

Markham Street closed to celebrate Pedestrian Sundays

SHERRY SMITHER
annex@insidetoronto.com

On July 13 Mirvish Village was transformed into a casual street fest – Pedestrian Sundays – a celebration of community, culture and ecology.

Closed to cars from Bloor to Lennox Streets, merchants, neighbours and visitors wandered through Markham Street while those interested in village history listened to David Mirvish's nostalgic talk.

"This (fest) gave me a chance to reminisce about my parents, about our past and about a time when I wish I was as young as I was then because it was 1963 when the first steps towards this village came into being," said Mirvish from the stage in front of his bookstore, "it was a group of happy accidents that caused it."

David's mother Anne, a sculptor, needed studio space at the same time that artists, including Jack Pollack, were looking for gallery space when they were forced out of their Gerrard Street Village studios. Since the late Ed Mirvish owned many of the houses across from Honest Ed's, Mirvish decided to make his wife Anne his first tenant. Within the first three months, 27 artists moved into the top floors of the houses in 1963 paying five dollars a week rent and notables

like Allen Ginsberg would frequent shops like the comic book store near David Mirvish's art gallery.

"My mother was already planning (her studio) and they hadn't got to the stage where she had moved in and I remember coming down here with my mother and Jack Pollack – we all were here at the same beginning," Mirvish told *The Annex Guardian*.

>>> **STREET, page 3**

"This street was part of my education and growing up like so many who were young business people on this street, I too had that opportunity that my father wanted to present and in that way it was a home for me.

"But now we've become a BIA and not just a street."

Responsible for hosting Pedestrian Sundays, the BIA (Business Improvements Area), chaired by Russell Lazar general manager of Honest Ed's, and board members Holly Gnaedinger and Karen Wilson recall how it was conceptualized.

"We were contacted by organizer Shamez Amlani of Pedestrian Sundays Kensington Market, who asked us to join forces with them and Baldwin Village.

:Throughout the summer, we have each chosen various Sundays throughout the month, we have ours on the second Sunday of June,

July and August, they are celebrating theirs on the very last Sunday of every month from May – September and Baldwin Village is on Sept. 14," Wilson said.

"Last year we had three on the schedule, but with the passing of Ed Mirvish we cancelled our August fest because the Mirvish family decided to have a celebration of his life and they dedicated that day for him which was quite a nice celebration," Wilson added.

On Sunday the BIA promoted local talent like vocalist Karen La Rose singing tunes from her new CD *Mosaik* (an eclectic jazz, blues, country sound to be launched July 25), singer Jadea Kelly and her folk band, musical storyteller Ronley Tepers Lipliners, jazz group Roman Tome and a performance from Randolph Academy.

Other activities included massages, basic tune-up lessons for cyclists, information from Toronto Vegetarian Association, and the Green Belt Society, food at the outdoor cafes, and eclectic shops and galleries to browse.

What makes street fairs so appealing? Amlani of P.S. Kensington Market remarks, "Streets aren't only to move objects from A to B. The street is where you meet your neighbourhood, hang out with your friends, meet new people, fall in love, where you live out the theatre of your life."

'This (fest) gave me a chance to reminisce about my parents, about our past and about a time when I wish I was as young...'

– David Mirvish

