

EDITORIAL

with Frances Learment

Comfort and joy

Some times you don't even have to go looking for holiday cheer – it arrived recently by phone and email – and underscored the basic decency of people at this time of year when the focus, and search, is for peace and goodwill.

A grateful Acton mom thought that the “elves” – current and retired posties – at the Acton Post Office deserved high praise for helping redirect a letter from Santa to her son.

The nine-year-old will be spending the holidays with his family in Palm Springs, California, and he used his grandparent's USA address for his return address on a wish-list missive to Santa. An alert supervisor in Acton wanted to make sure that Santa's response got to the boy, so she tracked down his family and made sure that Santa had an Acton address for his return letter.

The boy had some cross-boarder panic when he thought that Santa might have missed him – but his mother appreciated the Post Office going above and beyond – calling it a “sweet gesture” that will make the holidays much happier. No kidding.

The other bit of good cheer came from dedicated members of the Paul Murr Memorial Golf Tournament committee, who over the past 28 years, have raised \$939,000 for Cancer research with their annual tourney in Acton.

The money they raise – \$50,000 this year for the Acton Branch of the Canadian Cancer Society, and \$6,730 for Cancer Assistance Services of Halton Hills – helps pay for the research that led to a shift in cancer outcomes. For the first time ever, a majority of people with cancer – 62 per cent – following a diagnosis.

As with most people who do good, neither the Post Office staff nor Murr committee members wanted or expected any praise, content with knowing their actions made a real difference.

Looking Back



Ten Years Ago

- The spirit of Christmas was alive and thriving in 12 year old Dylan Walsh of Acton who organized his second annual toy drive at Robert Little School for needy Third World children.

- If Dr. Nather Alshakarji practices medicine in Acton for five years, Town Council will forgive a \$10,000 relocation loan he owes to a Milton medical group that earlier brought him from Newfoundland.

Five Years Ago

- With help from a Trillium Foundation grant, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Halton launched an after-school tutoring program at St. Joseph Catholic School.

- Construction began on a Community Hub at McKenzie-Smith Bennett School. The Hub will provide free meeting and workshop space to local social service groups.



HOLIDAY ELVIS: Roy LeBlanc channelled Elvis as he entertained a large crowd with a Christmas gospel concert at the Rockwood United Church on Sunday. – Ted Tyler photo

Reindeer Games

Last year, long before I truly understood Little J's fascination with reindeer, I saw and immediately bought without any hesitation a collector set of the original *Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer* movie and *Frosty the Snowman*.

I will admit at first I bought it for me. Every year at this time, even now, when Rudolph, Frosty or Santa Claus is Coming to Town is on television, I find myself watching it just like I did when I was a young girl. Burle Ives singing Holly Jolly Christmas is a wonderful and comforting moment for me. It was long before animation, 3D and video games.

As Little J's adoration of reindeer has grown this year (by the way, her herd is now at a healthy six, with only a few more needed for an official sleigh team), I have been looking forward to sharing my love of these classic television shows with her.

Then I hit a snag. I couldn't remember where I placed the movies. I went to the obvious spot...the indoor decorations box. In the box was all my decorations including her Elf on the Shelf she got last year. That thing creeps me out. If you haven't heard of it, it is an Elf that spies on the family and “re-



By
Angela Tyler

ports” back to Santa every night. The parents have to move the elf around every night so the kids think the elf really flies back to the North Pole. I keep thinking of the KGB. I had no problem finding Ernie the Spy Elf, but I couldn't find the movies. After searching every nook and cranny and every mommy/Santa hiding spot, I finally found them and Sunday night after the little guy was asleep the six of us...Dude, me, Little J, Baby Rudolph, Ralphie and Clarice, sat down for her first official viewing of *Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer* with Burle Ives narrating and singing.

I was pleased as punch. It was going to be one of those special moments. Then I remembered that Rudolph isn't the happiest movie. Rudolph gets bullied by the other kids. He's made fun of even by the reindeer coach. He's ostracized. He is made to conceal his true identity to protect his family from ridicule by others. There is a scary monster. There is a gold prospector that snaps the whip on his dog sled team pretty

harshly and there is a massive snow storm that almost destroys Christmas. And to top it off, Santa gets mad at the elves for a song they make for him and up until the end he's so skinny he looks like he has an eating disorder. Actually, maybe he does, because Mrs. Claus almost has to force him to eat, then he gets rotund for the big trip around the world and he slims down again; classic eating disorder red-flags.

Between the Sputnik elf, the bullied reindeer and the bulimic Santa, I was starting to re-think my choice of our Christmas tradition. Then as the movie ended on a happy note with Ives singing away, I realized that Little J was smiling from ear to ear.

That night as she was tucked into bed, she asked if Ernie was going to fly back to Santa and wondered what Santa was doing right then. I told her he was probably taking notes from the elves about how the day went for all the boys and girls around the world, and I was sure Ernie was going to give a great report for her. Life was good. She had her reindeer in her bed and Ernie and Santa were cool and the movie wasn't scary because go figure, we watched it again the next night and I'm pretty sure every night until Christmas.



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