

Out in Write Field



Summertime And The Living Is Chilly

By Bruce Stapley
Stouffville Free Press

I don't like to complain. Well okay then, I do. That being said, when we got skunked by the weather earlier this summer on our annual family getaway to Sandbanks, the magnificent Caribbean-esque paradise in Prince Edward County which boasts the world's largest freshwater sand dune system, it was as if I was a little school kid who just had his summer holidays taken away from him.

Pout? There was no end to it. To anybody who would listen I was mewling, recounting the endless days of chilly October winds blowing right through us, white-capped waters that left our kayaks collecting cobwebs on the shore of West Lake, and cloud covers and rain that turned our lazy outdoor dinners, usually back-dropped by a spectacular setting sun, into dreary affairs in a cramped cottage dining room. I noticed while re-reading the newspaper on one particularly dismal day that the temperature was higher in Yellowknife than it was where we were.

When we did manage to summon up enough courage to brave the elements and head off to our beloved dunes, we were treated to a scene of devastation that had people actually lying on the beach in sleeping bags, while others walked along the dunes in jackets. Only children were to be found shivering in the water, splashing their siblings as they tried to hold them under as is their custom in summertime.

Upon our arrival at Sandbanks at the beginning of our eagerly anticipated holiday, as the last vestiges of the heat wave of the previous week were still playing themselves out, we had surmised that since we'd never been there in the off season - only during the long hot days of July - that "It's always summer at Sandbanks."

Alanis Morissette would never be able to appreciate such irony. Within days our newly-minted little truism had been smashed to well-chilled pieces. "Well, at least now we know what it would be like to come here for Thanksgiving," someone offered. "Yeah, but we'd probably get more sun in mid-October," I shot back in a tone that could only be described as acrid.

Wrapped in our fall coats, we tried taking the obligatory day trips to pass the time. Our first outing was to a cheese factory, hoping to get a glimpse of the stuff actually being made, processed, or whatever it is they do to create cheese, only to be told they do it all during the night shift.

Our kids are too young to take on the famous wine tours of Prince Edward County, so we settled for a few tours of the shops of Picton, always stopping off at Giant Tiger to pick up supplies. Lunch at Buddha Dogs, Picton's wonderful gourmet hot dog emporium, is a ritual usually saved for that one crummy day. But it was a daily consideration this time around. And somehow that famous home made ice cream at Slickers in Bloomfield doesn't taste anywhere near as good when the clouds and relentless winds make a lofty high of 17 degrees feel more like 7.

Almost as if to taunt us, the weather turned around for our final full day as we awoke to warm sunshine in a cloudless sky, with the water on the lake as smooth as glass. "At least I can now remember why we always liked it here so much," I offered dryly.

But the rain was back with a vengeance the following day as we packed to go. The owner of the rental cottage dropped by to say goodbye and to confirm that we would be back next year. "Oh and I hate to have to tell you but we've got to put the price up next year to help pay for the new septic system," she told us.

I was sure I could hear the whiny strains of Alanis Morissette coming from across the rain-swept white caps. Ironic indeed!

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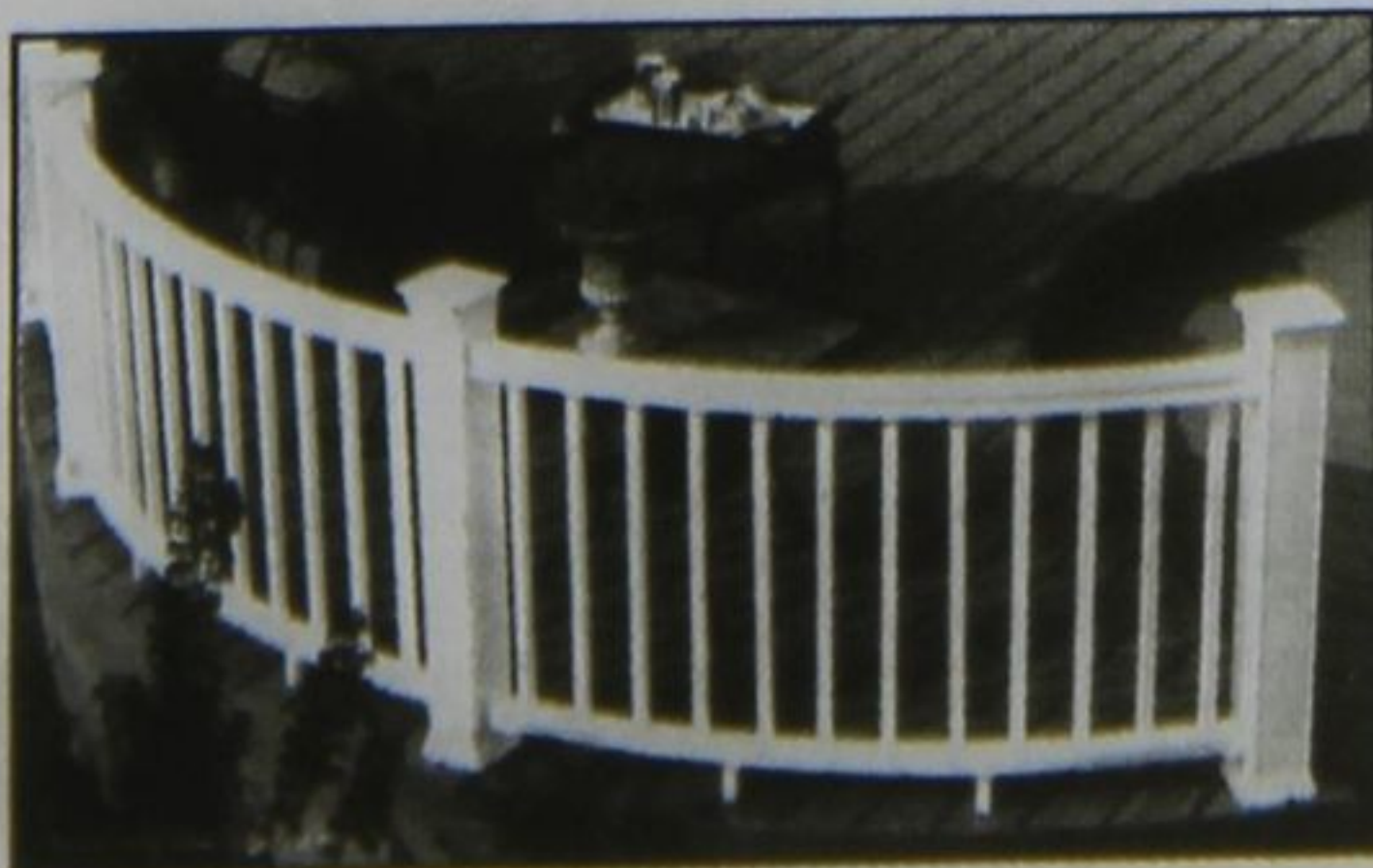


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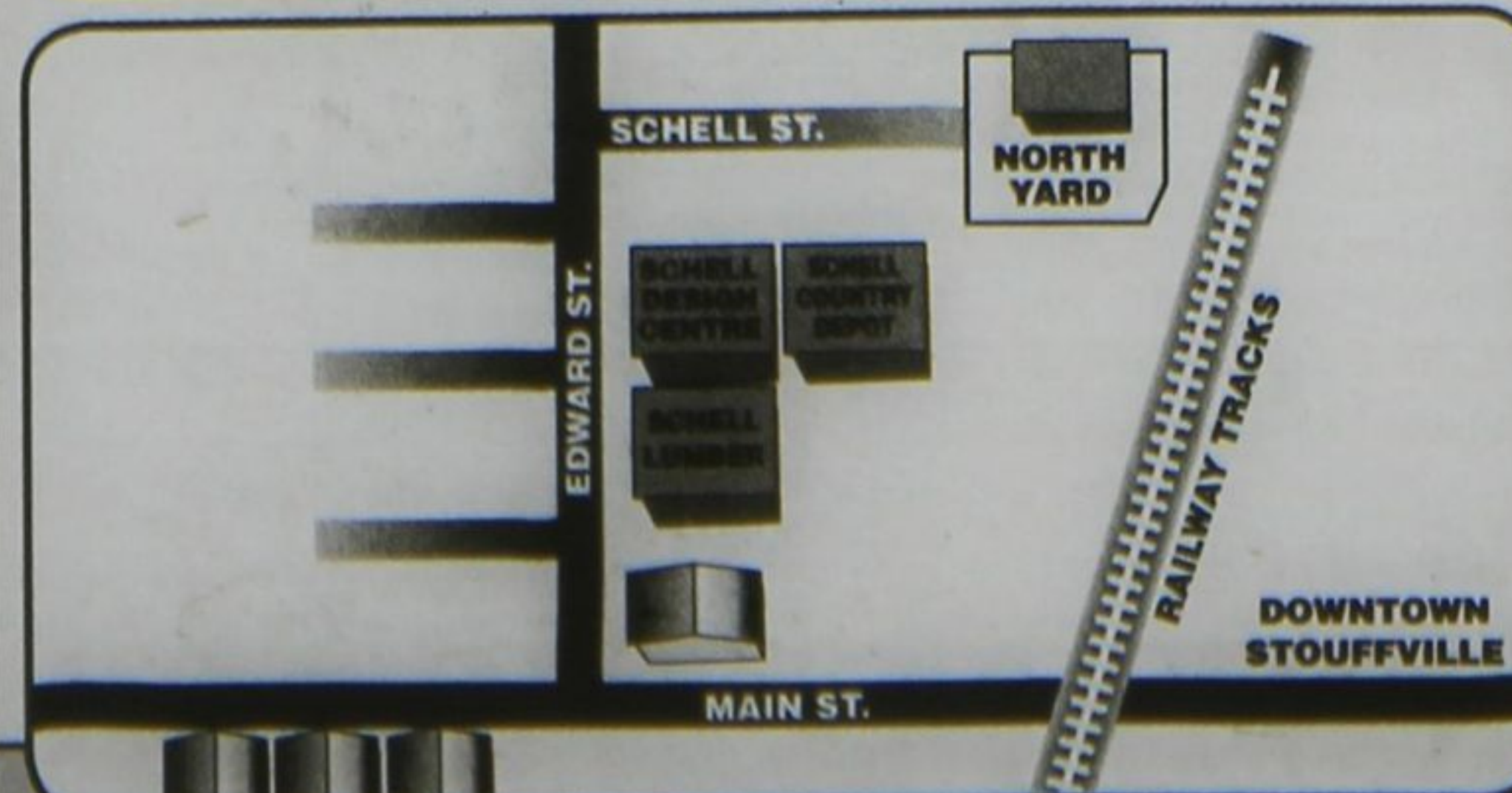
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