

Vintage Whine



A Universal Language

By Kate Gilderdale

By the time this column is in print, my son will have married his beautiful Turkish Canadian fiancée and Mr. Wallethead and I will be basking in the reflected glory of their joyful day.

One of the most wonderful aspects of life in Canada is the combination of different traditions and cultures through marriage. Isil has lived here for nine years, speaks excellent English and has become a Canadian citizen. Her parents, however, had never left Turkey until now and are not English speakers, although they have made great strides at learning new words since they arrived for the wedding.

Mr. Wallethead and I, alas, are showing no such proficiency in Turkish, although it's not for want of trying. I have a tin ear and a memory like a sieve, but with more holes. Every time we get together, Ibrahim patiently introduces a few new words, repeating them for my benefit in the hopes that one or two may eventually penetrate my rapidly diminishing brain cells.

Sometimes I manage to retain the words, but not the meaning. Other times I mangle them horribly, although our lovely extended Turkish family is far too polite to point this out. The other day I tried to tell Yasemin that she was very beautiful, but somehow managed to convey the opposite by substituting 'not' for 'very'. Luckily a well-developed sense of humour can transcend any language barrier, and Isil's parents were both amused by and sympathetic to my puny efforts at communication.

When they first arrived, we invited them to Chateau Gilderdale for dinner. I had bought a dictionary, and my daughter, Clare, a far better student of Turkish than me, wrote down some common words along with the

English translation to help me struggle through. Now I can say hello, goodbye, welcome, thank you, yes, no, hair and 'Health to your hands', a delightful phrase which means 'Thanks for cooking'. It's not exactly an extensive vocabulary, but it's a start.

The next time we met, the Gilderdale contingent was preparing to go to another wedding, at which Mr. Wallethead, all decked out in a tuxedo, was to be best man. Ibrahim took one look at my husband, gave a wide grin and pronounced his verdict on the overall effect: "James Bond." As far as Mr. Wallethead is concerned, he and Isil's father are now best friends forever.

The weekend before the wedding, one of our friends treated us to a Turkish concert at Trinity St. Paul's Centre in Toronto along with Isil and her family. Not only was the music wonderful, but the exuberance with which it was performed made it impossible not to clap your hands and tap your feet. It was in stark contrast to classical concerts I have attended, where hushed reverence is the order of the day, and unwrapping a candy or coughing are capital offences.

As Clare pointed out, the evening was another example of this country's amazing openness to different cultures. The Turkish community in Toronto is not big, but it is vibrant. We were probably the only people in the audience who didn't speak the language, but we were made to feel doubly welcome by all those around us who were delighted to share their joyful evening and their beautiful music with us.

To Isil's lovely parents on their first visit to Canada, *Hosgeldiniz*. And to Malcolm and Isil, as they start their journey through life together, *Tebrikler*.

Readers Write

Retaining A Sense Of Community

To Kinjal Dagli-Shah:

I am a volunteer and former political representative in town and would like to welcome you and thank you for the candid article you wrote in the *Stouffville Free Press*.

I have made a conscious effort to meet my new neighbours. You see I was born in Whitchurch-Stouffville in a little hospital called Briar Bush which no longer exists but

used to be where Spring St. is, off Main St. at the east end of town. If you ever want any assistance or information, I want to let you know we are here for you.

Your article was very insightful and it's comforting to know that the community feel is not lost in all the recent changes. I look forward to your next article!

Sue Sherban • Stouffville

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Historic Photo

Stouffville Superheroes

On a misty Halloween night a couple of decades ago, two local trick or treaters prepare to infiltrate small buildings at a single bound.



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