

THE HALTON HILLS **WEEKEND**

KEN NUGENT
Publisher

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Editor: Robin Incoe

Managing Editor: Cynthia Gamble

Staff Writers: Janet Baine, Lisa Tallyn

Photography: Ted Brown

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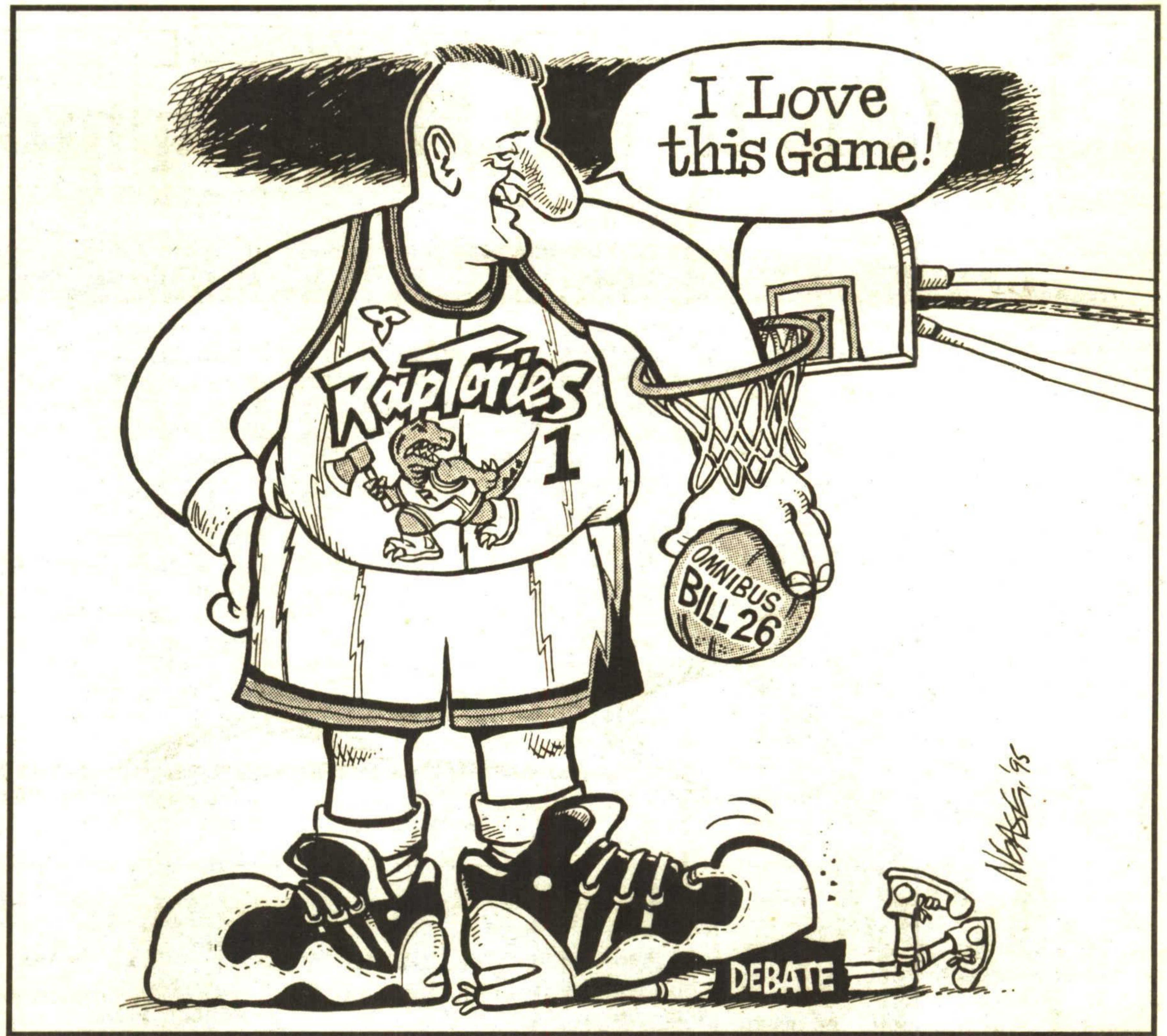
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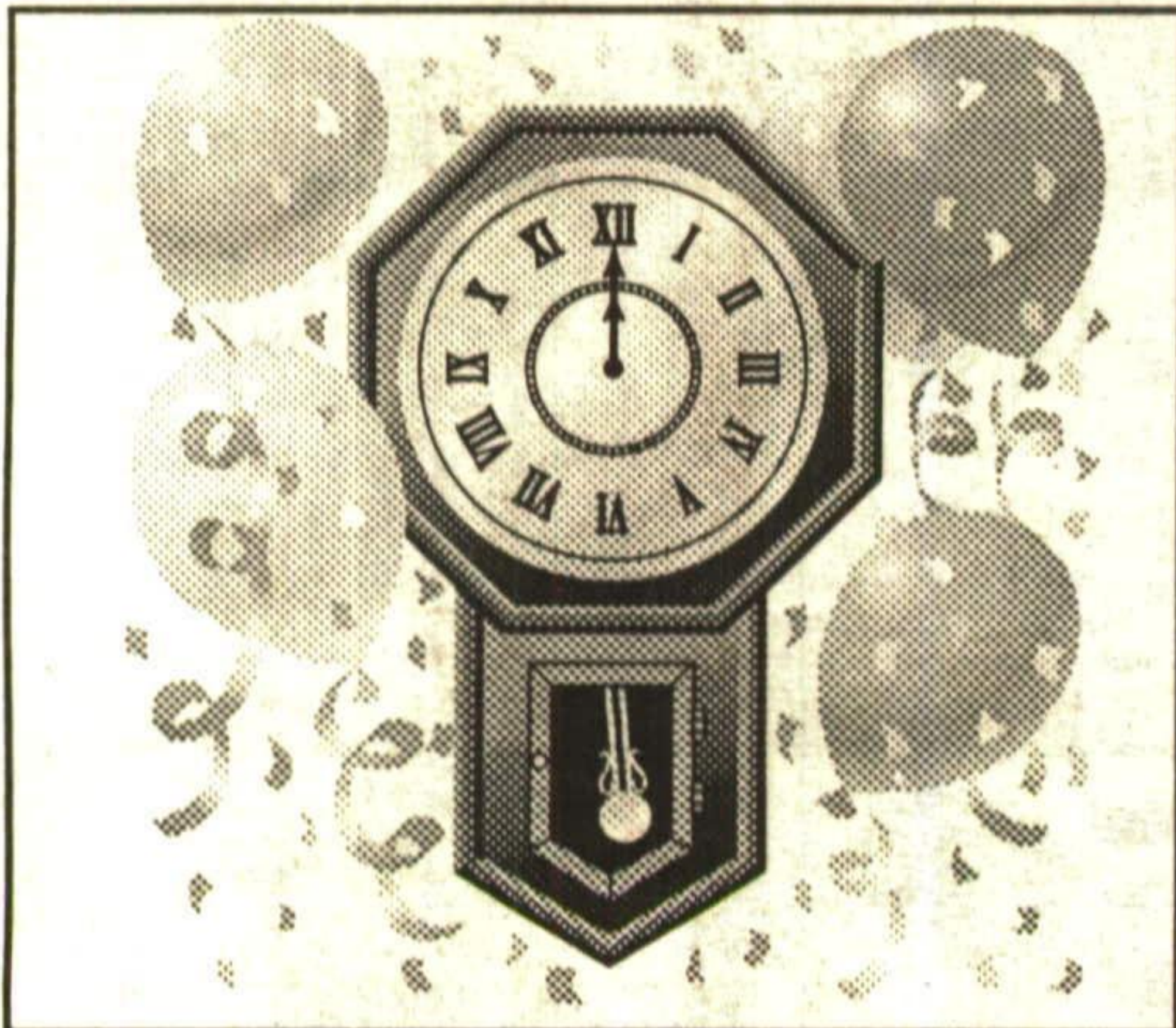
Circulation Manager: Nancy Geissler

Mailing Address: 211 ARMSTRONG AVE. GEORGETOWN, ONT. L7G 4X5
Telephone: 905-873-0301 Fax: 905-873-0398



We wish you a Happy New Year

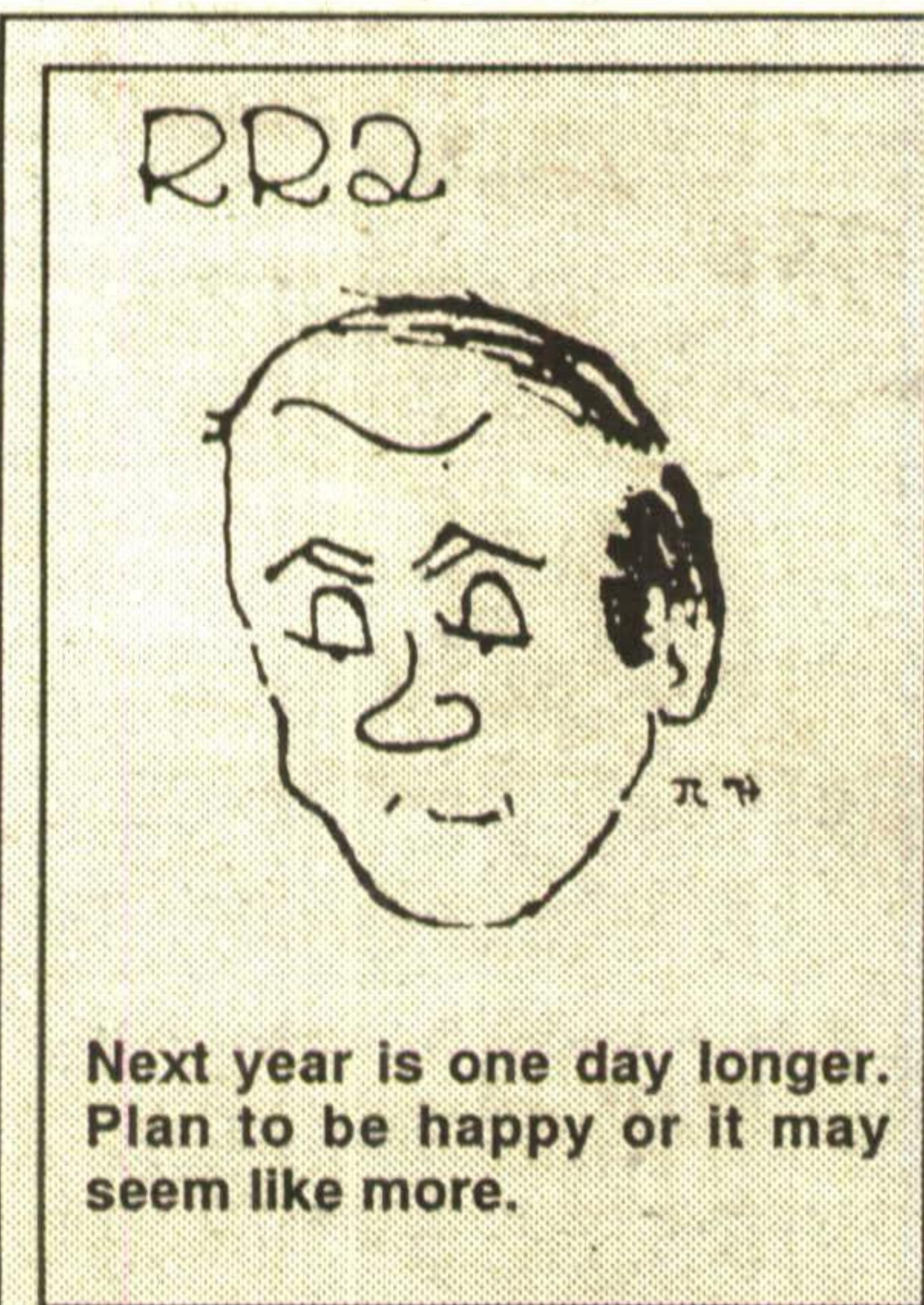
We at *The Georgetown Independent and Acton Free Press* want to wish everyone a Happy New Year, as well as say thank you for all the cooperation we have received at the newspaper in the past year.



Sometimes we get so tied up in the weekly grind of turning out a newspaper we neglect to mention how much cooperation we receive from the people all over Halton Hills and vicinity every week of the year.

No need to go into details, just a warm and sincere thank you from the all of us here at *The Independent/Free Press*.

May we also remind you on this holiday weekend, don't drink and drive: appoint a designated driver. Have a safe and happy 1996.



Next year is one day longer. Plan to be happy or it may seem like more.

Did you know?

Recent heavy snowfalls across Ontario have severely hampered deer movement between their food supplies and their shelter areas. The condition usually starts when snow depths reach 50 cm but in an one day period the Muskoka and Sault Ste. Marie areas received more than 100 cm of snow. In several areas the Ministry of Natural Resources have begun trail breaking with snow shoeing or with snow machines. If the current rate of snowfalls continue, an emergency state could be reached by early February and an emergency feeding program will have to be implemented.

—Ministry of Natural Resources

Christmas in wartime England

Editor's note: This is the last in the series of Christmas memoir columns written by local seniors. We hope you have enjoyed reading their stories.

My early childhood Christmases occurred at my paternal grandmother's house in northern England during World War II. The everyday world I was part of was a bleak and spartan one when compared to the 1990s.

The Christmas season likewise was much more restrained, low keyed and altogether unsophisticated. People improvised and used their imagination to create an interlude of celebration and festivity in a time of danger, uncertainty, and austerity. A sense of eager anticipation and enthusiastic excitement still managed to inject itself into the season.

Considering the unpredictability of the times, my father luckily managed to get home from his wartime occupation (repairing aircraft) in the south. Like Santa Claus, he somehow mysteriously arrived during Christmas Eve night, alerting my mother by throwing pieces of gravel up to the bedroom window. She would quietly go downstairs to let him in without disturbing the rest of the household, and he would be there to watch me open my presents from Santa on Christmas morning. Santa was called Father Christmas and I hung up a pillowcase instead of a stocking to accommodate bulkier presents.

The gifts were mostly homemade, or sometimes, particularly in the case of books, second-hand. My mother made fabric dolls with button eyes and embroidered faces. Their hair was appropriately colored yarn; either yellow, rust or brown, cleverly sewn to suggest curls or braids. Their outfits bore a familiar resemblance to the fabric of my own dresses and skirts, which themselves were often made from unpicked

clothes the adults in the family no longer wore. A wooden doll's bed arrived one year. It was painted apple green and sported a splendid rosy pink taffeta quilt, which I was later surprised to find out exactly matched the lining in my aunt's coat.

I don't remember much about Christmas dinner — which was eaten at lunch time — probably because I wasn't much interested in food back then, although I did enjoy our Christmas tea-time meal. This was eaten around 5 or 6 p.m. There was the special treat of jelly (Jell-O) and custard, or trifle, with its strangely daring hint of sherry, and perhaps a portion of tinned fruit. All of these mundane items were carefully hoarded luxuries due to wartime rationing. Tea was finished off with an iced dark fruit cake. The wartime recipe

From this Christmas onwards, I remember more details about Christmas dinner, still held at lunchtime. I think perhaps this Granny was a more enthusiastic cook than Granny Haworth, as I now remember the appearance of delicious roast potatoes and traditional Christmas pudding served with custard sauce. Tea-time was still the preferred meal though. We continued to have all the special treats of jelly, tinned fruit, trifle, etc. However, as well as the dark fruit cake, we had one of Granny's unique Victoria sponge cakes with the yummy buttercream filling. No one else ever managed to duplicate her recipe; a renowned picky eater, I startled everyone by eating two or three slices!

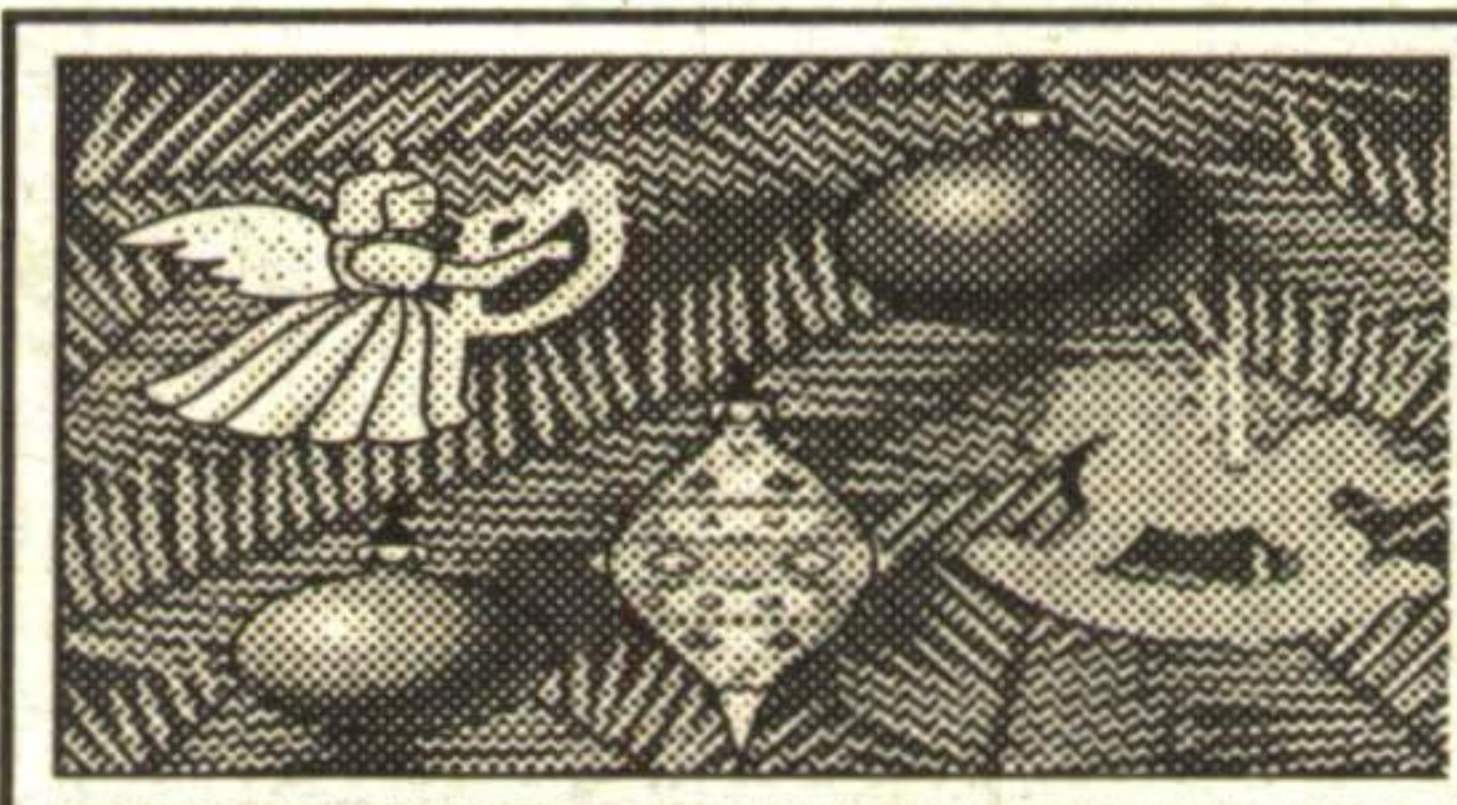
On that Christmas morning in 1944 I headed into the parlour to discover a small, real tree decorated with our familiar glass balls and tinsel but, to my amazement, ablaze with tiny, twinkling tree lights. Their bright, jewelled colors were an unexpected revelation.

How much more magical than the usual wax candles, always left unlit for safety, and clipped on to the tree branches in metal holders, which had formerly provided only a suggestion of sparkle!

This was the first time I'd met an electrically lighted Christmas tree! Still in wartime mode, our electricity was used as sparingly as possible. Granny usually took her energy conservation very seriously, but she had overlooked her scruples and taken the trouble to borrow a friend's string of pre-war lights as a special treat for me.

In subsequent years we returned to the clip-on candles, but her kindly thought-out gesture helped make that particular Christmas memorable.

Now we watch our grandchildren enjoying their Christmas treats, with eyes sparkling like the tree lights in 1944.



DEIDRE THOMAS