

Long-Time Resident Lives Life To The Fullest

By Kinjal Dagli Shah

A cardinal flew over my head as I walked into Melinda Lidster's spring garden.

"That means good luck," pointed out the 70-year-old cheerfully, as she set up some patio furniture on a deck surrounded by a colourful expanse of daffodils and tulips. Melinda is like that - full of tales and anecdotes about Stouffville, its people and her neighbours.

The 1220 house she lives in stands on one of the prettiest streets in Stouffville and, as she said, "This is the first and only home I have ever owned." Melinda lives with her husband Peter, and her 92-year-old mother, Valerie.

When you look at her mother, you can tell where Melinda gets her enthusiasm for life. Even with failing eyesight, Valerie is browsing through a magazine, looking at the pictures, if no longer able to read the text. "She used to read three to four books a month," said Melinda, proudly.

As Stouffvillites of 40 years, Melinda and Valerie are living testament to a town that has thrived on loyalty and camaraderie. "Mario on Main Street has been my hand dresser for over 40 years, and Mildred, who cleans my home, has been with me for as many decades," said Melinda.

"When I was in bed after a surgery recently, she told me I

was like a mother to her and she would never leave me. That's what this town is about. Stouffville is the home I've known forever."

On a recent weekend, Melinda celebrated 50 years in the nursing profession at a reunion with her classmates from St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto. Back then, she noted, women's career opportunities were much more limited. "In those days, you could really only become a teacher, a secretary or a nurse. But I've enjoyed my years in public health, and the reunion was amazing. To top it all, I ended up sharing a room with the same roommate I had back then," said the mother of Melissa, 45, and Jeremy, 30.

Life's little coincidences bring great joy to Melinda, who believes in living her life to the fullest. After her husband died in 1999, she was widowed for seven years before meeting up again with Peter, a former neighbour who had also lost his wife. "Peter had lived on the same street as me for 10 years! Who knew we would end up together?" she asked, her eyes wide with wonderment.

Melinda remarried at the age of 67, and she couldn't be happier. "Both my mother and godmother were present at the occasion, which made it so much more special. It's quite a joy to be married again," she said.

A stained glass window with an artistic representation of three tulips looks out onto the backyard. And Melinda has a tale behind that too. "I had that made when my husband died. The three tulips represent what remained - my two children and me."

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Melinda Lidster stands by the beautiful stained glass window in her historic Stouffville home.

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An impressive crowd turned out for the Food and Wine Festival at Ballantrae Golf and Country Club June 7. Ward 2 councillor Phil Bannon (left) organized the event, and he and Guy Carvelli of P & F Meats in Markham are seen cooking up a storm on the barbecue. Proceeds go to the Southlake Regional Cancer Care Hospital for a chemotherapy drug treatment refrigerator.



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