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COLUMNS

Thanks for the memories, Whitchurch-Stouffville

But I've seen it all in a small town
Had myself a ball in a small town

— John Mellencamp



Off The Top
with Jim Mason

The end.
This is my final column for the Stouffville Sun-Tribune.

Try and hold the applause. I won't let the door hit me on the way out.

After 34 years as editor of this newspaper, I'm packing it in at the end of September. Early and voluntary retirement, as they say.

Very early, as I put it.

Almost to this day in the fall of 1982, I was offered this job – not knowing where Stouffville was or how to pronounce it. The GTA stopped at Steeles Avenue, or so I thought.

But I was out of work, with bills for an upcoming wedding piling up and a rusting hulk of a 1977 LeMans on its last legs. I needed the cash.

And who could turn down the chance to help launch a new newspaper? It would be an adventure to embrace.

Not wanting an even spot-tier resume, I said I'd stay two years minimum.

Apologies for the slight overstay.

All thanks to you. From Day 1 – back when this truly was a Mellencampian small town (Population: 12,500 read the signs) – this has been a well-comming community.

Officially. One of the first stories I wrote was on Whitchurch-Stouffville being named one of Ontario's friendliest municipalities in a university study.

You've shared your celebrations, your grief and everything in between with us.

The death of too many young people in car crashes haunt all of us who lived here near the end of the 20th century. Those losses shook this place to its core.

Hockey championships had the polar opposite effect.

There have been some per-

sonally cool moments here in the land east of the 404.

A couple of prime ministers and premiers dropped by. Hockey great ones Bobby Orr and Connor McDavid. Jack Nicklaus, too. Paul Henderson. Roberto Alomar. Don Cherry. Almost all of Canadian hero Terry Fox's immediate family.

One of my favourite actors, Christopher Walken, and the late great Levon Helm of The Band.

The downside? A small town can be a fish bowl for people in the public eye. From the produce aisle at Metro to any aisle at church, I've been asked why we did or did not publish a story, how much a classified ad costs, why someone's newspaper wasn't delivered

It goes with the territory.

Our family grew from two to five in this small town. We moved three times. Made plenty of friends and memories along the route.

The three kids left the 905 for the 416 a few years ago but still call this place home.

Me?

You won't see this ugly mug in this corner ever again but I'm not leaving town.

It's home.

See you around, Stouffville. Thanks for the memories. On to the next adventure.

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

Weekend not for the weak

Oh what a weekend! There was so much happening I'm still out of breath.

While appreciating the fact September's a busy month, it's regrettable so many important events should clash on equivalent dates. The conflict of assignments kept me on the run. In future, as collapse prevention, I'll be tempted to attach an oxygen tank to my age-old CCM.

Unfortunately for many, Motorfest, Stouffville's classic car show, had to be deferred due to wet weather. It's re-scheduled for this Saturday from 9:30 a.m., to 4 p.m., at Teva, 5691 Main St. The event committee, Paul Parsons, Tim Soukup, Vince Signorello, Lois Irwin and Ed Hakonson obviously had their collective ears tuned to CTV's climate prognosticator Tom Brown last Thursday, hence the decision. A wise move. Through a website and hundreds of emails, the annulment was carried across Ontario so no show persons made the trip in vain.

MotorFest, now in its 18th year, is sponsored by EastRidge Evangelical Missionary Church and annually attracts up to 1,000 classic cars and trucks. To date, more than \$150,000 has been raised with all donations going to support the Aurora branch of Teen Challenge. This organization offers clientele, 18 years and over, freedom from drug and alcohol dependence. Show admission is free.

Classic event

Whitchurch-Stouffville's Terry Fox Run has become a community classic. And Sunday's event sustained this recognition with a repeat performance.

During a three-hour period, more than 1,000



Roaming Around
with Jim Thomas

men, women and children traveled the two and five-kilometre routes raising close to \$100,000. This figure is separate from money earned later this month by students of local schools.

"I had an extremely supportive committee," says chairperson Stacey FitzPatrick. "We'll be back in full force next year." The revised route, she said, worked well, resulting in many positive comments. She hopes to maintain the same course in 2017.

FitzPatrick, a successor to Sandy Schell-Kennedy, first became involved in the Terry Fox marathon while residing in the Niagara area. For good reason. Her father was a cancer survivor. She gained further experience as a member of the Stouffville run committee last year.

While walkers and runners dominated, many rode bicycles or traveled via roller blades and skateboards. A woman in her 70s chose to walk the 2K route – on two canes.

Health Minister Jane Philpott, accompanied by husband and daughter, were enthusiastically applauded. MPP Dr. Helene Jaczek had a booth on the grounds from where she distributed energy bars.

The most incredible display included two photos, one of Bob McNeil, described as "Stouffville's

Mr. Hockey" and another arranged by Bob and photographed by NHL greats including Wayne Gretzky, Gordie Howe, Mario Lemieux, Frank Mahovlich and Keith Acton.

McNeil requested and received a surgical postponement so he could participate in one more run. It was his last.

Super seniors

September is Seniors' Month. Sunday was Seniors' Day. The occasion, hosted by Mayor Justin Altmann and wife Jenny, was held at the Altmann family farm on Bethesda Road. The event was largely attended.

A highlight of the barbecue and corn roast was the presentation of framed plaques honouring seniors' groups and individuals for contributions to the community. Recipients included: Stouffville Branch 459, Royal Canadian Legion; Stouffville Lions Club; Whitchurch-Stouffville Food Bank; Stouffville Horticultural Society; 55-Plus Club; Golden Age Club; Stouffville Lawn Bowling Club; Stouffville crossing guards; former councillors Margot Marshall, Jim Rae, Wilf Morley and Cliff Dunkeld; Bruce and Bunny Burton; Ivan Harris and Ron and Margaret Brownsberger.

All will be featured on 16,000 town calendars.

A \$5,000 cheque from the Mayor's Community Fund was presented to Diane Ward and Wilf Morley. This will go towards the purchase of an accessible washroom to be used at sites including Stouffville Memorial Park, Markham Fair and elsewhere across York Region. The amount raised currently stands at \$86,000.

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

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