

Idle Pursuits

Cooperative of churches create Nativity Pageant

By DEBORAH QUAILE

In an effort to put the "Christ" back in "Christmas", local Christian churches are working together to produce a Nativity Pageant this December entitled *On the Way to Bethlehem*.

Scheduled for December 6 to 9 at Country Heritage Park in Milton, the "play" will run from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. A free-will offering is suggested, but it's important that everyone has access to the event.

It will be a carefully crafted walk-through, interactive production of the Nativity. The expansive cast includes over 70 members, with shepherds on the hillside tending sheep, an angel chorus, King Herod's court, a trumpeter, Magi following the Star, two inns, Roman soldiers, and a little drummer boy.

Mary and Joseph will walk to Bethlehem with their donkey, as other travelers complain en route about the payment of taxes. The manger scene will be the grand finale, with live animals and a healthy baby.

Throughout the guided walk, there will be a chorus at the manger and church, and a mass choir in the Gambrel Barn reception area. The end of the journey consists of a horse-drawn wagon ride back to the reception area, with refreshments as the choir sings carols from the loft.

At this time, Grace Anglican, St. Paul's, Knox, Boston and Nassagaweya Presbyterian, Southside Community Church and Milton Bible are the major thrust of the outdoor project.

And although it's only mid-summer, nine volunteers are busy stitching up costumes, from the opulent and decadent robes of the

rich, to common clothing for the poor.

A Nativity Team of five is working through the long-range plan, keeping all committees on target, spearheading fundraising, and welcoming supporters.

Representatives from each church inform their congregations of needs and progress, while other committees oversee décor, lighting, props, parking, advertising, receptions, hosting and music.

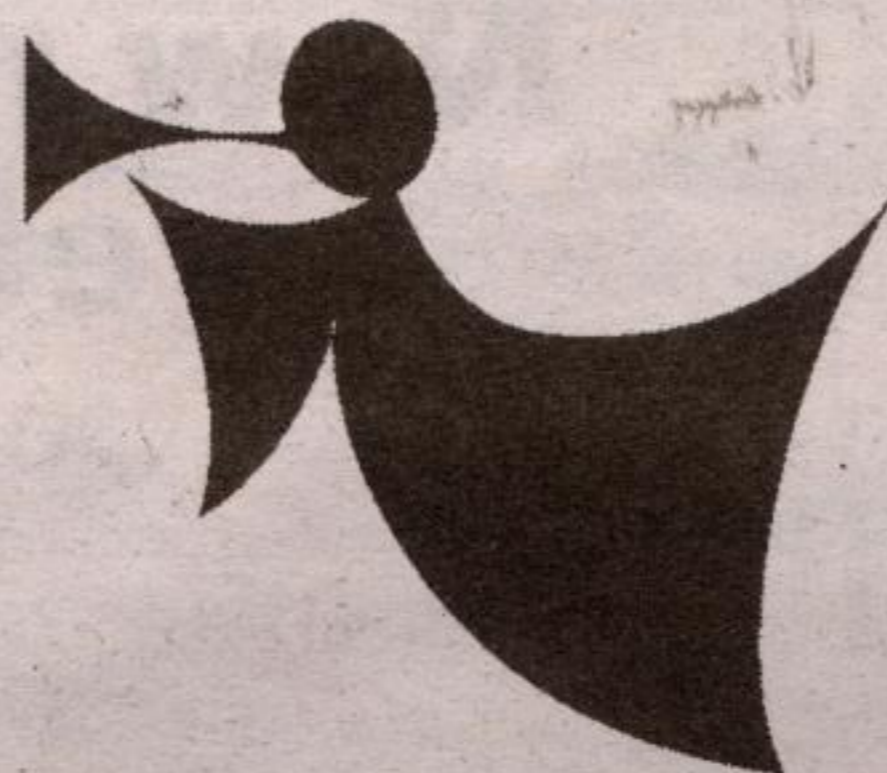
"Many people from several different congregations and Christian faiths are working together because they believe *On the Way to Bethlehem* is a great venture for the town, its people, and a wonderful way to begin the Christmas season. We hope that *On the Way to Bethlehem* will become a Milton tradition," says coordinator/director Dr.

Andrea Rowbottom.

Local citizens are encouraged to become involved as volunteers in many capacities, from positions in the spotlight to behind-the-scenes.

"It's our gift to the families of our community," Dr. Rowbottom adds. "As members of the community, please help us make this a tremendous success and witness the beginning of a Milton tradition."

For further information, Dr. Rowbottom can be reached at 905-875-0839.



Wry Words of Wisdom from a Rural Writer

Letters from the Country IV

Reviewed By DEBORAH QUAILE

Quaile Reviews

Marsha Boulton is our mirror for rural foibles. Whether documenting the great interest of neighbours - almost like a coffee klatch - when the septic tank is being pumped out, or the "garbage Gestapo" that keeps folk on the straight and narrow, she accurately pinpoints country differences from big city life.

In *Letters from the Country IV*, Ms. Boulton tempts her readers with title tidbits such as "The Myotonic Goatherd," "Osama bin Cluckin Meets His Match," or "Wally Ballys."

We hear about a nasty ram named Crash Test Dummy who butts the visiting neighbour in the derriere and then proceeds to commit patricide on his woolly dad. Exit the dumb ram and enter Bucky, the small but plucky Rideau Arcott who proves to be a true Lothario. Soon afterward Ms. Boulton's fields are checkerboards of black and white sheep, or as she notes when they come running to her whistle, "a player piano keyboard on hooves." Moments like that make a woman want to run out and buy a spinning wheel.

Small town news also proves to have inspired her scope for imagination. Who can resist laughing at true articles like the Speeder of the Week in the *Wellington Advertiser* or nudes that parade their privates in front of unwary women? Local visits, funerals and weddings are never as titillating as what flows from tongues in the coffee shops.

Ms. Boulton admits to

knowing about a steamy love affair between a politician and town clerk months before it hit the papers, but that is admittedly part of the charm of small town news - some of the best stuff is ignored as long as possible, usually to save hurt feelings.

As on any farm, there are poignant moments of pain, like the loss of stock that became almost pets. But the interspersing of emotional highs and lows rounds out the tales nicely, and others become all the more humorous for it.

Marsha Boulton writes with a clean, easy style, using a frankness that rests on readers' ears as if it could be coming from across the kitchen table over a cup of tea and cake.

There is the lingering feeling, however, that the publishers completed this book in more haste than its predecessors. Each of the first three volumes ran over 200 pages, and had such niceties as artistic seasonal dividers between the arrangements of stories. This book had none, and was a slim 152 pages in length. Still, for *Letters from the Country* aficionados, the fourth book of the series is a welcome, humorous look at modern rural living.

Letters from the Country IV
Marsha Boulton
Toronto: McArthur & Company, 2002
Softcover, 152 pgs., \$14.95
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