

# Pilkey weaves magic again at Missionary Church

For the past 50 years, Doris Pilkey, formerly of Stouffville, has been directing outstanding Christmas musicals at Markham's Missionary Church where she regularly presides at the organ.

On Dec. 3 and 4 at 3 p.m., she'll again wave her magic wand before passionate audiences expected to fill the sanctuary.

The church's location is 17th Avenue, Markham, between Hwy. 48 and McCowan Road.

This event, like most, started in a small way at a former Missionary church in North Markham, (Mt. Joy).

"We only had one spotlight; a few candles and a small cast," recalls Doris, "it's grown considerably since then."

Only seeing is believing.

There are 20 on the production staff; 52 on support staff; 21 perform-



**JIM THOMAS**  
Columnist

ers; a choir of 45 and a full orchestra comprising Nancy Slade, (piano); Doug Groat, (organ); Heather Seville, (keyboard); Janice DeRoy, (trumpet); Roger Zhang, (violin); Josh Maffel and Matt Peter, (saxophones).

In addition to serving as director, Doris is also the script-writer. Judith Goding, now of Kitchener, wrote the initial two. The pageant's entitled 'Heaven's Child'.

Doris Steckley is a native of Whitchurch, one of four girls in the family of Norman and Nettie Steckley. She attended

Hillcrest Public School on Kennedy Road and later Stouffville High.

Following graduation, she enrolled at Toronto Normal School, (Teachers College).

Her successful teaching career spanned more than 40 years including a lengthy period as a school librarian and a teacher training specialist at the University of Toronto.

It was back in grade 2 at Hillcrest that Doris made an early career decision. "Classmate Louise Clarke and I would sit under an old oak tree and help children in grade 1," she remembers. "From that point on I never considered any other occupation - teaching was it."

Ms. Clarke, now of Aurora, entered the same profession at the same time.

Doris's classroom demeanor didn't go unnoticed. In 1971 she was awarded the Queen's Sil-

ver Jubilee Medal and later received North York's coveted Claude Watson Outstanding Teacher Award.

The church has always played a significant role in her life. As a member in the congregation of Second Markham Baptist, now Springvale, she played both the piano and organ. In 1963, she and husband Eric were married there.

It was under the guidance of Stouffville's Bertha Stouffer that Doris gained her grade 8 piano and grade 2 theory. She also played the vibraphone and sang in the Youth for Christ choir. Later, she directed the 'Melody Makers', a Markham female barbershop chorus.

The pageant's planning begins in April, explains Doris. Following a summer break, work proceeds in earnest.

While the spectacle has many highlights, the

entrance of a live donkey carrying a stand-in Mary and baby Jesus is always certain to capture audience endearment. The excitement can also cause 'Kramer', the donkey, to activate a sudden kidney/bowel movement much to the displeasure of its guide.

"One time a few people in the front row had their shoes soaked," recalls Doris. "An accident is always a possibility." To minimize this, husband Eric walks close by with a mop and pail.

There's no admission charge or advance ticket sales. Monetary donations will be accepted, however, with all receipts divided between Markham's "Street Connection" and Whitchurch-Stouffville's accessible mobile trailer fund. Mayor Justin Altmann and wife Jenny plan to attend both performances in support of the venture. So also will

trailer advocates Diane Ward and Wilf Morley.

"Justin and Jenny have a real passion for this project," says Doris. Once viable, the unit will be utilized at various locations within York Region including Stouffville's Strawberry Festival and Markham Fair.

Rafters were ringing

The rafters were ringing in the cafetorium of Stouffville District Secondary School, Friday evening during the 24th annual Student Music Scholarship Concert.

Eight schools including four choirs; three bands; one dance and one hand-bell group participated before a standing room audience.

The concert emcee was Jim Mason. The invocation was delivered by Rev. Joan Masterton, St. James Presbyterian Church. A \$500 scholarship was awarded Cameron Williams of Stouffville.

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