

'Twere the flu that laid Bill low!

But those cards keep Smiley going!

by Bill Smiley



'Twere the fault of the 'flu. I can usually belt out a column regardless of weather, wife, or nuclear explosions, the latter two being much alike, but this time I was laid lower than a grasshopper's bottom, right from before Christmas through the New Year. Must be getting old and soft.

It's hard to turn out a column of deathless, sometimes desperate prose when your brain is like putty, your fingers are like dough, and your legs like clay sticks, while your stomach is making like a cement mixer and producing something much like cement.

I can usually find a topic this time of year: a savage attack on the Canadian winter. But I can't even do that. Christmas was warmer than August, warmer than England, according to a colleague who was there, and superior to Puerto Rico, where it rained and rained and blew the palm trees horizontal, according to another colleague who went off for "a week in the sun." And serves her right.

Despite my decrepitude, I tried to struggle through. Have you ever played chess or Monopoly with a bright eight-year-old who can beat you at either, even when you're in top shape?

Have you ever tried to repair broken toys on Christmas morning with a sharp six-year-old when your hands are shaking with the age and your mind is fixed on your next spurt to the bathroom?

Have you ever coped with a wife who moans, "But you always make

the dressing and help me with the gravy!", when all you want to do is crawl into a hole, cover yourself with something, even dressing, and quietly expire?

I compromised. In the shape of an octogenarian leper who has just had a massive stroke, I stuffed the ruddy beast, trussed it, and jammed it into the oven, before collapsing.

But I got my revenge on those who had frittered around making cups of tea while I labored over the creature. Told them I'd spit on my hands before I mixed the stuffing. That almost, but not quite, threw them off their Christmas dinner. I nibbled a bit of 'flu-filled stuffing, proclaimed it excellent, and they ate like pigs.

It was only through the greatest fortitude that I was able to get a little brandy down, now and again, to keep Death at His distance.

But it wasn't all bad. It never is, if you keep your pecker up. No small chore in these days of economic and political gloom.

Because of my condition, I let the old girl make all the Christmas telephone calls to old friends and relatives. That probably cost me about

\$200 as she has a propensity to believing that long-distance calls are made to somebody just around the corner, even when they're 600 miles away, and can chat amiably for half an hour about sweet fanny Adams.

And I managed to totter to the telephone on New Year's Eve and talk to a couple of old turkeys who joined the air force the day I did. I could have saved my breath, what was left of it, on that one. They were in worse shape than I was. And they didn't have the 'flu.

Got some cards from old friends: Don McCaulig, asking me to come and help him dig a hole in the ice for fishing, up in the Ottawa Valley; the Cadogans of New Brunswick, telling me to get that book published. Exactly the kinds of activities I felt like.

But don't worry, chaps. We'll get some of those trout yet, McCaulig, even if we have to use dynamite. And we'll get the book written yet, Cadogans. Even if we have to use a computer, a ghost writer and a team of doctors.

Missed my usual card from Major McEwen, who teaches playing the bagpipes in California, if you can imagine anything more incongruous.

He was a mere 84 last Christmas, so may be slowing down.

But my old pal in Westport didn't fall me. He signs his cards only, "Your TV Repairman," but they always come through.

Here's this year's: "Merry Christmas Smiley and lots more. Thank you for another year of your cheerful wit. I can't imagine anyone enjoying your column more than I do. Don't you dare to retire. The world needs you and you do a lot of good. Some day when I get over being silly and the swelling goes down in my head, I'll let the air out of my ego and write you a bragging letter that will make B.S. smell like roses. In the meantime, stay just like you are and I'll keep buying any paper that carries your column."

Earthy but uplifting. It almost ended my 'flu. One of these days I'm going to hire a private eye and track the old divel down.

My Christmas tree, erected in 15 minutes by a friend who arrived suddenly and cheerfully, while celebrating an anniversary, didn't fall down. My grandchildren still love me. I haven't been fired, despite due cause. My wife hasn't left me, despite due cause.

All in all, despite the 'flu, not too bad. I even got a refund from National Revenue. It took only from April to late December to find their error. I'm almost healthy again. The only thing I'm dreading at the moment, is the arrival of my Chargex account for December.

Out doors

by Lorne Fletcher

The Bible tells me that some time in the future I may have to wear a sign on my forehead.

And now an honorable councillor is trying to tell me that I should hang one on my back, or wherever.

Well I have news for you Mr. (Bill) Johnson, a good many Halton residents and landlords see no need for more chains around their necks.

If you are going to use your position as a councillor to further the aims of some organization that reportedly has written you two letters, then I should surely use my position as a newspaper columnist to refute some of the drivel that has appeared of late.

Make no mistake, with no exception would there have been any unregistered hunters in the recent deer hunt. M.N.R. personnel cover all areas very carefully, as they should. I'll wager most illegal deer shot in Halton are taken by poachers and weekend (maximum 10 acres) farmers who have plenty of no trespassing signs.

Mr. Johnson, where are the people? Our taxes go to Halton region just the same as yours do, however hopefully mine doesn't go to pay your stipend.

Every hunter that I have talked to that used a tag in the past hunt had registered their success immediately.

Good sportsmen work hand in hand with the ministry, and they go out of their way to get other hunters to co-operate.

As for the number of deer in Halton taken by hunters, brush wolves and auto accidents, just call the region. You will soon find out they are well on top of the situation.

Ice anglers are out in force in most areas, including Fairy Lake in Acton where a good many Pike in the two to four pound class were landed. Several anglers have told me these fish are not the best in the eating department and they have released these fish for another day.

My ice hut is now on Lake Simcoe with approximately 10 inches of good ice that is building fast due to very little snow.

Fishing has been very good, especially with large Whitefish and the every present Smelt Lake Trout are just starting to hit well. Giuseppe Depieri of Acton lost a good Lake Trout on the past weekend for want of a good gaff. To have it so close and then lose it, ah well one for the next time.

Still work on 911

A 911 emergency number for all Halton is still being investigated by a Task Force, but this time rental of the equipment is being studied.

Halton Hills Fire Chief Bill Cunningham, a member of the Task Force, which includes police, ambulance and fire representatives feels the setting up of the 911 number will be at least three years in the future.

He said the initial set-up costs exceed \$18,000 with monthly charges of \$15,000.

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