



# “A Really Big One”



By Irene Tennant

I turned off the lawn mower, wiped my brow and was walking to the house to get a glass of water when I heard the telephone. Missing a call causes me hours of anguish, so I dashed to the verandah, pushed open the screen and breathlessly said, “Hello.”

“Mrs. Tennant, we have sixteen boxes of trees for you here at the CN freight office,” said the agent.

“Oh my,” I replied dumbfoundedly. “The trees are in Brockville?”

“Yes ma’am,” he said, “They arrived this morning.”

“The Ministry of Natural Resources was supposed to notify us when we could go to Kemptville and pick up the trees,” I stated.

“I don’t know anything about what was supposed to happen. All I know is your trees are HERE. Our office closes at 5:00 p.m.”

My brain had to shift from first to third gear in a hurry to decide how I was going to cope with six thousand trees TODAY. Jack and I had planned to get them on Friday or Saturday and have a work-bee with relatives and friends to plant them. TODAY was a Tuesday. I couldn’t think of anyone that would be able to help us until the weekend and I didn’t think the trees would survive until then. I

managed to get in touch with my step father-in-law and he said he could drive me to the train freight yard at 3:00 p.m. Jack was home from school and had read my note when Cecil and I got back. We loaded the boxes in our yard wishing they weren’t here.

Every problem has a solution. I phoned a couple of the boys from the youth group I supervised and they arrived with two more boys after supper. Our children, Martha and Jonathan, Jack and I and the four boys got the trees back to the field and started planting. By sunset we had a few hundred in the ground. When we came back to the house, my sister’s son Chris was sitting on the verandah. He had ridden his bicycle twelve miles so he would be here to help us at day break. Jack took his personal leave day and Jonathan stayed home from school. Martha had something important that day at school and didn’t want to miss it. We worked in two teams - Jonathan with Chris and Jack with me, and the four of us planted ALL the trees before supper! Our Christmas tree business was in the ground.

Originally, we planned to have someone come and harvest all the trees at once. As I pruned and slashed them over the years I realized that since they were maturing at different rates that plan wasn’t going to

work, so we advertised as a “Cut Your Own” and “Freshly Cut” business.

Jack and I have really enjoyed the customers we have served, especially the ones who have selected a tree we have cut and brought to the house. Many of the spruce trees are now too big, so we cut just the tops and I prune them after they are cut. It is amazing how cutting off a branch here and there can improve the look of a tree. One woman last year couldn’t believe her eyes when I turned a ten foot tree into a seven foot tree that was exactly what she wanted.

One Saturday a man phoned about the possibility of getting a sixteen foot tree. I figured he was like most people who want a big tree and he really only wanted a twelve foot one. I was wrong! He brought out the biggest tree that we had on the land. Jack could not go for it with the tractor and we had told this man that when he said he would like to come to look, but he said, “Oh, I have two good strong boys. I’m sure we can manage to carry a tree.” I wish I had a video of this man and his boys. After being back in the woods for about three-quarters of an hour, they came back with faces lit up like a Christmas tree. He said, all in one breath, “Ma’am, we’ve found the tree we want but there is no way we can carry her out! I bet you have never seen this tree! It’s right in the centre of the stand!”

When he took a breath I said to him, “I bet I know exactly what tree you found! Is it south of the roadway to the sugar shanty?”

“Yes, almost in the middle of the field,” he said.

“And does it have two other trees around it that are almost as nice?”

From the look that came over his face I knew that he couldn’t believe that I knew what he had found. “You’re right Ma’am, and the one beside her will be mine next year if you let me take it out!”

The poor man was so excited he could hardly stand still. I said to him, “I don’t think we can do anything to help you today as my husband told you when you called. Jack is involved with a show and sale of his stained glass and tole painted articles this weekend and his brother is using the tractor and wagon. If you can come some day next week, we will have the tractor here and could get it for you.”

“Listen Ma’am, I gotta have that tree to-

## Dizzie Lizzie Keeps Busy!

Irene joined the Junetown Women’s Institute in 1971 after moving from Brockville. “I joined because I was urged to do so by Jack’s aunt, Dorothy Turner,” said Irene. She added: “The night ... [Aunt Dorothy] was presented with a Life Membership, she handed me her Badge and I’ve worn it with pride ever since.”

At the Branch level Irene has served as President, twice, and as Secretary-Treasurer and convener of several committees. She has been both the President and Treasurer of the Leeds District. Provincially, from 1993 to 1995, she served as FWIO Board Director for Subdivision 4. Presently, Irene is the First Vice-President of the Kingston Area.

As a teacher, Irene taught Grade 1 for seven years and did occasional teaching for another twelve. She also taught Sunday School for many years as part of her United Church Women activities. And, like many Women’s Institute members, Irene too has led 4-H Clubs.

For those of you who have not met Irene, perhaps you have met her second personality - Dizzie Lizzie. Irene created this alter persona and has written several monologues which Lizzie enjoys presenting at community, church and Women’s Institute events.



Irene and Jack Tennant standing in front of freshly-cut Christmas trees.

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