

## Stumbling through Stouffville



Bruce Stapley

### Late innings as good as ever

What a difference a couple of years make. I returned to the diamond this spring for the first time in two years to rejoin the softball team of my youth. By youth, I'm talking 30 my rookie season with coach Jim Brazier's Stouffville Monday Night Men's Lob Pitch League squad. It was 1979 that I dusted off the ball glove that had seen me through my teen years and trotted out on the field like an eager kid with this decidedly rag-tag bunch.

Over a quarter of a century later, the team still includes a half-dozen or so originals from the late 1970s and early '80s. Mercifully, however, attrition has led to the addition of some actual youngsters in recent years, kids in their late-twenties to mid-thirties who can still throw the ball with authority and don't have to strap on knee braces before taking to the field.

But it was only upon surveying this mix of graybeards, forty-somethings and the aforementioned wonderkids that it hit me just how far past our best-before-dates we third-decade players had become.

#### WE OLD CLUNKERS WEREN'T THE MEN WE ONCE WERE

Standing around, renewing old acquaintances with my fellow veterans before my first game, the subject of expanded waistlines came up. This led to a you-show-me-yours-and-I'll-show-you-mine exchange as, one by one, the old boys pulled up their jerseys to reveal their respective spreading middles.

This was followed by an update of whose marriages had dissolved since our last meeting. One of the guys evoked breathless oohs and aahs when he offered how he and his wife had celebrated their 30th anniversary this year. To which I promptly replied, "I've been married 30 years. It's just been to two different women."

When the game finally got underway, I realized, as the late Howard Cosell tried to tell Muhammad Ali when he stayed too long in the boxing ring, that we old clunkers weren't the men we once were. While the kids made their bullet throws from the outfield and slugged the ball deep into the distant night sky, we wobbly-legged journeymen spent most of the game lining up our designated runners and vying for the easy positions.

Standing in my rover position behind second base, I wistfully recalled that night in the mid-1980s when I had run flat out, dove and snagged a sinking line drive off the bat of Stouffville's own Keith Acton. Of course, I also remembered how Keith, then at the peak of his NHL career, hit the ball so far over my head in centre field in his next at-bat it still hasn't come back down to Earth.

When the game ended, I was reassured to discover at least one thing hadn't changed. The beer and chicken wings at the local watering hole still tasted as good as they had in years gone by.

After all, there's more to consistency than can be measured by hits, runs and errors.

Bruce Stapley is the ad executive for Whitchurch-Stouffville Living.

# Coptic Church brings congregation to Main Street

BY CONRAD BOYCE

One of Christianity's most ancient denominations has newly come to Stouffville. And many of its congregation will soon follow.

The Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate of Saint Bishoy, consisting of almost 300 families, bought the Missionary Church on Main Street in October 2004 after that congregation built a new facility; Eastridge, on the Tenth Line.

This month, in conjunction with Saint Bishoy's annual feast day in mid-July, the Coptic congregation is celebrating its arrival in Stouffville by inviting its new neighbours to a week-long series of events.

"The Coptic Church was founded in Egypt by the apostle Saint Mark very soon after the life of Christ," says Father Jeremiah, who, along with Father Tadros, leads the local Coptic congregation.

"We endured persecution for many centuries, first from the followers of the old Egyptian gods, then from the Romans and Arabs," he says. "But we survived and now there are 17 million in the Coptic Church around the world, and our Pope is still based in Cairo."

Although the first Coptic church was not founded in Canada until in 1968, there are now 25 congregations across the country, with a population of almost 80,000.

"We are a very traditional church," says Father Tadros, "with many sacraments and old rituals. Our services are conducted in three languages: English, Arabic and Coptic, which is an ancient Egyptian language."

Like most of the Coptic leadership and a great majority of its congregation, Fathers Jeremiah and Tadros are of Egyptian heritage, though Jeremiah went to

university here in Canada.

Now that the congregation of Saint Bishoy, who was a third-century monk, is established here in Stouffville, many of its congregation are expected to re-settle here.

"This building was perfect for us," says Father Jeremiah, "and, we think, so is this community. Our people like to be close to their

church, so many of us will make this our home."

During the feast of Bishoy, the church will have displays about Coptic history, meals of Egyptian food and many other events.

"Stouffville has welcomed us," the priests say, "and we want to welcome you in return. Please join us."

## Golf course chef wins EatSmart award



PHOTO BY CONRAD BOYCE

Warren Alley, executive chef at Emerald Hills Golf Club on Warden Road north of Bloomington, poses in front of the club's 18th green with his signature dish, a delicious farfalle pasta creation with grilled chicken, sun-dried tomatoes and a rosemary cream sauce. Emerald Hills was recently named one of six local winners of the York Region Health Services EatSmart award, recognizing healthy menu choices and excellent culinary quality. Warren, a graduate of Toronto's George Brown college, says his job satisfaction is in watching people enjoy his food and invites all our readers to enjoy the excellent cuisine and golf at Emerald Hills.

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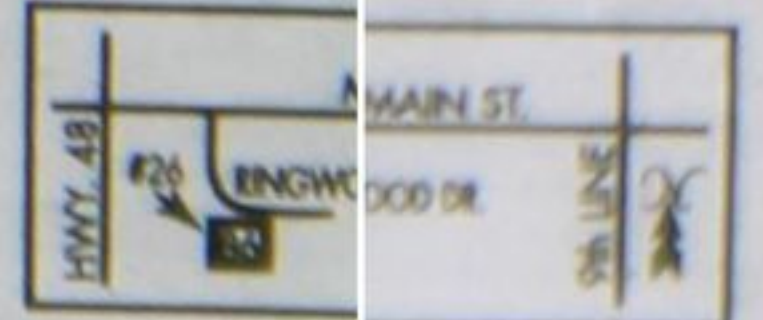
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