

## COLUMNS

### Main St. hasn't been the same without these two

**D**owntown Stouffville is short a couple more characters. Pioneers, if you will.

In a world packed with strip malls and power centres that appear nearly identical from town to town, we need more people like John Lord and Ted Topping.

Rest their souls.

Mr. Lord died May 11 – “not as I can assure you from choice” his obituary read. That was classic John Lord.

He was 76.

John operated the book store that carried his name on the north side of Main Street, just west of Park Drive, from 1974-2001.

That's an eternity in the world of small business, especially the book business. The storefront is now home to a mosque in rapidly transforming Stouffville.

But the store lived on in a largely online version in his home, on the Tenth Line north of Bloomington Road.

That was the downtown core's loss.

Because the Main Street location was as much a community drop-in as it was a retail outlet. It was home to book signings, community events that drew fans of the particular genres to Stouffville from all over the place.

Locals would just pop in to talk local politics or the latest in downtown gossip.

And John would hold court as only he could from his perch behind the counter, firing off a seemingly endless flurry of pithy comments – some you wouldn't understand until you were half way home.

It was outstanding theatre. The death notice for a guy who bought and sold millions of sentences in his lifetime was a mere 103 words long.

When the Stouffville Chamber of Commerce honoured its founders with a wonderful presentation at the



### Off The Top

with *Jim Mason*

Royal Canadian Legion last fall, John was in the group of honourees.

Ted Topping had a most eventful life, including enjoying the best of both worlds during his 92 years on the planet.

He owned Ted's Men's Wear and The Marguerite Shoppe for women, Main Street go-to clothing stores in downtown Stouffville back in the day.

In the bigger business of national retailing, he held senior roles with the Grafton Group, which owned the Jack Fraser chain.

No wonder Ted, who retired to the Ballantrae Golf and Country Club, always dressed so well.

He also co-owned The Park Theatre, which is now Nineteen On The Park.

If that wasn't enough, he was an NHL linesman who worked Toronto Maple Leaf games at fabled Maple Leaf Gardens during his free time.

More? The Toronto native joined the RCAF as a teenager and piloted the famous Lancaster Bombers during the Second World War.

No wonder he had so many great stories to share.

Rest in peace, gentlemen. We are better for having known you. Main Street misses you both.

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

## Growing concern a 'waist'

**I**'m a weight-watcher. And I dislike what I see. So much so I'm tempted to join the Stouffville Weight Watchers group that meets every Saturday at St. James Presbyterian Church. Or maybe TOPS, an organization that convenes Monday mornings at the same site.

While seemingly more for ladies, the leaders might lower the bar just a little to squeeze in one introverted male. Maybe.

To be honest I've tried. On the excuse of putting up a poster, I once invaded the feminine fatale league of Curves when it functioned on Main Street in downtown Stouffville.

But obvious gazes of impatience prompted me to exit faster than I entered. Why? Because their mode of exercise apparel was not in keeping with what I was wearing, or would dare to wear. Even in an age of sexual equality, one needs to draw the line.

In my teen years I was but a small fry, tipping the scales at a mere 125 pounds. However, high school classmates never made my insipid physique a point of boorish jokes due to the fact most males my age were much the same.

It was no secret though, that those boasting chest dimensions of a then modern-day Charles Atlas, were the ones who attracted all the attention, especially from girls. I and others like me were proverbial wall-flowers.

But 57 years of marriage plus fantastic home cooking has changed all that. The last time I stepped on a scale, the hour hand registered a whopping 195, a gain of 70 pounds since my courting days.

Unacceptable!

To be forewarned is, for me, to be alarmed. Last year when I visited Markville



### Roaming Around

with *Jim Thomas*

Shopping Centre to purchase my 'lay-away suit', a staff advisor questioned my waist size. "Twenty-eight inches," I replied with certainty. "I think not," he answered.

*But 57 years of*

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*home cooking has*

*changed all that.*

The tale of his tape proved me wrong. I'd expanded to a 42. Again, unacceptable!

So what's gone wrong? I don't visit McDonald's and chow-down on double cheeseburgers nor do I feast continually on chocolate donuts at Tim's. I'm very careful about what I consume.

Also, to reverse all normal consumption, I exercise daily and walk long distances weekly. The consequences still remain depressing.

Regardless, I refuse to give up. My weight reduction goal is 165, a drop of 30 pounds. When I reach this objective I'll celebrate the occasion with an old-tyme square dance on Rupert Avenue at which time I'm hoping to lose 30 pounds more.

### Knock, knock

The knock was a shock. What can be more disturbing than a telephone call in the middle of the night? It's something we've all experienced. Not only can it awaken one from a deep sleep, but conjure up all forms of fears, the majority, thankfully, false.

I've suffered through these occurrences many times, sky-rocketing the imagination process to the moon. A close family relative or friend has suddenly died; a son has been seriously injured in a motor vehicle accident; one's life-savings have been embezzled by a fraudulent investor and so on. Dreams can rapidly turn into nightmares.

A knock on the door at an ungodly hour can also create a similar mindset. Should I answer it or ignore it? Is it a neighbour or a nemesis? What should I do, call 911 or grab a baseball bat? Maybe both.

Something similar but less serious occurred at 381 Rupert Ave. last week.

It was 6:40 in the morning. I'd risen earlier than usual, wishing to purchase a coffee before motoring over to Millard St./Glad Park Ave. school crosswalk site.

That's when the doorbell rang. When no one responded, the ring was followed by a gentle tap.

"I'll get it," I said to my wife, Jean, who was partly in bed and partly out, "probably the newspaper delivery driver." It wasn't. Instead, there stood a police officer. My heart sank.

"What have I done?" I asked myself.

Thankfully nothing. She had the wrong address. Following a "sorry", she left. So did I – back to bed.

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