

WHY NOT JOIN US IN THE NEW YEAR?



CASUAL CAMARADERIE

The CBC (Coffee, Books and Conversation) club wrapped up its first successful year last Friday with a large gathering of regulars and newcomers. Among those who attended the Christmas party were (left to right) Ann Beaton, Esme Ball, chief librarian Betsy Cornwell, CBC host Norman Elson, Ronald Stevens, Richard Forster, Tove Lombro and Richard Whetter. The

club meets regularly Friday afternoons and provides an opportunity for people to come by for a chat, not just about books but anything that happens to come to mind. It's a very casual organization without an official membership (anyone can stop by) and is a warm, receptive place for people to meet each other.

(Herald photo)

Ben Case's 92 Christmases

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Over the years, the presents have included lots of books, games and warm clothes.

"I remember getting a hand sleigh with iron runners to share with my brother," Mr. Case recalled. "It was made by a local carpenter."

He also remembers getting a pair of spring skates, which he put to good use on the mill pond ice. Unlike hockey skates, which hadn't been developed yet, the spring skates fastened onto snow boots with clamps.

HOME FUN
"If there was ice Christmas, we would be skating. If not, we'd be sleighriding," Mr. Case said.

Without radios or televisions, children and adults in the 1890s kept themselves entertained with homemade fun, Mr. Case said.

"We had our own games, you know, like card games and bowling games in the long hall, checkers or crokinole," he said.

It was a special treat every Christmas when the Case family would make the trip out to visit the paternal side of the family, 30 miles distant.

"It was a long trip and it was quite an occasion to drive there," Mr. Case recalled. "We'd go by horse and cutter and it would take about three or four hours to get there."

Once there, they would stay overnight and celebrate with cousins, aunts

and uncles who would all gather.
Each Christmas, there would be a Sunday School concert held in the church, Mr. Case recalled, peppered with skills between the choruses.

TONE DEAF
"My brother and I were tone deaf and weren't much of an asset to the church concert," he laughed. "Our family made up in numbers what we lacked in talent." They were three sons and one daughter.

Christmas dinner at grandmothers always featured turkey with stuffing, mince meat pie

and plum pudding, all home-cooked, of course, Mr. Case said.

The turkeys had to be plucked by hand before they went into the roasting pan.

Later, during the first world war, Mr. Case spent four Christmases abroad, in the artillery division.

"We'd start with an extra rum issue on Christmas morning, then there'd be a concert in an old barn, village hall or abandoned French ammunition pit," he remembered. "The cook would have a special dinner for us, which often

wasn't very special."

The day would be spent quietly visiting each other in the dugouts, and the guns would be silent as a rule, Christmas Day, he said.

Now, Mr. Case spends Christmases quietly in his home. He used to go to a niece in Kitchener but finds the trip too much, especially now that he doesn't drive. His 88-year old sister comes up to visit from Toronto.

As for eating turkey, Mr. Case says he isn't keen on it. It makes for dry eating, he says, and plans to roast lamb or ham instead.

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