

# In your opinion

# Lots of socks, only one toy for Christmas

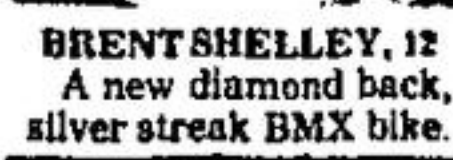


**MARISSA FOWLER, 4**  
I would like a Cabbage Patch doll, crall catty and slippers and shoes - that's all.



What would you like for Christmas?

**TRACY BARWEGEN, 10**  
A Simon game, a new pen and some books.



**BRENT SHELLEY, 12**  
A new diamond back, silver streak BMX bike.



**TARA CLARK, 10**  
A Care Bear, a Cabbage Patch kid, film for my camera. A telephone for my room.



**CRAIG COOPER, 11**  
A colesco vision, Zaxxon cartridge, New California light pads for my BMX bike.

Christmas was less commercial and more of a family celebration say some of the older members of the community.

Caught chatting about past Christmases Friday were Coffee, Conversation, Books (CBC) members Ron Stevens, 70, Bob Barber, 72, Aileen Douglas, 77, and Waverley Haist, 59. The four were sharing their Christmas-time experiences with one another in the library.

"When I was a youngster in England, Christmas was much more of a home affair and one spent a lot of time preparing for it because there wasn't the money to buy the decorations," Mr. Stevens said. "I've a feeling that because we participated in it we enjoyed it more."

Boxing day was the day for visiting grandmothers and those who weren't able to travel, with the object of delivering Christmas boxes to them, Mr. Stevens said.

"In England, we'd eat turkey and plum pudding on the 25th. In those days, it was the only time you ate turkey," he said. "The mince pies and Christmas pudding were all homemade. There was no bought stuff because people just didn't have the money in those days to go out and buy Christmas fare."

Mr. Barber's dad used to carve the turkey for Christmas dinner. By the time he was ready to eat his dinner, the first of his eight children would be back for seconds, Mr. Barber

laughed.

"I used to look forward to Christmas. Every one of us eight children would put our own stocking on the wooden strip along the mantelpiece," Mr. Barber recalled. "I think we were the earliest ones down to our gifts of the whole neighborhood."

Right at the toe of his stocking would be an orange, he said.

"You got oranges, nuts and raisins and you were expected to put them all back in the fruit bowl after," Mr. Stevens laughed. "They were just stocking stuffers."

The presents Santa brought were much more practical than those children receive nowadays.

"The economic conditions were such that presents were more of a practical nature, in the form of socks than in the nature of electronic games," Mr. Stevens said.

Nevertheless, children used to write their messages to Santa, set it on fire and let it blow up the chimney. That way they were sure he got it. They were also expected to put out cookies and a glass of wine for Santa, Mr. Stevens said.

There was always one toy for each child at Waverley Haist's home.

"I was born in 1924. We weren't desperately poor, but we were practical," she said. "My baby brother practically refused to open a present if it wasn't a toy, because he knew he'd be getting a lot of socks."

At Mrs. Haist's home, the Christmas tree didn't go up until after all the little ones had gone to bed Christmas Eve.

"It was just like magic the next morning. The Christmas tree

was there, all decorated, and the toys were underneath," she said.

One Christmas afternoon, Mrs. Haist recalled how she'd been visiting her Aunt Maggie who lived on a farm on the outskirts of Guelph when Santa drove up in

a horse and cutter and, because he was going too fast, he rolled out.

"I remember a steam engine I got, with a long chimney and belts and a boiler. You put water in the boiler and you heated it with solidified fuel," Mr. Barber recalled.

led. "As soon as the steam came out on top you knew you could start the engine."

It was always a fresh Christmas tree that went right up to the ceiling at Mr. Barber's home.

"We had a ritual, Christmas Eve," he said. "My dad would decorate the tree. He was always very meticulous. We didn't have lights in those days. We had candles that pinched onto the tree branches."

## The right slice for turkey dinner

By CHRIS AAGAARD  
Herald Staff Writer

Knives in hand, there's a right way and a wrong way to approach a Christmas turkey basking in its own succulent steam on the dining room table.

Paul O'Brien knows; he owns O'Brien Meats, a butcher-grocery shop on Acton's Mill Street. Here, with a few deft strokes of his knife, he turns unwieldy carcasses into dinner table sculptures and he is particularly busy filling orders for the holiday season.

So, there's no question about who handles the carving in the O'Brien household.

"I remove the leg section first," he told The Herald recently while addressing a haunch with a fillet knife. "I slice down to the drumstick, lifting out the dark meat first. For the rest of the bird, he follows a simple rule of thumb:

**TOP DOWN**

He carves the succulent white meat of the breast, slicing in a smooth downward stroke from the neck of the bird towards the

legs.

Today's turkeys, he said, just about cook themselves, requiring little attention while in the oven. People setting out to cook their first bird must remember to take out the little bag of giblets - the neck, heart and liver - before stuffing the turkey and popping it in the oven.

Depending on whether the bird is frozen or fresh, the giblet bag may be at the neck or at the rear of the cavity near the legs. They can be saved to make stock, gravy or added to the stuffing.

The stuffing (or dressing) should be taken out of the bird once it's ready to serve, Mr. O'Brien advised. Left in the cavity too long, "it can pick up an odor and give an offensive taste to the meat."

Mr. O'Brien has noticed that another sort of

turkey dinner, slightly less traditional, but favored by couples and people who aren't feeding a large family. It's a boneless turkey roast, with the white and dark meat rolled together.

Turkey isn't the only thing people tuck into at the Yule table. Mr. O'Brien has noticed lately that almost 50 per cent of his customers are asking for minced or cubed pork or beef, and sometimes veal.

They're among the ingredients found in tortiere, a French-Canadian, spicy meat pie which the O'Brien family also happens to enjoy at Christmas as well. Families maintaining ethnic traditions enjoy duck, goose or lamb over the holidays.

A fatter bird than the turkey, a cooking goose needs to be drained periodically



Action butcher Paul O'Brien says there are many other foods besides turkey which make their own special contribution to holiday dining. But, if you're dedicated to tradition, turkey should be prepared and carved properly.

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