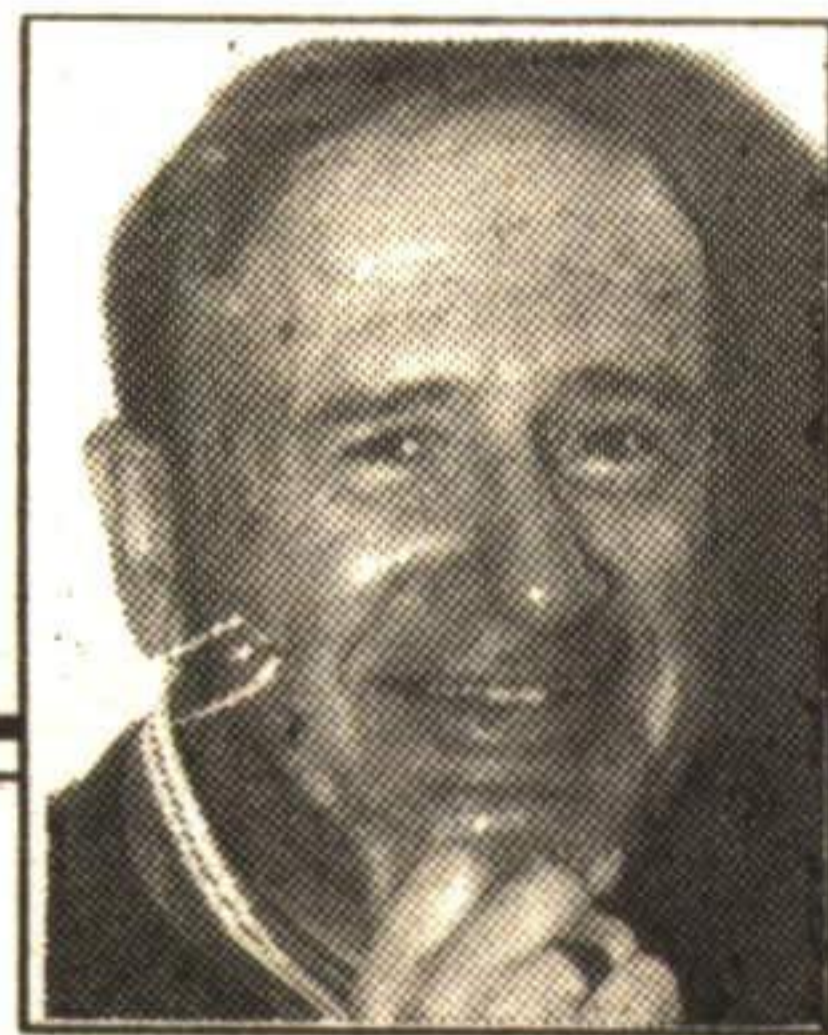


EDITORIAL

With Hartley Coles



Meaning of Christmas

We're standing on the threshold of Christmas, caught up in the frenzy of the season, wishing perhaps we could enjoy it more. Many of us think back to when there was less crass commercialism, less hectic schedules as we approached the holiday (think holy day) and wonder how we got caught up in the frenetic activity of today.

Like most, this writer enjoys both the secular and profane parts of the season but its real significance escapes me when accompanied by frenzied preparations to get everything done by deadline.

Christmas is fundamentally religious. If you take away the reason for the holy day then we are left with only a facade, a children's festival, a gorge at the banquet table. As much as I don't like slick slogans, "Jesus is the reason for the season" sums up what Christmas is all about. The rest is icing on the cake.

Again, like most people, I like all the fluff about falling snow, flickering gaslights silhouetting Dickensian characters singing carols, sleigh bells ringing as cutters glide over the snow in idyllic village settings. They're nostalgic fantasies, mirrors of what life once was, a more quiet and refined time.

We've heard the stories of how Christmas originated in ancient Greece or Rome, how the Druids cut mistletoe and holly to use in their ceremonies at megalithic stone circles in olde England. We've listened to the stories of how Santa Claus originated from some old Norse god and was transformed into a jolly old elf.

Many of us turn mellow when the late Bing Crosby croons, *I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas* for the zillionth time. We enjoy the Christmas dinners with turkey and all the trimmings. We love singing the carols which never seem to lose their appeal. We marvel at Charles Dickens' story of Ebenezer Scrooge and its message.

We're continually delighted by the sudden blossoming of outdoor lights, blushing on bushes, trees, homes and businesses. In our homes we erect a Christmas tree, festooned with lights and garlands and designed as a backdrop for the presents to loved ones.

We like the sights and sounds of the season including the faces of children as they creep downstairs before the stars go to bed, anxious to see if Santa has arrived. We enjoy meeting old friends and new, basking in the good will that radiates during the holidays.

And yet, if all the customs, music and good will of Christmas were to disappear into some dark void, the real message of Christmas would be there for us to ponder and reflect on Dec. 25. It was there centuries before our present customs evolved. Take that away, like some would want, and you are left with what - another day off?

Would we turn Christmas into a Yule festival, devoid of any real meaning except shopping excess and revelry, fed by greed? Would our joy be measured by the rise and fall of the stock index or the percentage of sales over last year?

If we want to preserve the feast and the festivities then obviously we can't overlook the reason for the season. It is best expressed in the New Testament simply and briefly by a writer named Luke:

"And it came to pass in those days that a decree went forth from Caesar Augustus that a census of the whole world should be taken... and Joseph also went from Galilee out of the town of Nazareth into Judea to the town of David, which is called Bethlehem - because he was of the house and family of David - to register together with Mary his espoused wife, who was with child.

"And it came to pass while they were there, that the days for her to be delivered were fulfilled. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."

Luke notes there were shepherds tending their flocks nearby and an angel appeared to them "and they were sore afraid. But the angel said, *'Do not be afraid for behold I bring you good news of great joy, which shall be to all people; for today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you, who is Christ the Lord.'*"

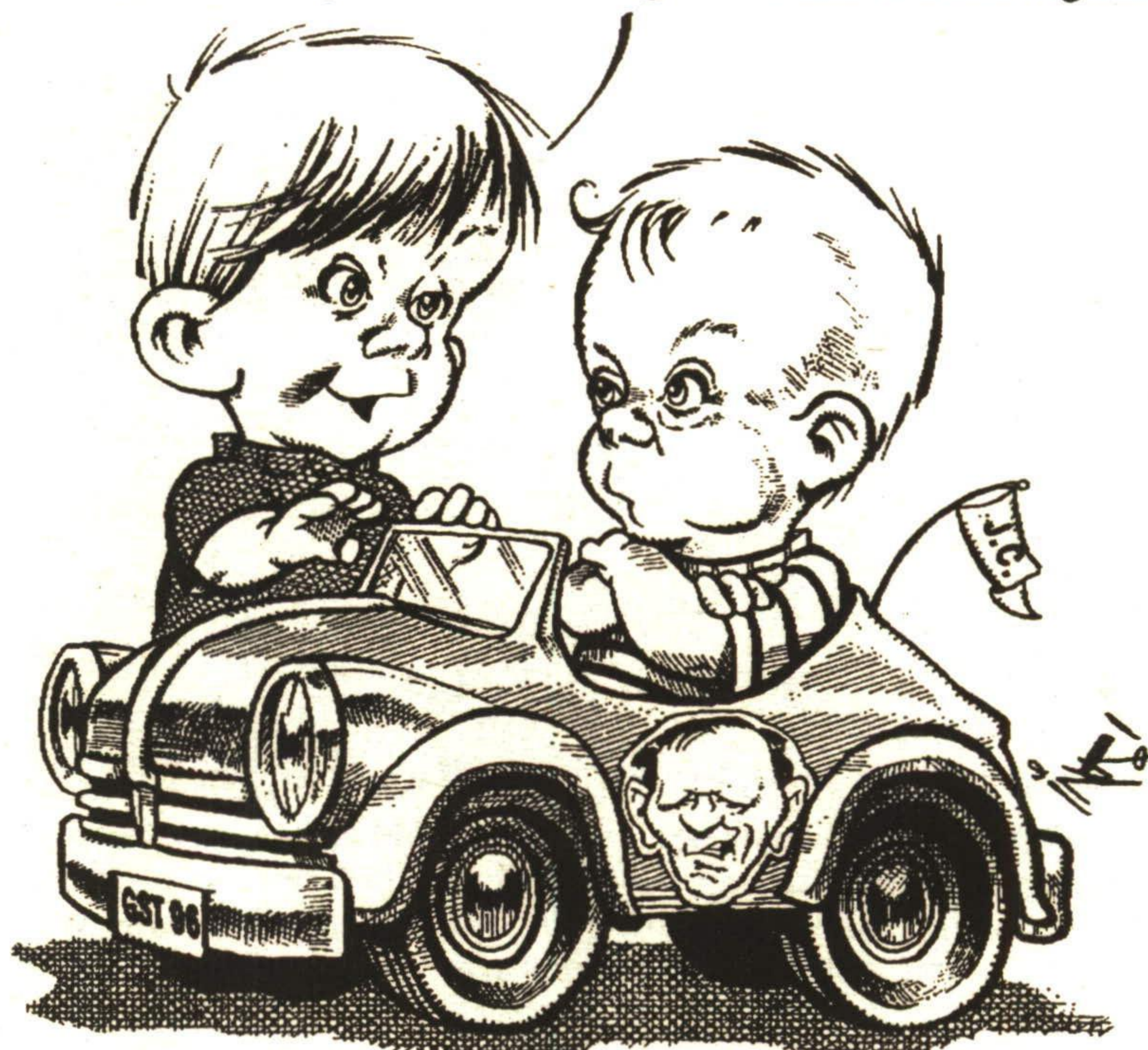
It's the real meaning of CHRISTmas.

And a merry one to you.

Same time last year ...

Halton Flour Milling neighbours present Council a list of problems, including increased noise, which the proposed expansion would cause ... **Andy Katsilieris**, owner of Andy's Restaurant, protests when the Town closes Mill St. to plow the road ... **Beth-El Christian Reformed Church** distributes 14 gift baskets to the needy.

You're lucky.... I wanted to get one of these "Chretien GST Racers" too! But then I realized, I can't back-pedal fast enough to make it work right.



Your LETTERS

Thanks to you!

To the Editor,

The Acton Firefighter's Association would like to thank everyone who helped to make the Acton Santa Claus Parade a success again this year:

Acton Agricultural Society, Acton BIA, ABTCO, Acton Denture Clinic, Acton Foodland, Acton Golden Age Club, Acton Home Hardware, Acton IGA, Acton Lions Club, *The Acton Tanner*, Acton Terminal Warehouse, Acton Welding, Andy's Restaurant, A.P. Green Refractories, the Bagel Bar, Blooms Away Flower Shop, Commercial Intertech, Daughters of Knox, Denny's Insurance, Evangel Pentacostal Tabernacle, Family Bar-

ber Shop, Glenlea Drug Mart, Mr. J. Graham, Halton Cable Systems, Halton Flour Milling, Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce, Halton Power Line, Holly Industries, the Independent & Free Press, John's Auto Service, Knights of Columbus, Knox Presbyterian Church, Lakeview Convenience, Leathertown Lumber, Legion Ladies' Auxiliary - Branch 197, McNabb Graphics, Nellis Construction, the olde Hide House, Pioneer Hi-bred Limited, Rockwood Fire Department, Rotary Club of Acton, Royal Canadian Legion - Branch 197, the Station Hotel, Strictly Fish Tropical Marine, Superior Glove, Mrs. L. Turkosz, Daniel Varanelli, Wetherby's, and the YMCA of Greater Toronto.

We'd also like to thanks all the float entrants for a fabulous show, the float judges, and the clowns.

Wishing you a very happy and safe holiday season.

*William Spielvogel, Parade Chair
Acton Firefighter's Association*

Justice for all

To the Editor,

The greatest gift we can give our children this Christmas is to take the time to make our country a place of justice, a better place to live, and give our kids hope for the future. It is time for the law-abiding citizens of Canada to take action.

The justice system is failing Ontarians and Canadians. We hear every day on the news of more and more heinous crimes - murders, rapes and bombs - yet our justice system is considering different sentences for one murder vs. two murders, as our prisons are overcrowded.

We must consider the death penalty. I can't comprehend how we can entertain discussion of euthanasia, including putting our elderly to sleep prematurely - people who have contributed to society, worked hard and need care - and yet not want to have the death penalty for murderers.

Murderers have deliberately taken the life of a man, woman or child. If our prisons are overcrowded, we are doing something

wrong. The answer isn't to release murderers back into our society, even with monitoring.

Give your kids a better country and write to: The Honourable Allan Rock, Rm. 441, S. Centre Block, House of Commons, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6. You can also fax the Minister at 613-947-4276, or call him at 613-992-4793.

Tell Mr. Rock we want change, *now!* Make your voice heard. We want real justice and truth and not the band-aids that our present justice system offers for heinous crimes.

Also, lawyers beware. Justice is indeed pure *truth!* If evidence or the truth is withheld by any lawyer, he/she must be charged as an accessory to the crime and receive the full force of the law. If you know you represent a killer, the truth should be brought forward.

Let's give our kids hope for a better tomorrow before things get worse. Merry Christmas, and let's make 1997 a better, safer, more just year for everyone.

*C. Krusky
R.R. 5, Rockwood*

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