

The Acton Free Press

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Business and Editorial Office

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Meters — ugh!

The Free Press last week carried a banner headline indicating the Town would ask the Business Improvement Association (BIA) for their opinion on the need for parking meters in downtown Acton. But it was all in error. Councillors from Acton with the help of more far-sighted colleagues killed that part of the resolution before council voted on it.

However, downtown Georgetown, long afflicted with the change bandits, will get new parking meters on Town-owned lots and the charge will jump from the present 10 cents an hour to 25 cents as soon as the meters can be changed. It was a move approved by the Georgetown Business Improvement Area (BIA).

However, what may be construed to be good for Georgetown does not necessarily mean it will benefit Acton.

Downtown shopping areas in towns all over Ontario are competing with malls and plazas for the consumer dollar. Part of the appeal of the malls is the ease of parking and the freedom from worry about tickets. Shoppers worried about how long they have left on a meter aren't liable to spend much time browsing through stores and browsing is often a good part of sales. Shoppers will just make their purchases and leave.

It would seem ridiculous for council to authorize parking meters in the downtown when it should be more accessible, not difficult, to use. We congratulate the Acton councillors for seeing through the carrot of revenue from meters to the real concerns of the downtown.

Mean vandals

Surely some of the meanest people in this community have to be responsible for vandalizing the strings of festive lights at Lakeview Villa on Elizabeth Drive last week. Not content with destruction there, the home next door was also vandalized, the vandals stealing floodlights erected to welcome home a daughter and son-in-law from their home in Europe.

It is hard to know what kind of meanness comes

over people especially at this time of the year when most people try their best to be kind and show their concern for others.

If the culprits are caught we hope the full force of the law is exercised. It could prevent further vandalism especially on senior citizens, many of whom spent a considerable amount of money from fixed incomes on providing the community with festive lighting.



Letters

Want Ethiopian aid stopped

Dear Sir:
George Galloway of the British charity War on Want has reported that he and British television crews have witnessed evidence of "a huge misappropriation of Western food aid in Ethiopia."
Galloway, who is just back from Ethiopia, reports seeing hundreds of

bags of Canadian, German and American skim milk that have been smuggled across the border into the Sudan and sold. Corrupt officials of Ethiopia's Marxist government have stolen the food Canada sent them for their own hungry people and are profiteering from its sale. Galloway has revealed that

Canadian grain is being made into biscuits that are later sold.

This misuse of Canadian aid, sad to say, was entirely predictable. Citizens for Foreign Aid Reform has urged the Canadian government not to go overboard. Past experience with government-to-government aid has not been a happy one in Ethiopia. The Ethiopian government is Marxist, brutal, and hopelessly corrupt. Over the past several years, there have been numerous reports of food aid being stolen and sold by Ethiopian officials. As well, grain sent from the European Economic Community was transferred at dockside and sent to the Soviet Union to pay for guns.

The sad reality is that government aid to Ethiopia is merely keeping in power the tyrants and corrupt officials who are at least partly to blame for the famine. Canada should cease government-to-government aid to Ethiopia and put the \$25 million or so thereby saved toward reducing the huge federal deficit. Aid of the sort we have been giving merely rips off the Canadian taxpayer and enriches some corrupt Ethiopian officials.

Sincerely yours,
Paul Fromm,
Research Director, C-FAR
(Citizens for Foreign Aid Reform Inc.)

Sunflower seeds entice grosbeaks

By ARLIN HACKMAN
Federation of Ontario Naturalists
If you haven't set up a backyard bird feeder, there's still time. A simple feeder made out of a piece of plywood (12" x 24") with a 1" railing around may be attached to a window ledge. With any luck, you'll have some Evening grosbeaks come right up to your window, if you stock the feeder with sunflower seeds.

Make sure you have an ample stock of sunflower seeds on hand. One large flock of grosbeaks will consume hundreds of pounds of seeds over the course of a winter—at considerable expense to the delighted birdwatcher.

Evening grosbeaks are about the size of a starling, and have an extremely large, conical whitish bill. The male is largely dull yellow, with black and white wings. The female is silvery-gray, but with just enough of the yellow and black to be recognizable. Their call is a ringing finch-like chirp "cleer" or "clee-ip."

People wonder why the birds are called "Evening" grosbeaks because they seem to be more active in the morning than toward evening. When they were named, they had been heard to sing only in the evening.

Formerly, this was primarily a western species, but in recent times it has rapidly pushed its breeding range eastward. In Ontario it was first known to nest at Lake of the Woods in 1920, first

in the Muskoka district in 1927 and first in Algonquin Park in 1932. It now breeds east to Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia.

Other birds you might expect at a window feeder—particularly if the feed mixture contains a high percentage of sunflower seeds—are Black capped chickadees, bluejays, White-breasted nuthatches, cardinals and Purple finches. If the feeder contains a suet rack, Downy woodpeckers should visit it regularly.

Among Ontario winter birds, there are several species that prefer to feed on the ground. Thus, the seeds spilled by the sloppy feeding habits of other birds at the feeder are utilized by these ground feeders, such as slate coloured juncos, tree sparrows, mourning doves and even pheasants.

Several feeders are always better than one. Larger birds may dominate a single feeder so that some interesting species may leave your area in search of food. Of course, if you get into bird feeding in a big way, have your credit card ready.

Letters are welcome

Please keep them brief



Back issues

10 years ago

Dec. 25, 1974

Mrs. Evelyn Beattie was appointed to Halton Hills library board Thursday night to fill a vacant spot among council appointees.
Ross Cooper, 27, was hired as Area Recreation Co-ordinator for wards one and two at a salary of \$10,455 and a \$50 monthly car allowance.

20 years ago

Dec. 24, 1964

Acton Reeve H. Hinton will toss his hat into the ring for Warden of Halton County. It is expected he will run a two way race against Herb Merry of Oakville.

Brilliant lights and Christmas decorations visible for blocks, light the front entrance to Beardmore and Co. Ltd. and many have admired the display.

Santa Claus made his annual visit to Acton Saturday to distribute candies and gifts to over 500 children whose parents are employed at Beardmore and Co. Ltd.

50 years ago

Dec. 27, 1934

Bert Hayes, rural mail carrier, was seriously injured after starting his route Monday afternoon, when a car driven by Dr. Borden, of Alma, collided with the sleigh in which Hayes was riding, throwing him out and fracturing several ribs.

A farmer in Esqueving Township injured his knee about haying time. He worried about it for he had alfalfa that he wanted to cut. The alfalfa went to seed and later he cut and threshed it. Alfalfa seed is one product that is in high price this year on account of its scarcity and the farmer received \$2,000 for the alfalfa seed from one field.

The severe winter weather yesterday has made the roads rather hard to travel.

75 years ago

Dec. 23, 1909

The citizens' committee has arranged for a meeting of the workmen of town, to be held in the town hall December 30 when Mr. James Simpson, of Toronto, the well known champion of labor interests in that city, will address the meeting.

The schools closed yesterday for the Christmas holidays. They will reopen Monday, January 3.

Reeve Swackhamer is erecting another building for Morris Sax, on his property on Main St.

100 years ago

Jan. 1, 1885

An exciting runaway occurred on Main St. on Sunday. Mr. Jos. Price, of Harding's grocery, was just starting out for a drive when the horse became frightened and dashed away at a furious pace. The cutter was completely destroyed and now Josiah thinks Sunday driving is not a paying business.

Erin village was the scene of a shocking accident Friday last. The victim was the son of Mr. George Ramshaw, late of Nassagaweya, aged about 12 years. He was left in the house for a short time, in charge of a sick lady, while his mother ran an errand. In the mother's absence her son was amusing himself by rolling about the floor when he kicked one of the legs from under a large self feeding coal stove which rolled over upon him. At present he lies in precarious condition.

Thermometer readings were 20 degrees below zero last week and 50 degrees above this week.

The perfect gift!

by Captain Wilson Perrin

All of us have been caught up in the buying and receiving of Christmas gifts. Some of you were excited with your gift, others of you were disappointed or either surprised. In any case, the various reactions to the Christmas Spirit has again reminded me of a very valuable and perfect gift—"The gift of God's Son, Jesus Christ to the World."

During the past weeks I have been involved in singing Christmas carols at different institutions. During those times, I have shared a meditation with many different people. My meditation was based upon St. Luke 2: 7, which says, "And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn." (kjv)

I then asked them a question, "What do you feel is the best Christmas gift you have received?" There were a good mixture of responses, some said "Having good health"; "being together with family"; "being with friends"; I was so pleased when one person said, "having Jesus Christ in my heart." I thought, yes, that's the best gift to receive, that is a perfect gift for all of us.

What a priceless gift God's Son, Jesus is, God's gift to humanity came wrapped up in "swaddling clothes" and was also wrapped up in all the Love of the Heavenly Father, to a world that was a hopelessly wandering around looking for a deliverer.

Jesus is in essence "the gift of Salvation" to the world. St. Matthew 1: 21 says, "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins." (NIV)

During this festive season, it is my personal prayer that you will receive "the perfect gift". Money cannot buy Him, hard work alone cannot obtain his favor. God is saying, "by faith, receive my Son and live."

May this Christmas be the time when you will receive the "Perfect Gift" and the New Year will be the time when you will enjoy Him.

Smiley wouldn't trade today's Yule for old

Like practically everything else in the frantic 20th century, Christmas is vastly overdone. A day that was, for our ancestors, a simple observance of the birth of Christ combined with a family get-together of reasonable jollity, has grown to the proportions of a nightmare in which shopping for gifts, exchange of cards, Christmas entertainments, high-powered advertising and a steady and relentless stream of so-called "Christmas" music make up the accumulation of horrors.

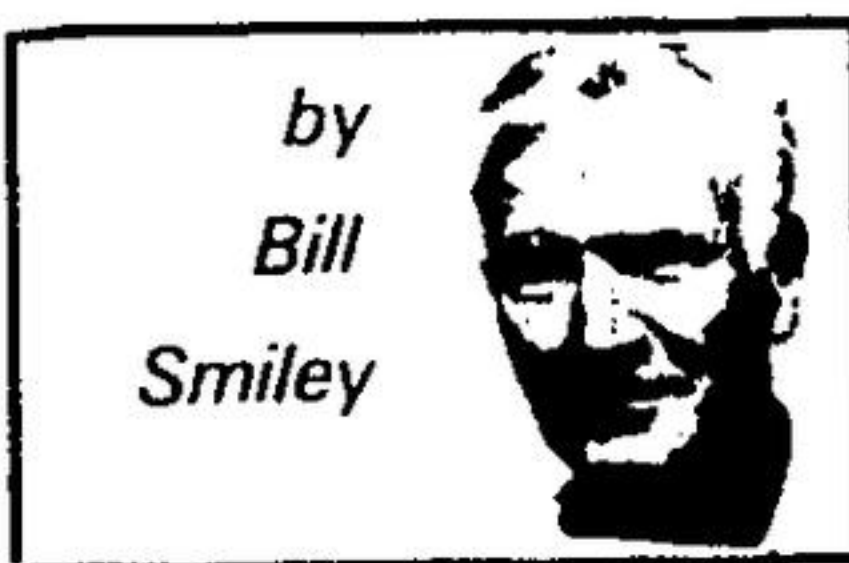
In the good old days, the family rose early, and went to church, where the parson gave them a two-hour appetizer. They then went home and took a nip of something to take off the chill. While the servants were sweating in the kitchen, preparing the vast dinner to come, they took a bite of lunch. Then the ladies set off to distribute food parcels to the poor, while the men put their tails to the fire and went after that chill again.

That's your ancestors I'm talking about. Mine were among the people the ladies were taking the food to. I can still see them

kicking the pigs under the bed when her ladyship came in, tugging their forelocks, scraping their feet, and saying "fank yer, milady, fank yer, mum" as she pulled one of the geese that had died of disease, and one of last year's bottles of blackberry brandy, which had turned vinegary, out of her basket.

Today, of course, my ancestors' descendants will eat turkey on Christmas Day until they bear a resemblance to purple pigs, while the descendants of milady, who have managed to hang on to the old home only by taking tourists through at a shilling a shot, will be dining meagrely, in the only room of the big house they can afford to heat, on a nice bit of brisquet and some brussels sprouts. And serves them right.

However, that's not what I started out to say, but I can't remember what it was, anyway. Oh, yes, about the old days and today. Well, despite all the wailing and throwing of hands in the air at the paganism and commercialism surrounding our Christmas today, I wouldn't trade



it for the old-fashioned one of a hundred years ago.

And don't forget, I said "surrounding" our Christmas. Sure our kids believe in Santa Claus. Sure our pre-Christmas preparations are getting more and more hectic and more and more subject to commercialism. But our kids grow out of Santa Claus, without any dire effects. And we get over the pre-Christmas panic and celebrate the day with just as much reverence and just as much family fun as

ever our ancestors did.

I'll warrant our youngsters know just as much, and maybe more, about the story of Christmas, and the coming of the Christ child, as their counter-parts of a hundred years ago know. Mine do, anyway, thanks to their Sunday School teachers.

And I'll bet we're not half as smug and selfish, despite our much-touted materialism, as our Victorian great-grandfathers were, sitting on their fat rumps by the fire on Christmas day, and letting the poor worry about themselves.

On this coming Christmas Day, in our own little town, the Band will be out in the cold, playing for the old people and shut-ins. Groups of ladies and men from a dozen different organizations will be scurrying about with vast baskets of food and treats for the needy.

And the needy are pretty few and far between these days, simply because we have a whole lot more social conscience

than our ancestors had. Outside that warm, cosy, jolly Pickwickian Christmas of a hundred years ago lay a world of cold and hunger and degradation. We wouldn't let it exist today.

So don't let the worry-warts spoil Christmas, with their perpetual complaining that Christmas is being paganized. Nothing can sully Christmas, because Christmas is in your heart, in the simple story on that day, in the shining eyes of a child, in the loveliness of the carols.

Yes, and it is in the Christmas tree, and the gay windows, and the colored lights against the snow and the perspiring Santa Claus at the Christmas concert, and the card from a friend you haven't seen in years.

If you enjoy the giving of gifts, run yourself away into debt, are happy in the family reunion, attend church on Christmas Day, stayed away from the hard stuff, and weren't a pig with the turkey, you didn't go far wrong.