

Stouffville
Sun-Tribune

COLUMNS

Are you really celebrating our holidays officially?

How was your long weekend, Whitchurch-Stouffville?

Did you lap up three or four days worth? Or was it really five, if you could throw in last Thursday's snow day?

And how much Easter was really in your Easter break?

According to the last census (2011), about two-thirds of we Whitchurch-Stouffvillians are or were Christian.

By checking that box on the census form, I'll then assume most know about the cross, the big rock – and that The Last Supper isn't just a big painting hanging in Italy.

Yet, I wonder how many thousands of us don't actually mark Easter as *Easter*?

I'm afraid it's just another break from the work and school routine. Another chance to get together with family and friends, hopefully over a large spread and beverages of your choice.

Not that there's anything wrong with that. I'll vote for more time off, says the guy who was writing much of this on Monday, while his friends who work in banking, municipal government or the education system were waking up late and walking around in their pyjamas before enjoying an afternoon siesta.

Not bitter. Honest. In a commuter town, where folks board the GO train or get behind the wheel at ungodly early-morning hours and return long after dark every day, family time is precious and precarious.

But if someone could fill me in on the significance, religious or otherwise, of Easter Monday as a holiday it would be appreciated.

It's really not fair to pick on just Easter, is it?

How many folks really take part in union-related activities during the Labour Day weekend — unless going to The Ex or buying schools supplies



Off The Top

with *Jim Mason*

from people who are working for the minimum wage count.

How many of us could identify Queen Victoria in a police lineup? Yet, we unofficially welcome summer in these parts by lighting fire-crackers in her name every May.

The August long weekend. Is it the Civic Holiday or Lord Simcoe Day? Does anybody care?

Canada Day gets it.

Family Day is OK, too. Thank you, Dalton McGuinty.

Thanksgiving is all about food. If we can take a moment to be grateful for said eats, I'm cool with it.

Christmas? See Easter.

If we agree to keep all of these days off, let's look at renaming the boring and the dated.

Terry Fox deserves a national holiday over anybody else in this country. (If Terry was American, your know there would be an annual four-day extravaganza in his name south of the border. We're too modest.)

So do our First Nations communities, the folks who were here first, way before that Confederation thing we celebrate so gleefully every Dec. 1.

Any other deserving nominations, Whitchurch-Stouffville?

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

St. Mark's celebrating 50th

It was a vision that became a reality; an ambition that became an achievement.

It was a structural creation 50 years ago. It's an educational inspiration today.

On June 15, 1966, thirty-nine families welcomed the proposal with prayer. At 7 p.m., April 25, 2016, many will applaud the project with praise. For good reason.

Stouffville's St. Mark Catholic School will celebrate a half-century of service to this community. All former staff, students and trustees are invited.

Looking back, board member Dr. Terry O'Connor recalls discussions concerning a new Catholic school in Stouffville began circulating among people attending an organization called St. Jude's Club. From there it was further discussed within St. Patrick's parish in Markham.

Initially, a site fronting on Hwy. 47 was the trustees' choice. This was later changed to a five-acre property with access from Elm Road.

"They, (St. Patrick's), were a tremendous help," says Terry. A ratepayers meeting held later in Stouffville's Royal Canadian Legion accorded the proposal whole-hearted support. However, a report completed by town assessor Lloyd Turner showed only 106 children would initially attend.

"We were hoping for 300 students," remembers Terry. "We soon reached that number," he added, "filling five classrooms and a portable."

While the school's completion was scheduled for the fall of '65, a shortage of materials delayed construction, O'Connor said. At this point, an arrangement was made with the Legion and the Masonic Lodge to utilize



Roaming Around

with *Jim Thomas*

their buildings.

"Both organizations helped us greatly," O'Connor recalls. Two buses, owned and operated by Albert and Roy Heise, transported students to Stouffville from a wide area. In addition to Terry O'Connor, other board members at the time included: Dr. Denis O'Connor, chair; Jack McDermott, vice-chair; Bill Kamps, treasurer; Robert Carey and Don Gibson. Joan Kamps later served as board secretary.

"Joan was a key to our success," says Terry. "She did almost everything," adds wife Colleen.

For several months, Terry volunteered as the school's janitor with a workplace in the boiler room. The board met in a rear portable; the gym was half its present size and the first principal, Jack Condon, taught half-time. His salary was in the range of \$3,600 to \$4,600.

Guest speaker at the official dedication was Msgr. W.S. Carville of Augustine's Seminary, Toronto and former priest at St. Patrick's. Other platform invitees included reeve Ken Laushway, Stouffville; reeve Ross Farquharson, Whitchurch; reeve Stewart Rumble, Markham; principal William Duxbury, Stouffville District High School; principal Lorne Boadway, Summitview Public School and

principal Keith Sutherland, Orchard Park Public School.

It was during the ceremony that board vice-chairman McDermott quipped: "It's a little bit shocking to be opening a school when there is no school."

The \$170,000 building wasn't ready for occupancy until several months later. It would be described as "the most significant design of any school in the area'.

Even back then, the trustees had the foresight to plan an addition. This occurred in 1991. The present enrollment stands at 378 with a staff of 35 headed by principal Derm Fitzpatrick. French immersion will be added in September.

Carol Hainschwang, a St. Mark teacher back in the early '80s, was affectionately known as "Mrs. Mom" to her kindergarten kids. But to son Brad, a pupil in the class, she was just plain "Mom".

Vibrant at age 70, this mother of three and grandmother of five clearly recalls her job interview by the principal in a portable at the rear of the school. She retired in 2011.

Staff teacher Susan Whitebread, now instructing a second student generation, is a member of the school anniversary committee along with Lisa Lauriault, Silvia Chin and Souraya Chab Majdalani assisted by parents Andrea Doufexis, Deborah Civello and Nada Francelli.

The program will include two choirs; a glee club and a Grade 4 dance group. Students from grades 7 and 8 will serve as a welcoming committee.

Susan, a teacher and extra-curricular choir director since 1999, will regretfully retire at the end of June.

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

905-640-2612
Fax: 905-640-8778
Class: 1-800-743-3353
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Mike Banville

Editor
Jim Mason
jmason@yrmg.com

Advertising Manager
Mara Sepe
msepe@yrmg.com

**Circulation
Co-ordinator**
Daphne Lawrie
dlawrie@yrmg.com

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