

# Opinion

**Halton Hills THIS WEEK**

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## A special time of the year

Merry Christmas everybody! Merry, merry Christmas!

It's a time of the year when smiles are a little more genuine, wishes are a little more hearty and our pockbooks open up a little more.

Not to say that commercialism should supersede the true meaning of Christmas. No one, however, can deny the wonderful feeling you experience when someone you really care for opens that perfect present, the one you knew was perfect the second you saw it, or made it for that matter.

And so what if you don't have the money to buy the most luxurious gifts. Money, although something, is not everything. Having people who love and respect you, having a roof over your head and some food in your belly (usually at Christmas-time, this criteria is filled quite nicely) is most important ... everything else is trimmings.

A real Christmas is Thanksgiving with snow. It's all too easy to get wrapped up in financial worries and not recognize the pleasure of speaking to family members long-distance or seeing those once-a-year relatives who, although imperfect, are still yours. Maybe uncle Charlie picks his teeth at the dinner table, but he always asks about the kids and he picked you up at the mechanic's last month when the car was being fixed.

What about the joy you get from reading about homeless children who have received presents because of the generosity of others. Be thankful there are still people out there who care for others' welfare, and that you are not one whose welfare needs caring for. (Although a little caring feels pretty good.)

Instead of complaining of the few days off you have been given for the holidays, think of the volunteers who are handing out food-baskets on Christmas Day instead of spending time with their families.

A real Christmas does not belong to any one religion - it's a beautiful tradition (it doesn't matter whose) which gives us an excuse to not worry, not hurry, and take the time to smell the holly.

Oksana Buhel

## The Christmas Myth

To the Editor:

It is a myth the urban resident pays for the garbage disposal of rural residents. Worse, when this myth is repeated by our mayor, Russ Miller, the rural resident needs a new spokesperson.

When urban (town) residents get services that rural residents do not get, the rural taxes are less than the town taxes.

Our mayor signs the booklet every year called "Taxpayer Information". Page two of the 1993 booklet shows the rural tax is \$165.02 per year less than the town tax on the average home assessed at \$5,700. The booklet states that 88 per cent of this is garbage. For the paltry sum of \$145 per year, \$2.79 per week, the town gets garbage pick-up and disposal. Can anyone believe that \$145 per year pays for these services and further subsidizes rural garbage disposal as well? That's the myth Region, and our mayor are trying to put over on rural residents to justify rural residents being charged \$5 per visit to the dump.

There are two aspects to a full garbage system: Collection and disposal.

Traditionally garbage pick-up was always a town service because long rural routes dictated against rural pick-up. However, both rural and urban dwellers always had garbage disposal at a local dump included in their taxes.

The only recourse to rural dwellers is to question the urban service charge to town residences.

The rural reduction in taxes has to start at \$260. (garbage disposal cost paid by rural resident that is included in town resident's taxes). Thereafter, you must add to the rural tax reduction the town person's costs of garbage collection and special refuse pick-up, street lights and crossing guards.

Rural residents must demand a complete review of the urban service area charge. Nothing less than a \$600 tax reduction seems acceptable to cover the difference in services between rural and urban taxes.

Rural dwellers, start calling your councillor now! Demand a detailed accounting of the urban service charge.

**D.B. Morrow**  
**R.R. #1, Norval**

## The People's Corner

### Christmas traditions and plants

By Grace C. Lockwood  
 Special to HHTW

Plants have always played an important role in our Christmas traditions. The use of evergreens, cones and herbs in the making of wreaths and garlands dates back to the Egyptians at least 1000 years before Christ. Wreaths and garlands have also been recorded in Oriental, Persian, ancient Hebrew and Druid history. Evergreens especially symbolize eternal life with their "evergreen" foliage in the dead of winter.

Holly, ivy and mistletoe are popular decorations today but have a rich symbolic history. Holly is synonymous with Christmas and the name is thought to be derived from Holy tree. The Druids considered it to be sacred with the power to repel evil spirits and protect a dwelling from lightning.

Later, the berries were said to be white until the blood of Christ spilled on them and turned them red. Ivy was associated with Bacchus, the Greek god of wine and it was believed that ivy berries eaten before imbibing prevented intoxication (unfortunately not true). It is now a symbol of love because of its clinging growth habit.

Mistletoe was another plant sacred to the Druids, especially when found on oak trees. They used it for religious and medicinal purposes. The traditions of kissing beneath the mistletoe has its roots in Norse mythology.

An arrow tipped with

mistletoe was used to kill Balder, the Norse god of light and goodness. His grief-stricken mother, Frigg, then commanded that the

plant be used only for peace from then on. Meeting under a suspended mistletoe, enemies must make peace and members of the opposite sex kiss each other for love and friendship. This developed into the kissing bush. The kissing bush is usually made by fitting four rings together to form a sphere, then decorating the rings with evergreens, mistletoe and other personal touches and suspended from the ceiling or doorway. Sometimes the Holy Family is placed within the sphere.

Lesser known Christmas plants include the boxwood, used by ancient Hebrews in the Feast of the Tabernacle, and rosemary whose white flowers reputedly turned blue when Mary spread the Infant Child's clothing on a bush to dry. The poinsettia is a relatively new addition to Christmas flowers. In Mexican lore, a poor girl wanted to bring a present to the Christ Child in a rich cathedral. An angel told her to pick the weeds by the roadside and as she brought them up the aisle, the top-most leaves burst into a brilliant red. The poinsettia was introduced to the US. by a



D r Poinsett and is now irreplaceable. Other Christmas flowers include the Christmas rose (hellebore) which blooms

then it was burned during the twelve days of Christmas and the ashes kept to fertilize the fruit trees for a good harvest. Sometimes the log was partially burned then covered with a cloth and presents hidden underneath for the children.

The Christmas tree as we know it began in Germany around the 16th century.

The earliest trees were decorated with apples and sweets but had no lights. Candles were normally put on a pyramid beside the tree. Legend has it that Martin Luther (1483 - 1546) was walking home through the woods one winter evening. The stars were so beautiful that he put candles in an evergreen tree to show his children what the first Christmas night sky may have looked like. From then on, the custom of putting up Christmas trees spread slowly through northern Europe.

It became widely popular after Queen Victoria married Prince Albert and spread the custom through England. German immigrants had already brought the tree to the U.S. in the 1700's and now it is a cherished part of the holiday season for everyone.

Our Christmas traditions have their origins in many different cultures, some are ancient and others new. Yet they blend harmoniously to create a rich background for a wonderful season. May your Christmas be joyous and safe, and Happy Growing in 1994!

## Community Open House

The Cooperative Program Planning Committee of Halton Hills will once again be hosting a Community Open House. This year's event will be the fifth edition of this community organization showcase.

It will be taking place on March 25, from 5-9 p.m. and March 26, from 10 a.m.-5 p.m., at the Georgetown Marketplace Indoor Mall.

This event will provide an opportunity to promote the services of local organizations, recruit new members and help commemorate The International Year of the Family: 1994.

If you haven't yet received your registration form for this event, and are interested in participating, please contact Joy Thompson at The Recreation and Parks Department at 873-2600, ext. 263.



## Christmas celebration

Nicholas Newby (left) Katie Banks and Sarah Berry helped get the audience into the Christmas spirit at Acton's M.Z. Bennett public school Christmas pageant.

HHTW photo