

GRAPE VINE

'Heritage' brackets

The first of 44 new brackets for the downtown area's hanging flower baskets have arrived, and they're drawing rave reviews.

The new brackets were purchased by the Acton B.I.A. and they will replace the existing ones, which are attached to lampposts throughout the downtown.

B.I.A. members are betting on the new brackets attracting a lot of attention from both Actonites and visitors. They are made out of heavy cast iron and feature the words "Town of Acton" above a pair of old-style storefronts.

"Everyone who has seen the new brackets has loved them," enthused B.I.A. director Dan Dolliver Monday. "They should really improve the look of downtown."

Dan expects the brackets to be installed early in the new year.

Ski lessons offered

Calling all young skiers! The Town's Rec and Parks department, along with the Glen Eden Ski area, is offering an incredible package deal for 8 to 14-year-olds this winter.

The eight-week program includes bus transportation with adult supervision, lessons with qualified instructors and a lift pass for \$192.23.

No experience is necessary, and if you don't have your own equip-

ment, rentals are available for \$11 a day. Transportation is not a problem, as a bus will pick up and drop off participants at McKenzie-Smith school.

For registration info call 873-2600, ext. 275.

No charges laid

Halton Regional Police stopped 1,892 vehicles last week (Monday through Sunday) in the third week of their annual R.I.D.E. program.

Police conducted 11 roadside screening tests and handed out two 12-hour suspensions. No impaired charges were laid.

The program will continue until New Year's. So far, a total of 5,452 autos have been pulled over, with 35 tests, nine suspensions and seven individuals being charged with impaired driving.

Pool closing

As you may already know, the Acton Indoor Pool is closed right now.

The pool was shut down on Friday for its annual maintenance and repairs. It will reopen on Monday, Jan. 2.

A Christmas Wish

In keeping with the holiday spirit we asked Acton municipal councillor and B.I.A. secretary Gerald Rennie for his Christmas wish. Here's what he replied:

"My Christmas wish for this year is that we finally resolve all the problems that have stalled this community and that we can begin building in Acton East. I hope that we can put all those fish studies behind us in 1995."

The only suitable response to that is - *Let's just hope that Santa is listening!*

HEY!

Any suggestions for Santa Claus?



"I would like a snowboard because it's fun, and Polly Pocket Ferry Wonderland. I hope I can play in the snow this Christmas."

Dallas Leperd, Hwy. 7

"I would like a Lego fire station and a new Matchbox rescue centre. I saw the fire station in the store and I wanted it, and I saw the rescue centre in a magazine."

J.D. Hartnagle, John Street

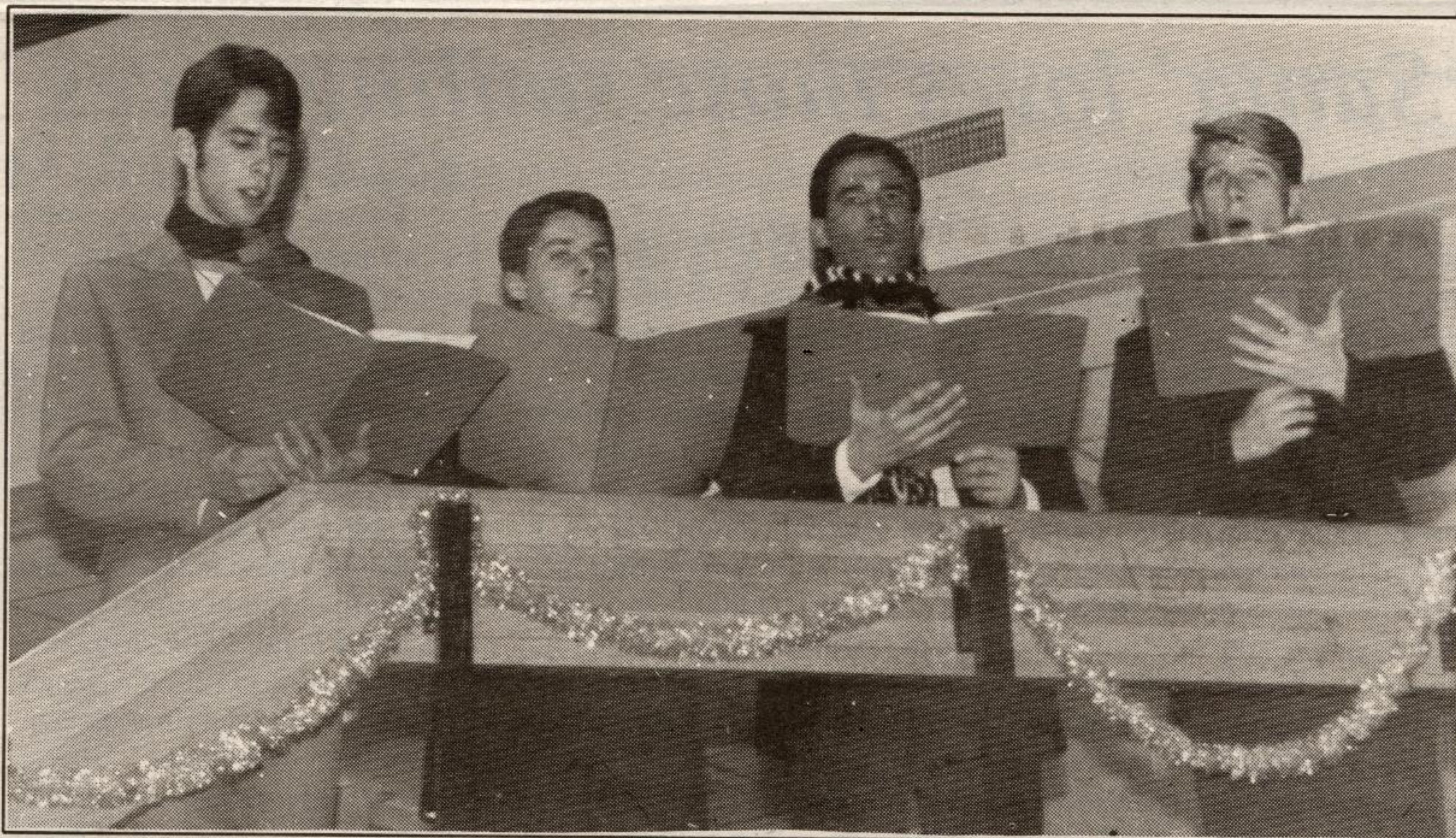
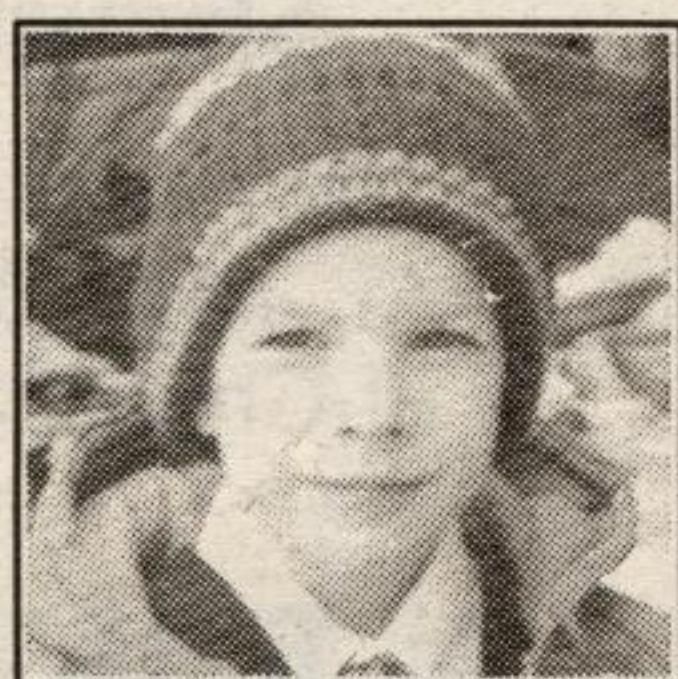


"I would like some roller-blades, because they are fun. I enjoy Christmas Eve the most during the holidays."

Carolyn Crowther, Main Street

"I want Biker Mice (good guys) and Boss (the bad guy), and Lego set truck and road. I can't wait to open up presents and try out my new toys on Christmas morning."

Ryan Martin, Birchway Place



CHRISTMAS CAROLLERS! The Acton High Christmas quartet of, from left, Gene Stuckless, Matt Gerhard, teacher Peter Wilcox and Bill Koeslag entertained visitors during the intermission of the school's annual Christmas concert on Thursday. (Doug Harrison photo)

Dreams of Christmas Past

On the night before Christmas, when all through the house, not a creature is stirring - I like to gaze at the fire and think of Christmases past.

Our children always talk about this Christmas or that one, trying to decide which was the best. At our house, Christmas stories are almost as important as what's under the tree.

The kids are now realizing that these memories of family Christmases will last longer and become more valuable with the telling and the passing of time. I hope that some of my remembrances will stir the memories of "Christmas Past" for you.

My earliest Christmas memories revolve around the preparations. Dad would bring home the Christmas turkey, freshly killed, from the butcher. No frozen turkeys then. The neck would be wrapped in bloody brown paper. Most of the feathers would be off, but my grandmother and I would pluck the rest, out on the back porch. Then the claws would be sawed off.

I remember that you could pull the ligaments of the severed claw and watch the toes curl up. Great fun, when you were 7 or 8 years old.

It fell to Nana to burn the pinfeathers off the turkey. This was accomplished by holding the bird over the gas range, simultaneously arguing with my mother as to the procedure. Each year I would learn some new words.

The houses weren't well insulated, so staying warm through the night was a nightly challenge. The job of "banking the coals" fell to the men of the family (my dad and me) and was the last chore before bedtime. I can remember sitting in the basement with my dad as he explained how the coal had to be banked up the sides of the huge furnace. Then came the delicate task of adjusting the drafts so you would have a slow burning fire, which would last the night. It was quite a procedure.

Dad and I would sit in front of the furnace with the door open. The fire would be white hot at the bottom with flames dancing up the side. Dad would spit, through a gap in his front teeth, right into the middle of the fire - I'd try to follow his lead but usually only

The Way I See It

With Mike O'Leary



ended up with spittle dribbling down my chin. He'd laugh at my efforts and shoo me off to bed. I thought he was the cleverest guy alive.

Funny, the things you remember.

We weren't rich, we weren't poor, we were Irish. In the early '50s the Irish in Toronto were starting to move up the social scale. My dad worked six days a week and one Sunday a month. Most dads worked these hours, and most moms stayed home. It was important to put on the "best face" you could. Much time and effort went into making the most of what we had.

There were no discount stores or warehouse outlets in those days. Anyone who had contacts and could "get it for you wholesale" was a popular fellow. My dad had "contacts."

I remember one Christmas when I got a train set. In addition to running around the track, the train whistled and, if you dropped a special pellet down the stack, it puffed real smoke. Or at least it was supposed to.

When mine whistled, it sounded like someone was strangling a loon. The pellet in the stack created a smell not unlike a pig farm. The transformer sparked and smoked where it was attached to the tracks. It blew house fuses regularly. The tracks would come apart when the engine went around the corner at the ends. This killed the power and stopped the train. This was my "big" present. You only got one big thing.

After Mass that Christmas, all us kids gathered in front of the church to compare notes on what Santa had brought. In addition to hockey sticks, pucks and the like, we all got a train set. Unfortunately, our moms told us, Santa must have dropped our trains on the way down the chimney. It never occurred to us that it was odd that Santa could be so consistently clumsy.

My poor dad caught plenty of dirty looks that Christmas morning. It ended his career as a wholesaler. Long into the new year, Mom would mumble "you and your wholesale" whenever she wanted to end an argument between them. Mom never lost arguments.

I don't have any personal favourite Christmas - I enjoy them all. Our most dramatic was possibly the year our oldest daughter was born.

Cathy had to have surgery on her arm that year. We were understandably panicked that our 6-month-old had to be in hospital. After the operation, we were with her in her room. Although she had a huge bandage on her arm, she was obviously healthy and as the anesthetic wore off, she was alert and happy.

The other children were really sick. The little girl in the next bed suffered from hydrocephaly. That same morning she had a brain shunt put in to reduce the pressure on her brain. Compared to her, our kid was ready to run the marathon. Her mother was gracious enough to be concerned about Cathy's surgery, even though her child was in far more serious condition.

We brought Cathy home on Dec. 23. Whenever I worry that we don't have all that I'd like, I think of Christmas 1969 and am grateful for the abundance we have.

Christmas memories also bring back seasonal sayings that strike fear into a parent's heart - "some assembly required" is one of the big ones. I suppose some people are better organized than I and get all those chores done in advance. When our kids were small, Christmas Eve would find Mary and me sitting on the floor trying to figure out directions.

It's amazing, isn't it, how toy manufacturers assume their customers are all mechanical engineers. About 3 am we'd head off to bed for a well-deserved four hours sleep. When the kids wake you up, however, it seems worthwhile. Fuzzy, but worthwhile.

This is our last edition of *The Tanner* until the new year. "The bride," the girls and I would like to wish you the merriest Christmas ever. We hope that 1995 will be happy and prosperous for you.

See you in January.