

A Growing Concern

By Kinjal Dagli-Shah

Jay Reesor was 14 when his dad asked him if he'd like to become a farmer, just like him. Jay promptly said no, and yet that's what he's been doing successfully for more than 25 years.

A copy of the book *Eat, Pray, Love* lay on Jay's kitchen table in the 150-year-old house, nestled amid 100 acres of land. The title pretty much sums up Jay's life, even though the contents – the book tells the story of a woman on a quest for spiritual healing – may be markedly different. In a life spent on the farm, 54-year-old Jay of Reesor Farm Market fame is all about eating on, praying for and loving his land. He put it simply: "I've been renting this farm for 25 years but I haven't grown tired of it. I have a very close connection to it. The land's been good to me."

Jay settled on the sprawling farm at a time when Elgin Mills was only a gravel road, and Stouffville ended north of Hoover Park. And while he favours the preservation of farmland, he doesn't mind the growth of this town. "People need a good place to live, and I'm glad Stouffville is able to

provide that," he said.

His farm, though, lies secluded from the new developments. "I'm happy my land is owned by the federal government. I'll never be tempted to sell it," he pointed out, having seen several other farms give way to buildings.

"It's inevitable, and I try to change with the times too. I had pigs and chickens when I was a young farmer but now I focus on strawberries, sweet corn and baked goods, among other produce," said Jay, watching his strawberries ripening to be picked in June. "Strawberries and sweet corn are my favourite things to grow," he added.

The Reesor Farm Market on Ninth Line is really just the public face of a busy summer farm. Walk past the generations-old walnut and ash trees, and take in the fragrance of the lilacs and lilies, and you see where the action is. Jay and his "three Reesor girls", along with a sprinkling of employees and relatives, toil through the summer to ensure a good harvest and a busy season.

For Jay, the few summer months that most Canadians live for are spent doing business. "I don't mind it

because I'm out on the farm enjoying the weather every day. I travel in the winter if I want to," he said, without a hint of regret. As a matter of fact, Jay works through the snowy months too, at his 'winter home,' the Reesor Farm Kitchen which sells baked and prepared food.

For now, though, the Reesors are eagerly awaiting eight acres of strawberries and 35 acres of sweet corn, as are the Stouffvillites who lap up the fresh produce.



Ramblin' Ruth

Zen And The Art Of Maintenance

By Ruth LeBlanc

Life is all about maintenance. Your body requires an occasional checkup and as the years roll by it becomes a necessity. Eyes and teeth need examining while bodies go through a relocation phase.

I am at an age where I am a sucker for new products that promise to banish lines and provide a youthful glow in weeks, if not days. I contribute more than I should to the billion dollar business of selling products representing the fountain of youth.

The more things you have, the more care and maintenance is required. Engines of all kind need an occasional oil or spark plug change and tune-ups are a necessity to keep them running smoothly. Giving into a whim a while ago, I bought a 1962 Volkswagen bug I spotted in a newspaper ad. When I saw the sky blue classic, it was love at first sight.

It was not perfect. The appraiser said it showed the signs of age any 40-

something would. A ding here and a imperfection there, along with a sagging liner. I could relate to the ravages of aging this old girl showed all too well, but I overlooked the blemishes as visions of summer drives with classic tunes playing filled my head.

Not once did I consider that it would require maintenance to protect and preserve it. The poor little blue bug has not been properly appreciated or cared for. It sits in the driveway covered with a tarp. Even worse is my embarrassment at never having learned to drive a standard, which of course it happens to be.

My efforts to learn came to an abrupt end when my volunteer instructors dropped off one by one, usually after our first lesson. Lurching across parking lots with screeching brakes and hysterical shrieks, I found it more frustrating than frightening, unlike my while knuckled passengers.

This year, my beau has

accepted the challenge of undertaking the maintenance needed to put things right, so that will be one less engine to worry about. That's a good thing, because on the long weekend the highly anticipated boat launch went slightly askew.

A few minutes after the launch, smoke started coming out of the inboard engine and the boat had to be towed back to the marina, where it awaits inspection. You can bet some kind of maintenance will be suggested. If leaving the plug out last year and nearly sinking in Lake Simcoe weren't enough, the late night encounter with a hidden sandbar should have been an indicator that I am no sailor.

In the past, all that maintenance was done for me and, if ignorance is bliss, I was certainly blissful. Now I have decided to turn over a new leaf. I will do my best to maintain what I can, and relax and not worry about what is going to stop or not start at all.

As for the VW, the art of driving standard is apparently understanding the synchronicity of the vehicle and listening to what the gears tell me. Sounds very Zen, but I will listen and hope good Karma brings quiet and fluid gear shifting.

Ask certain people how they are doing and they will reply: "I am maintaining" and trust me, I will be too.

June At Latcham Gallery

By Maura Broadhurst

In June Latcham gallery presents an exciting new program called the *Celebrating Diversity Festival*.

This year's festival will focus on First Nations culture with a solo exhibition by native artist Mary Anne Barkhouse. When you enter the gallery you will notice a functioning coin-operated horse that represents the four horses of the apocalypse, and the biblical story predicting the end of the world. By approaching the topic from a child-like perspective, the artist takes away some of its weight.

She also considers the story as an outsider; there are no such end of the world stories in her native culture. Although this piece has been exhibited before in Ottawa, Barkhouse has reworked some of the elements to reflect local native history. The exhibition opens June 10 and Barkhouse will talk about her work that evening at the opening. The exhibition continues until July 17.

In addition, in several town buildings you may encounter sculptures by Métis artist David Hannan, who explores the complex relationships between humans, animals and nature. Inspired by taxidermy, he manipulates animal shapes into distorted, incomplete human/animal objects.

He also explores the contemporary conflict between the natural and the synthetic, reflecting on questions about his identity, his status as a member of the Métis nation, his experience of living in urban centres and his relationship with the natural world. Disturbing and intriguing, his works evoke curiosity and demand careful contemplation.

In celebration of National Aboriginal Day, Hannan will lead our Free Family Art Day on June 19, helping people of all ages to create their own work of art to take home. This month, as part of the festival, local native artist Dianne Green will present her paintings at the Lebovic Centre for Arts and Entertainment – Nineteen on the Park.

On July 7, Latcham Gallery proudly presents Tribe of One, a multi-arts, multicultural group of musicians, singers, native dancers and painters in a celebration of Canada Day and the wonderful diversity of our great country.

Maura Broadhurst is curator at the Latcham Gallery.

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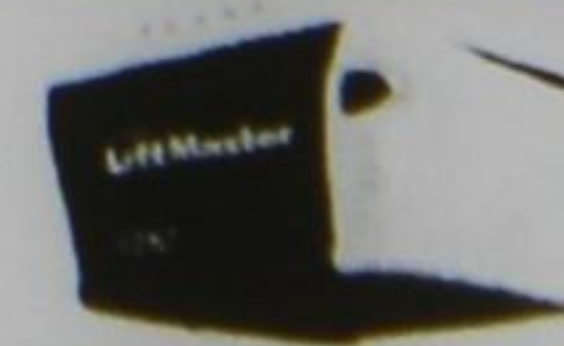
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