

GRAPEVINE

LUNCHEON SUCCESS

A small army of generous volunteers helped make Acton's first Christmas Day lunch a huge, and tasty, success.

Between 25 and 30 guests, invited mainly because they were alone and without plans, were treated to a turkey lunch buffet.

Organizer Ann Adema said they had a draw for a gingerbread house, carol singing and a great meal of donated food, or food purchased with several cash donations.

"We plan to do it again next year," Adema said, adding they may move from Trinity United Church to the larger Seniors' Centre at the arena.

Adema said what is "most special" is how the community came forward to volunteer.

"People brought food in. One man brought in and set up chaffing dishes, and there were so many people who worked on the lunch up until the date - it was a success because of everyone's participation," Adema said.

SMILEY RETIRES

After 32 years employment with the town, Keith Smiley's official last day as senior public works supervisor is today, (December 31), but Smiley, who lives on the Fourth Line, north of Acton, actually left his desk several weeks ago to use up accrued vacation time.

Described as a "devoted and hard worker - a real company man," by long-time colleague Dick Spear, Smiley apparently has not yet settled into retirement.

"He was just in before lunch time and he says he's pretty bored and looking for some kind of hobby," Spear said.

WORTH THE DRIVE?

Acton has a new and semi-fa-

mous resident - the former Tory cabinet minister John Snobelen.

Snobelen, at one time the Minister of Natural Resources and then Education and Training - remember the quote about creating an education "crisis" - has returned to Ontario from an Oklahoma ranch where he lived for several years, causing critics to demand that he resign his Mississauga West seat at Queen's Park, which he finally did last March.

Snobelen's family has a horse farm north of Georgetown.

RESOLUTIONS

Many people make - and some even keep - New Year's resolutions. Here's a sampling of resolutions and plans made by some Actonians for 2004.

Gus Galimanas, Subway franchise.

"I'd like to have peace on earth, and everybody should enjoy what we have in this country. We are very fortunate to be living in this country and we should appreciate it."

Acton and Regional Councillor Clark Somerville:

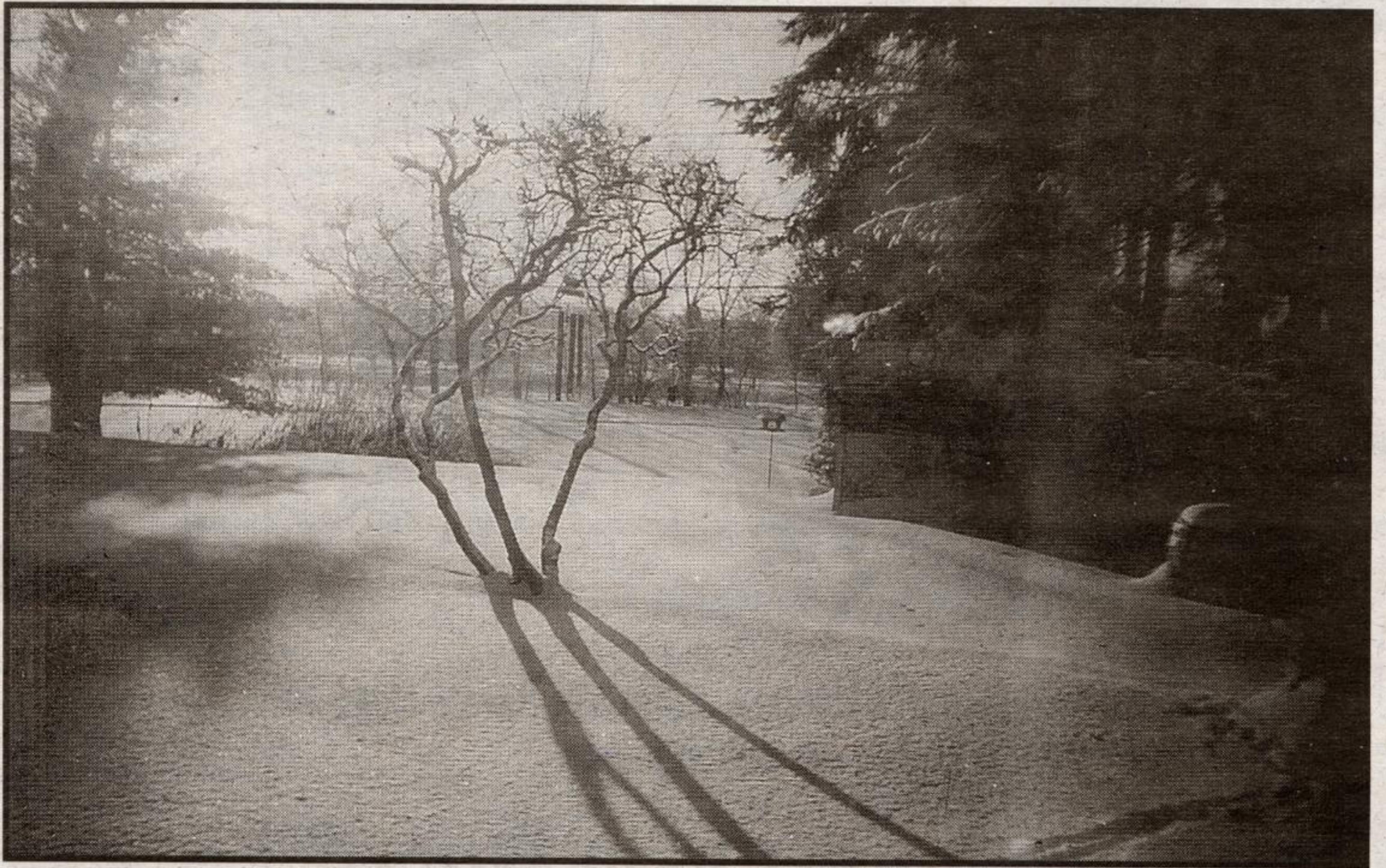
"I never make resolutions - if I'm going to do something, I'll do it. I am planning on quitting smoking - I'll try again," Somerville said, adding his New Year's tradition is to put dimes on the tops of his doors to bring good fortune.

Acton Citizens' Band Master George Elliott:

"I never make New Year's resolutions. What's the point? I might say that I was going to go skiing more this year - but that would depend on the weather."

Grapevine scribe:

"I promise to respect all deadlines - especially for payroll invoices - and to offer up all the news that fits."



MORNING SUN: Before balmy weather and rain interfered with the winter solstice, the editor's back yard was blanketed with an almost seamless carpet of snow which the morning sun rippled and cast long shadows for his camera lens. Forecasters maintain real winter conditions will return soon.

Yes - you can hear the tree fall!

It's generally accepted that, the older you get the faster the years fly by. While that's certainly proved true, I have also noticed another disconcerting year-end feeling. I look forward to getting the old year over and starting afresh. The last few years have been personally and professionally less than satisfying. In many ways 2003 followed the recent trend. Here's what I mean.

SARS came, literally, out of the blue on an airplane before we even knew it existed. Suddenly, we had a full blown epidemic on our hands, or so it seemed. The loss of life was heartbreaking. The reality was that many of the deceased were elderly with serious, pre-existing medical problems. Even so, they were added to the SARS totals and the panic spread world-wide. Toronto, and ultimately Canada, became a destination travellers were advised to avoid.

This caused problems for many of us. While the tourism and hospitality industries were hardest hit, the resulting slowdown sent major ripples through the economy. Regular readers will know I'm in the gift industry, selling to retail stores. Because my territory includes Niagara Falls and the peninsula, my business was down to the point it was my worst year ever. To add insult to injury business expenses went up.

2003 started pretty well for me. Our youngest daughter Erin was at university in Ireland. Our oldest daughter Catharine had given me a plane ticket and an invitation to join her and her sister Christine on a vacation to visit Erin in Ireland. It was the trip of a lifetime and we had a great adventure. Even in Ireland, though we couldn't escape SARS.

We were travelling through the town of Sligo when the bus stopped for a comfort break. There, on the wall of a bus shelter was a poster warning people about visiting Toronto. I couldn't believe it. After that I noticed people looking askance at me because of the Canadian flags on my hat and coat. Mayor Lastman may not have known who the World Health Organization (WHO) was but the people in Europe certainly did.

Then came the blackout which was for most of us little more than an inconvenience. People working

The Way I See It

with Mike O'Leary



or living in highrises had it tougher but honestly, was it really a calamity? I escaped most of the mayhem as I was on my way to the lake when the lights went off.

In a way, though, it was indicative of how our year as a country had been going. The Americans at first tried to blame us even though it was soon proved that an Ohio based utility was at fault. The initial accusation still stung and lingered.

Canadians had to deal with the Mad Cow disease problem. One stinking cow and then hysteria took over. It's not that the situation wasn't serious, but to close down the entire border to beef exports for months, when it was proved the case was isolated to one herd, was (pardon the expression) a classic case of overkill. The year finished with another dairy cow being identified as having Mad Cow in the American north-west. The Americans are again pointing an accusatory finger at us and suggesting the animal in question came from Canada. Another economic bombshell in the making.

Some folks think the Yanks have it in for us because we didn't support them in the war on Iraq. I'm not a warmonger but I still think we made the wrong decision. We weren't being asked for more troops. Those who think we stayed out of the conflict are delusional. With three ships and almost 2000 sailors and airmen in the Persian Gulf, we had a major presence and freed-up American troops for operations against Iraq. We also had 2000 soldiers committed to Afghanistan. To say we didn't participate is simply word games. What we did accomplish was to seriously and, in my opinion, needlessly anger our closest ally and largest trading partner. Smooth move.

Hopefully, our new leader, P.M. the P.M., will be able to mend fences with the Bush administration. I watched the P.M.'s year end interview and was very pleased with his plans. Paul Martin has a commanding presence

and should make us proud on the world stage. What a welcome relief. Anyone who gives Tequila Sheila the boot is OK in my books.

Locally the big political happening was the election of long time councillor Rick Bonnette as mayor. Considered an underdog going in, Rick ran a masterful campaign winning by an impressive margin.

2003 has not been a total disaster for we in Acton or Canada as a whole. Locally, construction began in earnest on the new homes in Acton East. This new year sees us with many new neighbours and more to welcome come '04.

Personally, my highlight was the spring trip to Ireland with three of my daughters. A close second was the confidence Acton voters placed in me by electing me to town council along with Jon Hurst and Clark Somerville. We all feel honoured to represent you.

Our youngest daughter Erin received her BSc from the University of Waterloo in September. She is now applying to various schools for her graduate degree. Unfortunately even Erin's graduation had a smidge of calamity. We had brought an extra car, an older one, to take some of the pressure off our family vehicles. It was less than a month new to us when some pond scum stole it off the street in Waterloo, early in the morning of her graduation. Don't tell us that car theft is a minor crime.

In sports Mike Weir won the Masters and generally had a great year. Becky Scott was finally told she will be getting her cross country skiing gold medal early in '04. My beloved Leafs are leading the NHL and some people says there is no God!

Christmas snuck up on me this year. I didn't get my outdoor lights up 'till Christmas Eve day. While we bought our tree early, we didn't set it up until the Sunday before Christmas. It looked great.

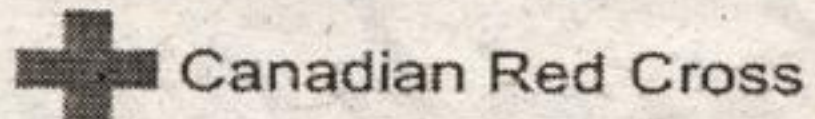
Given the type of year this was, it figures that our Christmas tree fell over, onto the computer desk, the day after we put it up. Twice!!!

Goodbye 2003: I shed no tears for thee. Hello 2004: I'm looking for so much more.

Happy New Year everyone.

THINK TWICE-THIN ICE

❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️
KNOW THE ICE THICKNESS AND WEATHER CONDITIONS OF THE AREA YOU ARE SKATING AND TAKE APPROPRIATE PRECAUTIONS.
 ❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️
 ❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️
 ❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️



Balmy Yules...

continued from page 6

faith, hope and love.

The four calling birds were the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

The five golden rings recalled the Torah or Law, the first five books of the Old Testament.

The six geese a-laying stood for the six days of creation.

Seven swans a-swimming represented the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit: Prophecy, Serving, Teaching, Exhortation, Contribution, Leadership and Mercy.

The eight maids a-milking

were the eight beatitudes.

Nine ladies dancing were the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self Control.

The ten lords a-leaping were the Ten Commandments.

The eleven pipers piping stood for the eleven faithful disciples.

The twelve drummers drumming symbolized the twelve points of belief in The Apostles' Creed.

So there you go - a bit of history that shows how this "strange" carol originated.