

living IN THE HILLS

A Christmas special from Ballinafad

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The Herald

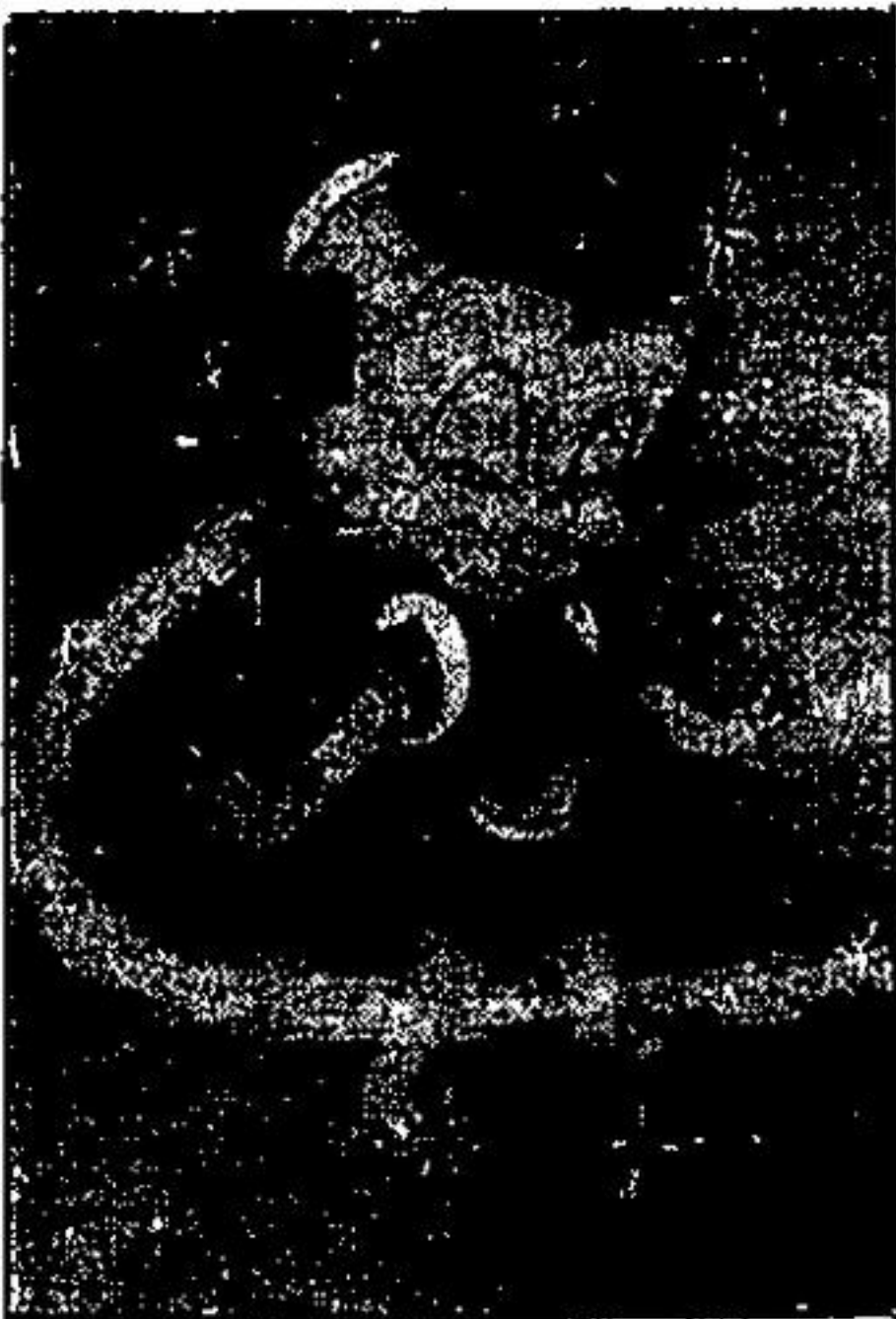
Soulmates in life, Gabrielle St. George and husband Dom Vetro of Ballinafad, have created and produced an animated Christmas Special "The Gift of Light" which appropriately features two animated heroes known as 'SoulMates' which will air next Wednesday (Nov. 27) on CBC at 7:30 p.m.

The animated SoulMates are two Valley Kid type aliens on a mission to save a disenchanted Santa Claus from becoming a homeless bum in the half-hour special.

In real-life, the soulmates are Ms. St. George and Mr. Vetro, a wife and husband team who collaborated to produce their first-ever animated special.

Their venture began several years ago when Ms. St. George, a film major at York University, received a fellowship jointly funded by CTV and Telefilm Canada, creating a position for her as Assistant Story Editor on the CBS police show, 'Night Heat.'

After the 20 weeks of her fellowship, Ms. St. George was offered a permanent full-time position as Story Editor on Night Heat along with a contract to write an episode as a freelance writer.



Two years later, after having edited over 50 Night Heat episodes and writing six Night Heat scripts, she accepted an offer to be the Story Editor on the CBS-CTV detective series 'Diamonds'. She worked as Story Editor on this show for one season and wrote two Diamond scripts.

In the interim, she married Dom Vetro, a Wilfred Laurier business major graduate, who played professional football for four years with the Montreal Alouettes and Hamilton Tiger-Cats. When his football career was cut short by a car accident, he used his business degree to begin several businesses in Toronto and Brampton.

By 1988, Ms. St. George wanted a change. Being a Story Editor meant gruelling 80-hour weeks and with a young son, it wasn't the ideal lifestyle.

"While on Diamonds I was asked to be the story editor for the journalism drama 'ENG' and I said to them, basically, you want me to put my son up for adoption. They said yes and I said no," recalls Ms. St. George.

To find something that would allow her time with her family and incorporate a desire to do something for children, she decided to bring some of her own ideas to the screen as an independent producer.

She created the SoulMates and her husband became the contractual negotiator, financial advisor and production manager.

"I'm a strong believer in positive thinking," she says. "With all the

things children have to face today such as war and crime, I think kids need all the help they can get with positive thinking."

Positive thinking is what the SoulMates, named Orion and Orillia, are all about. Using special power and insight, they're on a mission to Earth to fight the evil Angris McBragg, who uses his wizardly powers to spread negativity and disillusionment around the world.

By the time the SoulMates reach earth, Angris has used a dirty trick to make a seeing eye dog believe he can no longer help his little charge Ella and as the rippling effect of negativity spreads, even Santa Claus becomes disillusioned and sets off into the night believing he can't make a difference anymore.

Just as the prospect of having a joyous Christmas looks its bleakest, the SoulMates save the day in a nail-biting adventure you'll have to see Wednesday night.

The production features many big-name Canadian stars including TV Star Al Waxman (King of Kensington) as the voice of Angris McBragg; movie star Sheila McCarthy (Die Hard 2, Stepping Out, Paradise) as Orillia and Gema Zamprogna (Felicity on Road to Avonlea) as the little blind girl, Ella.

The show also features a rocking soundtrack, developed by Domenic Troiano, who worked with the Guess Who and created music scores for Night Heat and the new TV show, Counterstrike.

Now that SoulMates is set to air, Ms. St. George and Mr. Vetro are hoping for high ratings which will springboard the feature as a pilot for a Soulmates television series.

"It was originally made as a Christmas special to play year after year," said Ms. St. George. "But the second part of the project was that the show would serve as a pilot for a Saturday morning cartoon series."

Already CBC has indicated interest in creating a cartoon series said Ms. St. George, who has already outlined the first 13 episodes.

If it does work out, SoulMates Productions Inc. would become a full-time job for producer Mr. Vetro and require consistent creative input from Ms. St. George. They've even discussed opening a SoulMates office in Georgetown to serve as a meeting place for writers and a base for financial operations.

Besides SoulMates, Ms. St. George is hoping to open a new door in feature film writing.

She's already completed her first feature film script called 'Heart and Soul' which is a romantic comedy about an elderly woman who breaks out of a nursing home, meets a bank robber and has an adventure.

She's just completed a second rewrite on the script for film and TV producer Henry Winkler who wants to produce the movie.

Glamorous? You bet, Ms. St. George just got back from Los Angeles where she met with Mr. Winkler to discuss the movie.

"I like the hard work and the glamor," she admits. "I also like getting to put my family first and live out in the middle of nowhere."

The couple has lived at their stately Ballinafad home for two years after residing in Limehouse for three years.

Their house is up for sale and they're considering moving to California but if they don't, they plan to stay in Halton Hills.

Currently, all thoughts of the bright lights of Hollywood are being pushed aside as they wait to see how successful their first big-time project, SoulMates, will be.



Mates in animation

Husband and wife team Gabrielle St. George (left) and Dom Vetro cozy up at their Ballinafad home to watch a tape of their animation creation, "The Gift of Light" which airs 7:30 p.m. on CBC Nov. 27. (Herald Photo by Lisa Boonstoppel-Pot)



Santa a bum?

In this scene from the animated feature film, "The Gift of Light," a disillusioned Santa Claus becomes a homeless bum and befriends a seeing eye dog, Trueman, who's been cruelly tricked into

believing his slight is falling by a wicked wizard. It's a sad scene from the Christmas special created and produced by Gabrielle St. George and her husband Dom Vetro of Ballinafad. (Photo submitted)



Happy ending

The animated Christmas special created by Gabrielle St. George of Ballinafad ends on a happy note as all good Christmas shows do and features

Santa Claus, Comet, Trueman the seeing eye dog and Santa's helpers. It airs Nov. 27 on CBC. (Photo submitted)