

He Is The Bookman

By Kate Gilderdale
Stouffville Free Press

As John Lord celebrates 40 years as a book seller, what he misses most is hanging out with customers at his downtown Stouffville store.

John first set up shop at the wedding cake house on Hwy 48 before moving north to Stouffville, first to the south side of Main St. in the building beside Reid's Antiques, and later to the north side of Main. Today he works from his home, where he has amassed a phenomenal collection of second hand and antiquarian treasures to intrigue bibliophiles of all ages and interests.

Despite being a self-styled curmudgeon, John loves nothing more than engaging in lively conversation, peppered with his trademark wit. So he was thrilled to receive, out of the blue, an email from a customer who used to visit his store frequently many years ago, when she was a teenager.

"Memories of your store in Stouffville just randomly popped into my head today," wrote Shelley Vallee-Neilson. "I lived in Stouffville as a young teenager and I have wonderful memories of walking into your store and the scent of all the books. You always treated me with respect and encouraged my love of reading. I don't know why your book store just came back to me now after all these years, but I wanted to thank you for the personal attention you gave to your customers."

When John first opened his store in Stouffville, downtown Main St. was the bustling hub of the community, with so

many retailers and pedestrians, "it would take me an hour and a half to get from the store to the bank because I kept bumping into people I knew and stopping for a chat."

Among the many colourful characters who inhabited John's shop over the years was Alfie the cat with his trademark squashed left ear. "We found him sitting at the door one day and when we opened up he walked in."

Inquiries failed to unearth an owner, so John adopted him. "He was with us for six years." Alfie could often be found snoozing regally on a shelf beside various tomes, but he never attempted to leave - he knew when he was on to a good thing.

"Then there was the night I locked three kids in the store by mistake, and got a phone call saying 'your front door's open'." The kids had managed to unbolt the door from the inside, but had no way of locking it again.

On another occasion, a customer came in with a large brood of children. When she was about to leave, she realized that her youngest was missing. "We found her sleeping underneath a shelf," recalled John with a smile.

When he responded to Shelley's email, her reply summed up the feelings of many of his customers over the years. "I know it was my love of reading (which your store was definitely instrumental in) that developed my own style of writing," she noted.

"You write in the same manner you speak: eloquently, with soothing warmth and a passion for reading. You are The Bookman!"

Local Student Scores Place at Rugby Academy

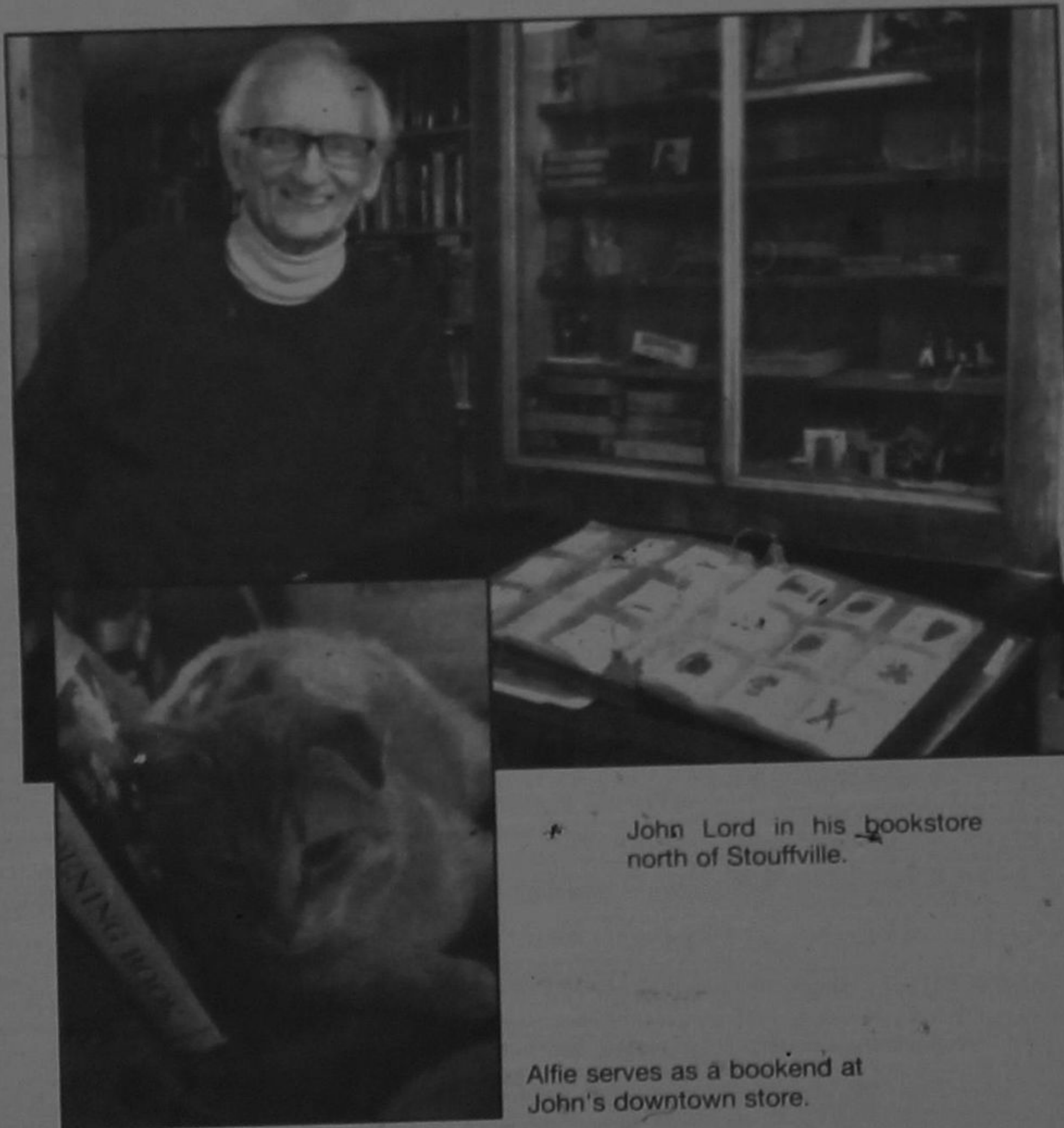
Keely Patterson, 15, a student at Stouffville District Secondary School and member of the Markham Irish Canadian Rugby Club, has earned a place with the Upright Rugby Canada Academy's under 18 Rogues Sevens team.

After coming in second in the Peterborough 7's tournament in the early autumn, Keely has been part of two tournament championships for the Rogues: The Q-Meta Cup in Brantford in October and the Niagara Falls 7's in mid-November. She has done extremely well in her first year at the Elite Rugby academy scoring tries and kicking conversions in both winning efforts.



Keely Patterson has won a place with Upright Rugby Canada Academy's Rogues Sevens team.

Mike Patterson photo



John Lord in his bookstore north of Stouffville.

Alfie serves as a bookend at John's downtown store.

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