

OPINION

LETTERS POLICY

All submissions must be less than 400 words and include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The Sun-Tribune reserves the right to publish or not publish and to edit for clarity and space. E-mail jmason@yrmg.com

COLUMNS

What's in a name? Plenty, we hope, Stouffville

I hope students at Harry Bowes Public School ask about the namesake of their school in north-east Stouffville.

On the south side of the former village, I trust someone moving onto Ken Laushway Avenue wonders who the heck the guy in their street address is and does a little homework. Or at the very least, they plunk his name into Google.

(For the record, Bowes was a public school trustee/board chair, Main Street pharmacist and minor hockey volunteer. Laushway was the last reeve of Stouffville and the first mayor of Whitchurch-Stouffville. I had the pleasure of knowing both gentlemen.)

Count me in as a big fan of the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville's policy of naming streets after prominent residents.

Better to honour the memory of a dedicated volunteer or politician than the child of a developer or someone who did a politician a favour. Trust me, it's happened.

I hope the same logic prevails at the York Region District School Board. A campaign was launched last year to have a school being constructed in southeast Stouffville named after Lorne Boadway.

Boadway was principal of Summitview Public School for 31 years. He was named Whitchurch-Stouffville's citizen of the year in 1987, the year he retired from the Main Street school. His work in Stouffville stretched well beyond the school halls, especially musically.

Should the new school, on Hoover Park Drive east of Tenth Line, be graced with his name, Boadway won't be able to experience it the way an overjoyed Bowes did when his school opened in 2008.

Boadway died three years ago.

Still, the honour should be bestowed.



Off The Top

with *Jim Mason*

In the name of Jim

Speaking of honours, the dude to the right has many. Enough to easily fill his 'Room of Memories' as he calls the Jim Thomas Hall of Fame in the family home on Rupert Avenue.

Jim Thomas has been a journalist in Stouffville since 1950. He's also given back to a ton of worthy causes and organized several events on his own during those years.

He's a former citizen of the year and a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal. He was the subject of a roast in the late 1980s.

His latest volunteering venture is at Parkview Home for Seniors. (He writes about his work there this week.)

The family council at the Weldon Road facility is recognizing Thomas' work with a concert in his honour next month. Fittingly, the money they raise funds music programming at the home.

The renowned Men of Note will provide the music. The show goes Feb. 5 at 7:30 p.m. in the auditorium of neighbouring Parkview Village on Ninth Line.

Tickets are \$15 from Parkview Home or Village.

Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune. Follow him on Twitter @stouffeditor

Rising to the occasion

I don't profess to be a pastor. Despite the fact the late Eldred King, former mayor of Whitchurch-Stouffville, once recommended I don a clerical collar, that profession was the farthest thing from my mind. And still is.

However, once a year, during our minister's annual vacation, I and others, willingly step up to the pulpit and attempt to fill the reverend's shoes. Inadequate as I may be, no one in the congregation has yet departed the sanctuary in protest. In all likelihood, I'll probably accept the same responsibility this summer. Appropriate or not, it's a challenging but rewarding experience.

Associated with this, I've served for the past 11 months in the role of a twice-weekly volunteer at Stouffville's Parkview Home.

Every Sunday afternoon and Wednesday evening I lend a helping hand in bringing wheelchair residents from three floors to Founders' Hall where worship services are conducted. In addition to this unpretentious task, I also assist in looking up hymn numbers for those who find this undertaking difficult. Again, not an onerous duty.

On Sunday, Jan. 10, I nervously accepted an added responsibility, that of a minister. The circumstance occurred when the assigned pastor, for whatever reason, could not attend. These situations occur from time to time. With the hall close to capacity, a cancellation was out of the question. So the attending staff member did the next best thing. She endeavoured to fill the ministerial vacuum with a hymn-sing. But I could see signs of frustration in her face. That's when I offered



Roaming Around

with *Jim Thomas*

my services.

"I've nothing on paper," I said, "but if a brief message is needed, maybe I can help." She breathed a sigh of relief.

Despite the fact I was ill-prepared, all went well. The congregation sat in rapt attention as I attempted to explain to them the role of a volunteer. They even applauded at the conclusion, perhaps, I thought later, because the message lasted less than 10 minutes.

Little did they know, or did I know, the highlight of the afternoon was still to come. Without prior notice, I requested Pat Bissell, mother of former EastRidge Stouffville pastor Scott Bissell, to provide piano accompaniment for the concluding hymn. I also suggested the selection, His Eye is on the Sparrow, appreciating the fact it has long been her personal favourite.

What followed was a dual presentation the like of which I'd never heard and will likely never hear again. Her penetrating voice shook the rafters and her keyboard articulation sent shivers up and down my spine. I wished it to never end.

So there I was, on an ordinary Sunday afternoon, experiencing a talent I'd heard about but never

heard. It was a service of worship I'll never forget.

106 years young

On Jan. 31, Parkview Home resident Marjorie Gayman will observe her 106th birthday.

Born in Almira, Marjorie and husband Ben moved to Unionville following marriage where they raised their family—son Lawrence, (Neb), now of Uxbridge and daughter Marie (Graham), of Aurora. She has five grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. Congratulations!

Compassion exemplified

Karen (Kennedy) Burnett, formerly of Stouffville and now of Oshawa, submitted the following letter, a portion of which is included in this week's column. It reads:

"When Ryan and I had to make the decision to 'put down' our beloved cat 'Stewy', we were crushed. Living in Oshawa, we knew of several vet clinics where he could be taken. Unfortunately, the only information we could gain related to costs and long waits for appointments. Since 'Stewy' was 15 years old we'd already made the decision. But no one wished to listen. It was then I remembered the Stouffville Veterinary Clinic. When we arrived, we were met by a very understanding receptionist. Minutes later we were greeted by Dr. Smith. She gave us the support we needed. She also provided us time to say goodbye. Within three days we received a condolence card. It warmed our hearts to know they would think so passionate of us during our time of grief."

Jim Thomas is a Stouffville resident who has written for area newspapers for more than 65 years.