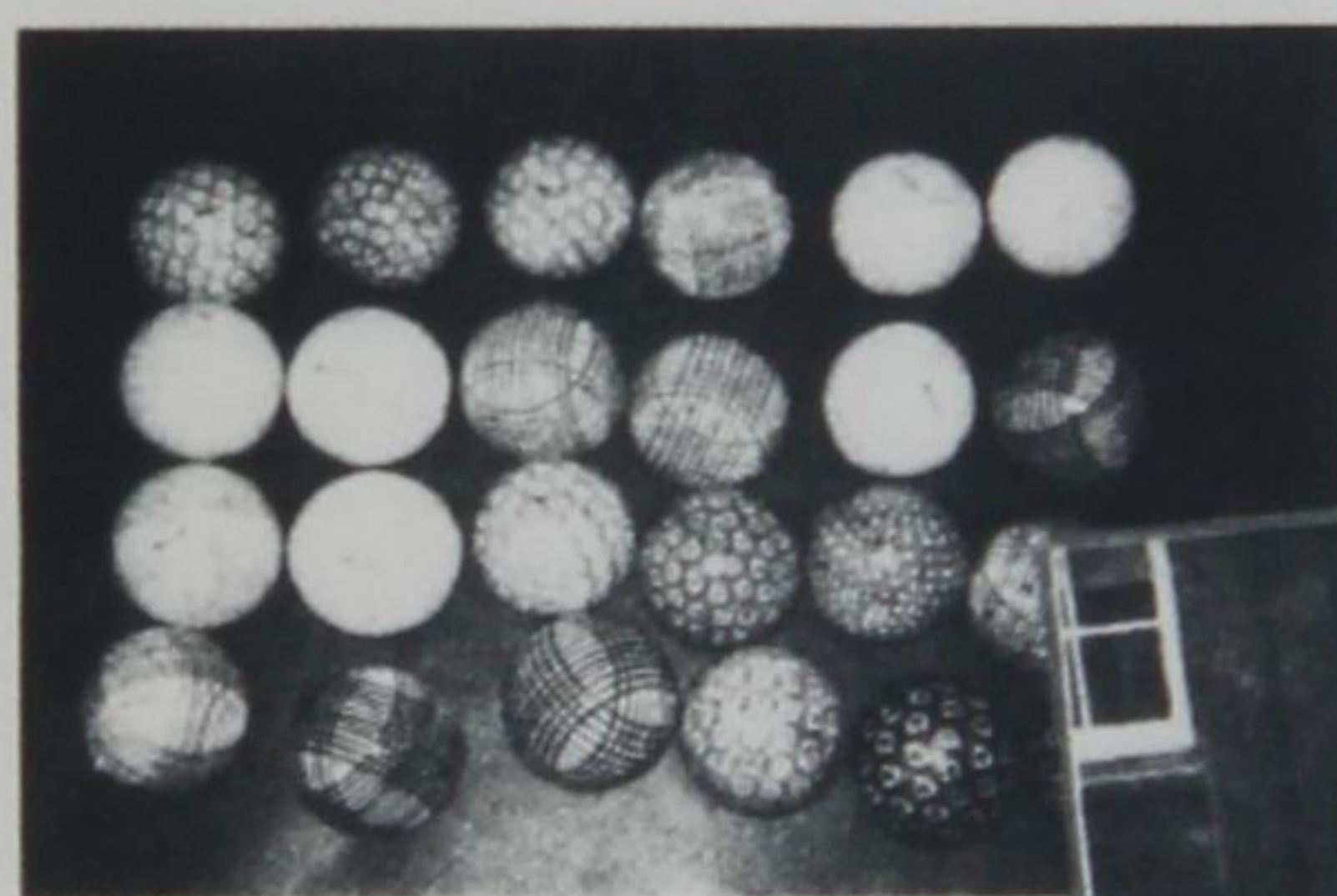
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These colourful orbs from the museum's huge collection of artifacts were used for carpet bowling, a popular Victorian parlour game.

Photos courtesy of Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum



Among the more than 15,000 items listed on Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum's database is this photograph of an old man reading to a young girl.




This beautifully illustrated student's math book is another of the many items listed on the museum's database.

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