

Turning Back the Clock

Historic photo submitted courtesy of Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum



Stouffville online, 19th century style. Pictured here is Alex Bruce, president of Stouffville & Bethesda Telephone Co. Bell telephone service was established in Stouffville in December 1884. The first exchange was located in Coulson and Freel's drug store. In January 1885 ten subscribers were listed. By 1904 there were 17 local subscribers.

LET'S HEAR FROM YOU WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE

Whitchurch-Stouffville This Month believes your opinions are important, and encourages you to voice your comments or concerns in a Letter To The Editor. We accept all letters, but only publish letters which have been signed. We request you include a phone number (not to be published) for verification of the letter writer. While Whitchurch-Stouffville This Month reserves the right to edit letters, due to content or length, in most cases letters will be published as written.

Fax your letters to: 905-642-2368, or e-mail to: withwrinkles@hotmail.com or mail to WSTM, Kate Gilderdale, 6111 Main St., Stouffville, Ont., L4A 3R4

Whitchurch-Stouffville This Month is on the web.
Look for us each month at: www.stouffvilleonline.com



Kate A'la carte

Mobile Communications A Three Ring Circus

"There's an old story about the person who wished his computer were as easy to use as his telephone. That wish has come true, since I no longer know how to use my telephone." Anonymous.

I finally succumbed to societal pressure -- and the fact that I've been spending far too much time on the Don Valley parking lot of late, panicking about missed appointments -- and bought a cellphone. I selected the company with the best rural coverage, and a long history of communications experience.

Having signed up for a basic package which included three months of free service, I went home to place my inaugural call. First I had to activate the phone. "It's easy," claimed the instructions. "1. Choose your phone. 2. Choose the monthly plan. 3. Call the toll-free number to start your service." I managed 1 and 2 without difficulty, but 3 was another story.

My first effort netted me a 416 phone number. Flushed with triumph at having managed to program it in, I decided to test drive it by calling my home phone. Since I was standing a couple of feet away from the latter device, I was startled when an automated voice announced, "The number you have dialled is long distance. Please hang up and try your call again."

Then I asked Mr. Wallethead to call my new phone. "The number you have dialled is long distance..." I contacted the communications' experts responsible and a machine answered with the usual raft of options, starting with, 'For service in English, press one.' I pressed one. Then I pressed the customer service number.

A robot advised me that all their operators were currently busy, but my call was important to them, and I should stay on the line for the first available operator. These tidings were repeated in French -- wait a minute, hadn't I just pressed one for English? -- followed by a burst of canned Muzak and an endless loop of commercials in fulsome praise of my mobile phone provider.

It was some time before a human being came on the line. "How may I help you?" I explained that my new number was not local. "Where are you calling from?" she wanted to know. "Stouffville," I replied. "Stokeville? Where's that?" Several minutes and a short geography lesson later, she offered me a number that would not be long-distance in Aurora.

"But Aurora is long distance from here," I said, my patience wearing thin. It took two more calls and a touch of apoplexy before I was assigned a new, local number. It worked. A month later a bill for \$25 plus GST arrived.

I checked the bill and discovered a service charge for \$25 for the number change. When my hands had unclenched sufficiently, I called to complain. "But you changed your number," said my customer service representative, after I had gone through the usual voice mail hoops in search of a real person.

Once he had grasped the concept that I wasn't planning to pay long distance for local calls, he agreed to remove the charge. Lo and behold, last week I got an invoice for \$2.15, \$1.75 of which was the GST on the initial service charge, the remaining 40 cents representing interest on the original sum of \$26.75.

My next call was taken by Lisa who quickly discovered that I was not a happy camper. It was nothing personal, I explained, but would she advise management that my experience with her company had convinced me that, in future, I would seek my communications equipment elsewhere. "Certainly," she said, politely, before reverting to her script.

"And thank you for choosing us as your service provider."

Dr. Carol A. Genin & Dr. J. Martin McDowell
Optometrists



Eye Care in Stouffville
6085 Main Street
905 642 3937

MOLLER INSURANCE

Home ★ Auto

905-642-2745

64 Sandiford Drive, Unit 1,
STOUFFVILLE