

Tuba or not tuba? No question for Dr. Zeussafon!

BY FRANCES NIBLOCK
The Rockwood Miller

Rockwood's Bob Messmer likes to blow his own horn — and what a horn it is, with its wheels and six foot length.

When Messmer, a musician for more than 30 years, wants to have a little fun he puts away his serious tuba — he plays with both the Guelph Concert Band and the Governor General's Horse Guard — and wheels out what he

calls "Dr. Zeussafon".

It's a former tuba, remade by Messmer with a Dr. Seuss, Cat In The Hat attitude, that makes for some very interesting music. Messmer created Dr. Zeussafon approximately 16 years ago, rescuing a dented tuba on its way to the scrap heap.

"The instrument was made out of a tuba that had been destroyed by students learning to play, and instead of throwing it away, I gave it a rebirth," Messmer explained recently.

"I took it apart, repaired it as best I could and put it back together in a different shape."

"The bell section is about six feet away from where you play it — it's great for playing with a hangover because the noise is six feet away," Messmer laughed, adding that the horn sounds like a normal tuba.

Messmer, who works servicing planes for Air Canada, once had a business making and repairing instruments, and said that music is now his hobby.

Messmer and Dr. Zeussafon are very mobile — the tuba is mounted on wheels "borrowed" from a lawn mower.

"I had an engagement at Ontario Place as part of a strolling Dixieland band one summer, moving from place to place and playing. After

lugging my horn around for a few days I came up with the idea for the wheels and began rolling it around and never looked back," he said.

Messmer wheeled his horn to Nathan Phillips Square recently to play in the fifth annual Christmas Tubafest with 120 tuba players from across Ontario. The horn also did double-duty at the Messmer home this Christmas.

"I took it home after the Tubafest and set it in the living room and my wife suggested we not get

a Christmas tree but just hang our decorations on it, so we did," Messmer chortled.

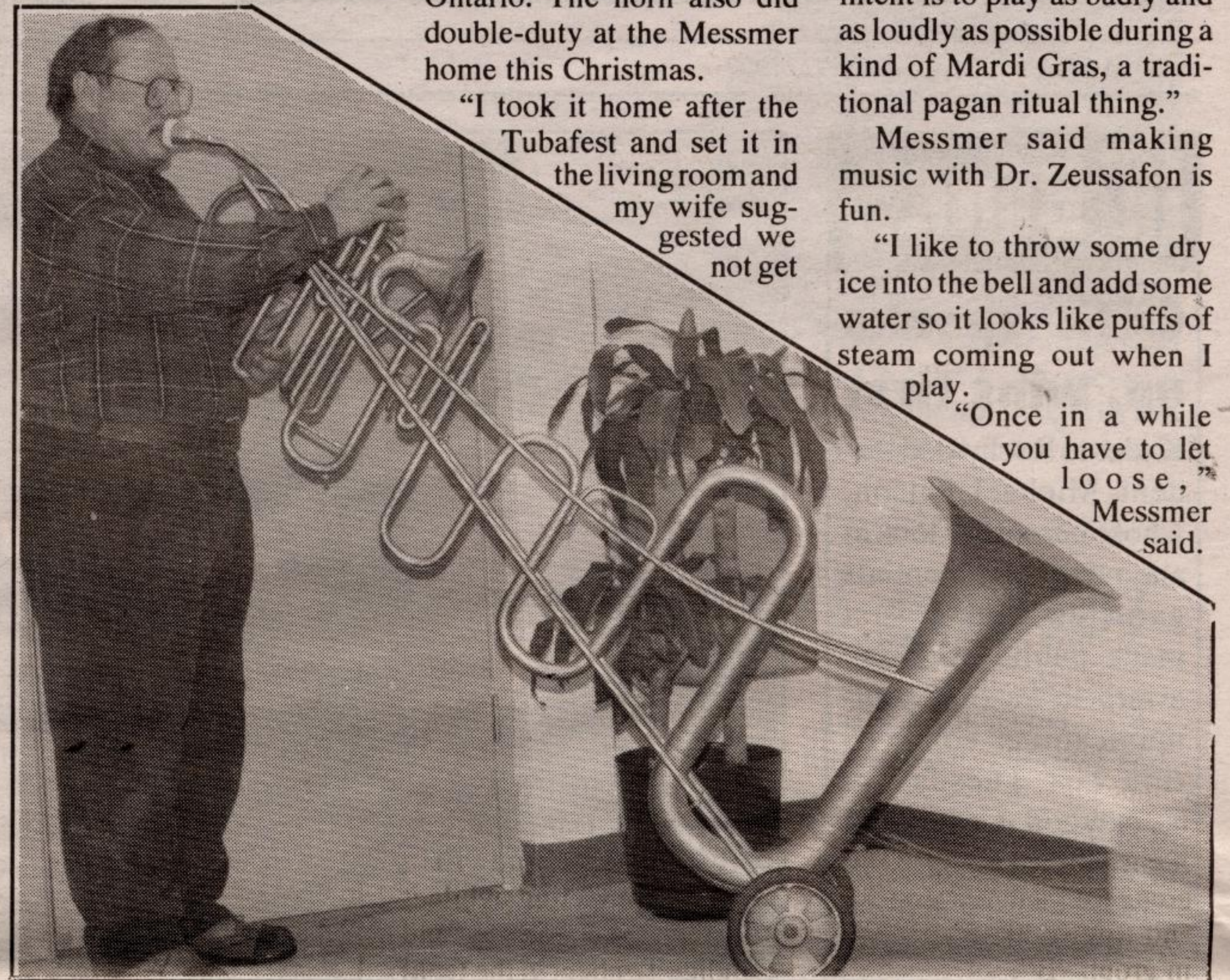
This Saturday Messmer will get up very early and take his Dr. Zeussafon to Toronto and play very badly.

"My wife and I play in a Swiss Carnival Band that has a parade every year and the intent is to play as badly and as loudly as possible during a kind of Mardi Gras, a traditional pagan ritual thing."

Messmer said making music with Dr. Zeussafon is fun.

"I like to throw some dry ice into the bell and add some water so it looks like puffs of steam coming out when I play."

"Once in a while you have to let loose," Messmer said.



BLOWING HIS OWN HORN: Bob Messmer dropped by *The Miller's* office recently to play his Dr. Zeussafon in a snappy rendition of "When the Saints Come Marching In."

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