

Guido & Co: Spreading 'love' through community

by SUZANNE LAUNDROMAT
Neighbors Reporter

Guido is part of a vanishing species — a civic merchant with a heart.

Although you would have to look pretty hard to find a person who works harder for his community, Guido describes his profession as a labor of love — literally.

"I see myself as being in the 'love and comfort' business," he smiled. "I help the lonely, the depressed, those from out of town."

Guido hit the streets a scant one year ago and the progress he has made is a tribute to hard work, hustle, and street smarts. He now has five employees "working at the street level" he says. And they could not be happier about their boss.

"He's great," says Candy (not her real name). "Like before he came we didn't have union benefits, holiday pay, (sound of gum smacking) or a pension plan. Nothin'."

For his philanthropy Guido now grosses close to 250 G's per annum, a far cry from 1985 when he was a poor second-year business student at the University of Alberta. He left because he couldn't handle what he describes as the "Ivory Tower mentality" of academe.

"I couldn't stand it (school)," he winces. "You know a student is there to learn to improve his mind. They

should be encouraging students to experiment, try new things, not put you on probation the minute you hit a rocky stretch of river. I had to get out."

The university's loss was Jasper Avenue's gain as Guido has taken it upon himself to bolster Edmonton's sagging tourist trade.

"We're tryin' real hard," he says. "Two for one specials. Coupons in the *Jurnal* and *Sun*. Draws for free trips to Hawaii. Prizes for the one millionth customer. All that stuff."

Guido is upset because he feels the community is not behind him on this. "Well, heck, now they're passing laws to arrest and detain the customers for just talking to my staff. Jeez, that's like kicking a customer out of a fancy restaurant because he wants to read the menu. I don't know. I'm really disillusioned. Hey, guys, it's a team effort."

Guido also sidelines as a "financial consultant," making small loans to enterprising young international import/export companies. "I make loans to people you don't normally see at the bank," he explains.

"I really love helping out people — it's a great way to get to know folks — especially their families," he said with a smile, gently fondling his favorite sledgehammer.

The recent economic downturn,



Candy and Guido are a couple of hard-nosed professionals with a great concern for the welfare of the community.

however, has taken its toll on Guido's business. "People take longer to pay back now — but I'm a nice guy, I let people pay over time. I've got a bunch of guys who have been making payments for years."

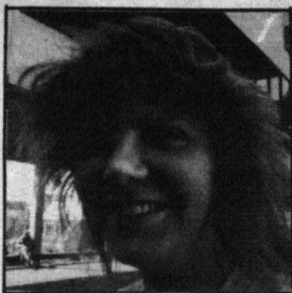
Guido not only makes money for the community, he pours it back into the community. "I've already installed five heated lampposts down Jasper, making them more comfortable to lean against in winter months. And Harry's Love Shoppe will be adding on a Sodom and Gomorrah wing next month with money from a grant from the Guido foundation."

Guido has had to put up with a lot to see his one-man crusade come to fruition. He mentions the harassment tactics of local law enforcement slime and points nonchalantly to a six-inch vertical scar running down the left side of his rib cage. "This was a gift from someone less civic-minded than myself," he says of the scar. "But," he sighs, "as in any human endeavor you'll find those who are in it only for themselves."

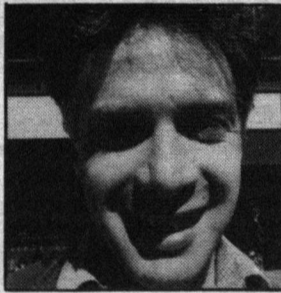
Guido is enjoying himself immensely, but does not see his current position lasting in perpetuity. "I'm saving enough money to go back to school," he says. "I think I want to get into corporate law."

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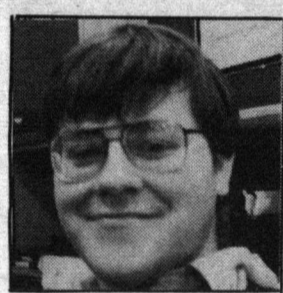
SUE
"West Edmonton Mall. It's so busy nobody goes there anymore."



BIFF
"If you travel in downtown Edmonton, it seems like there are only two seasons: winter and construction."



ELISE
"Living next door to my friend Arlene. All she does is talk behind people's backs. How bush league."



MORRIS
"The people."

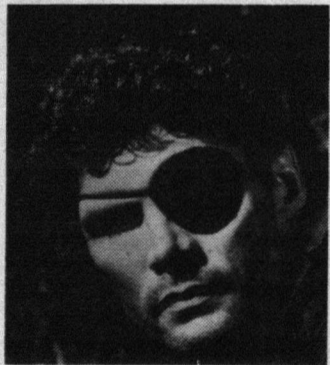


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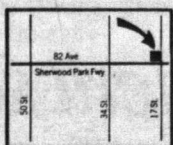
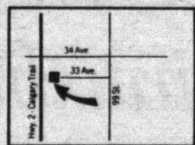
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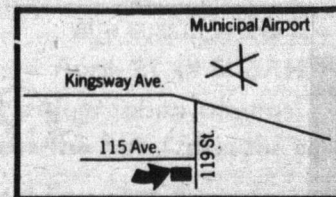
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