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Yes, Cornelia, there is a Jesus Christ

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following Christmas editorial by Publisher Peter Brouwer is a letter to his youngest daughter. We'd like to think that a lot of dads, all over Halton Hills, are writing letters to their 10-year-olds at this time of the year.

Dear Cornelia:

In a few days it will be Christmas and you'll get up at six in the morning and wake everyone else in the house, and the dog and the cat, because you can't wait to gather 'round the Christmas tree with your two brothers and three sisters and your mother and me.

I remember your first Christmas, when you were just big enough to sit up by the tree and you ripped your way through the wrapping on all the presents your big brothers and sisters got you.

It was even better than a birthday, wasn't it?

And I remember, too, the second and the third and fourth and fifth and



by
**PETER
BROUWER**

sixth Christmas...with you taking it all in from your little corner next to the tree.

I suppose, because you're the "little one" in the family, I've concentrated on you all those Christmas mornings.

But now you're getting to be a big girl. You're getting so big that on Christmas morning you'll probably be watching me as much as I'll be watching you.

I know we'll both have a beautiful Christmas this year.

For many Christmases now, I've tried to tell you what Christmas is all about, and why we're giving gifts to each other.

Remember the first time you asked your dad "is there really a Santa Claus?" I remember the question. I probably didn't give you a very good answer.

But you know, don't you?

We all have to be Santa's in our own way. I know you've been very busy these last few weeks being a little Santa. I check up on these things. You've been spending a lot of time behind your closed bedroom door. Things must be happening in there.

I've told you how I grew up with a different Santa, and how he was not a jolly fat man, in a red jump suit, but how he was like a real saint in a long robe and a saintly hat and how he

came on a white horse and many weeks before Christmas, on December 6.

I've also told you how both Santa's, even though one was a tall saint and the other a jolly fat man, were both the same in a way, because both came with many gifts.

And of course, you remember about the wise men from the East who came to Bethlehem to bring gifts to the baby Jesus.

And this giving of gifts is really what I want to talk to you about.

When you're happy for someone, when you're pleased with someone, when you really love someone, you want to give to them.

You don't give gifts to people you don't like - right? You don't give anything to people you don't know. You keep to your family and friends and maybe even the teacher and the principal and the mailman and the carrier who delivers The Herald.

And that's where we all make a big mistake. Did you know that?

When that little baby Jesus, who started Christmas, became a man, he showed us every day what Christmas is all about.

He loved the people he knew and the ones he didn't know.

He gave gifts even to his enemies.

He gave people the greatest gift of them all - love.

He gave it to the people who lived in Israel when he was a teacher there.

He loved the people so much, he was willing to die for them.

And he didn't just love the people who came in a nice suit to listen to him, and who had good jobs and money and a nice warm house with a big porch.

He made a special effort every day to give love and friendship and gifts of all kinds to bums and drunks and poor people.

He made sick people better.

He told people like you and me and all your brothers and sisters and your mother and the neighbors and aunts and uncles and everybody, that we've got to make every day like Christmas.

He told you, Cornelia, to be a little bit like him.

He told you to love people. Even the ones you don't like.

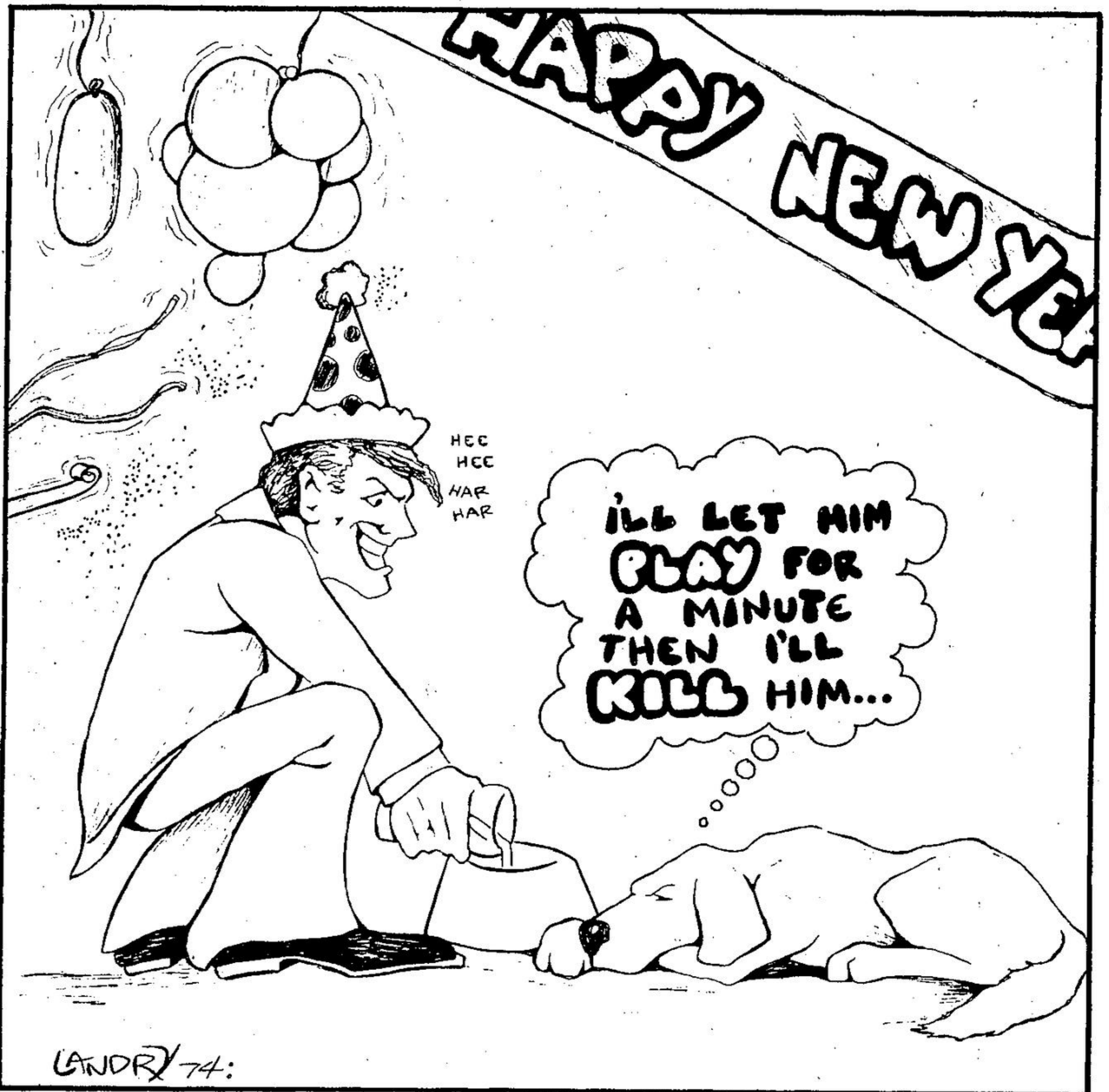
He told you that the biggest gift you can give comes without fancy wrapping paper and a ribbon.

He told you that you can give it 365 days of the year.

So, let's you and I try to make Christmas last a little longer, shall we? Like all year?

Merry Christmas, sweetheart! And many happy returns of the day!

Your dad



Well Santa, here I am again

Dear Santa:

It's been so long Santa I'm afraid I feel a little foolish penning this letter. I guess the last time I did it was... When I was eight? or 11 or 13? or 18? Funny, I can't recall the exact year I finally didn't bother writing you a note on Christmas Eve and burning it so you could see what I wanted.

There were years there when I suspected and then eventually knew THE SECRET OF SANTA CLAUS but still carried on because... well, that was just part of Christmas.

Which is probably why I'm writing this year Santa. Maybe, just maybe, by writing this letter some of that magic of Christmases past, of the best Christmases, will somehow return.

You see Santa, things have changed drastically since I last wrote to you. Some of the changes are for the better, some for the worse. Some just... well, we'll wait and see.

But you know the worst thing that's happened Santa? I've grown up. Yes, I'm an adult now, full of responsibilities, obligations, maturity, sociability, stability, even a little morality. Everything that I pledged to myself would never happen to me, has happened.

I no longer laugh unless it's right to laugh.

I don't get mad unless it's proper and possible to get mad.

I no longer look at people and accept them just as they are.

I can't do things anymore without weighing the pros and cons. And the cons are winning and more often these days Santa.

I don't do a lot of things I used to,

because of the simple fact that I have to play the role of an adult; a grown-up; a responsible citizen in a supposedly responsible world.

You know, the worst Santa? I haven't thrown a snowball Santa in... I guess it must be five years now. Remember that time back in college



by
**BILL
JOHNSTON**

when we... Well, I'm sure you remember, Santa. It was a lot of fun. Those were the...

I realize that when I put this letter to a match this Christmas Eve all I'm going to end up with is a pile of blackened ashes, but you know Santa, I don't think in all of my 25 years I've wanted to believe in you so much as tonight.

Here I sit, surrounded in Christmas decorations, not only wondering what this Christmas scene is all about but why? Now that's a new one. What's the why of Christmas 1974?

Why did I just sit through a newscast that seems to have been repeated 365 times this past year? Bombs in Belfast. Food prices going up. Another strike. Arabs retaliate against the Israelis. Oil crisis. So little has changed in 1974. If anything I

think we've slipped back.

Why don't I know what's going to happen in the coming year? Oh I've never particularly worried about that before. But looking at 1975 I feel a tinge of apprehension. Recession. Depression. Inflation. Familiar words. Important words in our lives yet words and things over which we have little control. Bay Street and Wall Street be kind to us in 1975.

Why do these thoughts weigh heavier and heavier upon us with every morning's start?

I guess Santa if I knew you were there and I knew you could help bring me what tonight I wanted most, I would ask for only one thing: a child-like attitude to face the coming year with all its inevitable problems. Through rose tinted glasses I might be able to see more clearly what possibly makes this world worth loving.

I would ask for a little "peace on earth good will towards all men"

Santa, you know and I know, that the soldier now oiling his gun in Israel, or the bomber making another instrument of death in a grimy London flat, or the robber stepping into the Detroit liquor store with a gun in his hand, really aren't going to be moved, much less affected, by such glorious sounding request. So I won't bother.

Man being man, his path is always going to be a difficult one. He usually makes it difficult.

But you know Santa, better than anyone else, that children don't believe in complications and infuriations. For them the simplest way from point A to point B is moving along that direct line.

To get from Christmas 1974 to a better world, circa?, you travel the most direct route. That's the road of friendship, co-operation and heckuva lot of love.

I guess Santa I've rambled enough. Merry Christmas to you.

Bill Johnston

What's new?

We would like to thank the Ontario Federation of Agriculture for one of the more meaningful press releases to filter through our morning mail in many a year.

Not only was it meaningful but, for the first time since God invented the Canada Post Office, we have to admit that we totally agreed with the point of view and facts presented in

the OFA statement.

For that reason we publish the contents of the OFA news release in its entirety:

That's right. Besides the OFA's address and telephone number the release was blank.

Perhaps that's their way of saying-for eight cents-"No Comments."

To our Doc

From the Oakville Journal Record:
Dr. Frank Phillbrook
Member of Parliament, Halton,
Parliament Hill, Ottawa

Dear Doc,

Just thought we'd write to thank you for sending those Christmas cards our way (nothing like those franking privileges, eh Frank?) and to let you know how things look on the home front.

As you can well imagine, folks hereabouts are in a tizzy now, what with last minute Christmas shopping and all. Boy, howdy, are the stores

crowded! Oh, but don't get us wrong, though. We're all pitching in and tightening our belts just the way you fellas said we should. Not that there's much choice. With prices the way they are these days, we suppose folks should be glad they've still got belts to tighten, right? Ha, Ha.

Seriously, though, Doc, this inflation thing really has some people down, hard-pressed as they are just to make ends meet, much less come up with the extra cash to pay for the kids' gifts. And if that weren't bad enough, now there's all this talk of recession, layoffs and such. Frankly, Doc, they're scared. Can't really blame them, either. Seems every time they turn around, it costs them more to keep bread on the table, clothes on their backs and even a roof over their heads. We thought it only fair to let you know that a lot of those folks are beginning to wonder if you people in Ottawa can do anything to help them.

This public confidence sure is a fragile thing.

Actually, Doc, that's really why we're writing. You see, we've heard tell that you fellas are thinking about voting yourselves a 50 per cent pay hike. And we've got to tell you that people in Halton aren't likely to take too kindly to the idea. To tell the truth, we can't think of anything you could do that would more alienate them.

Not to say that you don't deserve more money. Certainly, you and most of your colleagues took hefty cuts in pay to take on the burden of public office. And we recognize that it costs a lot of money to maintain two residences, keep the riding organization in tune and be everywhere you're supposed to be when you're supposed to be there. And with the hours you fellas work and the responsibilities you have to shoulder, there's no question that you

earn every penny you get.

But the guy on the street, who's got to make every dollar count now and who doesn't know what the future holds, is unlikely to look at it that way.

All he's likely to understand is that a bunch of people who already make thousands of dollars more than we are, on the one hand, telling him not to be greedy and, on the other, dipping into his pocket to give themselves even more. We just don't know how you could explain it to him, Doc. Or how you would tell a family facing a Christmas little more than bleak and a coming year not much brighter than you just can't get by on much less than \$40,000 a year. We can't for the life of us see how you could do it.

Sorry to have been so somber, Doc. We just thought you'd want to know what the folks back home are thinking. After all, knowing what the people think, and how they feel, might help you make better decisions.

