

Christmas, a time for miracles

We've all heard of those magical events that seem to occur around the Christmas season.

They're called Christmas miracles.

Over the years, the movie industry has made the most of these miracles, and given us such special movies as *White Christmas*, *The Bells of St. Mary's*, and more recently favorites like *Prancer* and *The Christmas Box*.

It's pretty easy to have a miracle on the silver screen or television.

But last Christmas, I witnessed a Christmas miracle, right within my own family.

And no movie could ever come close to doing justice to this story.

The story centers around my mother, my father and my third daughter Maggie.

I've written about Maggie in the past — how she loves Christmas and all the magic that goes with it. She always has, since she was a toddler.

Leading up to last Christmas was not a very happy time for our family.

My mother, who had suffered from numerous strokes over the years, had lost more and more of her capabilities during the year, and by last Christmas, she was unable to speak any more than a word or two at a time, and had lost much of her short term memory. Walking was sometimes a struggle, and she needed constant daily supervision.

It was fair to say Mom had some good days, and lots of bad days.

Dad was caring for her on a day to day basis, looking after all her daily needs, and consequently, was becoming quite weary.

The night we decorated our Christmas tree, I invited Mom and Dad over to visit our house, so they could watch the annual ritual of trimming the tree, and perhaps share some festive spirit.

During the evening, Dad said he didn't feel much like putting up decorations at home, saying "it just seemed like too much of a hassle this year."

Maggie sat there listening, and knew of the magnificent collection of decorations Mom and Dad had accumulated over the years. She told Dad she would help.

"Gaga," she said, using the pet name all our kids have called him over the years, "Tomorrow night, I'm coming over, and you and I and Nana are gonna do some serious decorating at your house."

He reluctantly agreed.

The next night, Maggie headed over to Mom and Dad's house ready to do battle with the barren walls in the living room, dining room and all the little places in between. Dad had already erected their tree so it was ready for Maggie, and the many boxes of decorations were hauled out, ready for her to peruse and hang in the appropriate places.

They decorated the tree, the chandelier, the buffet and china cabinet, as well as all the little niches around the room.

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Ted Brown

As they finished, and the Christmas tree stood twinkling in the dim of the living room, Maggie pulled out Mom and Dad's collection of Christmas records.

She put one on the stereo, and the music flowed through the speakers in the living room.

One of Mom's favorites, *Silver Bells*, came on, and Maggie started to sing along with the recording.

"Silver bells, silver bells, it's Christmas time in the city..."

Suddenly, Mom started to sing along, keeping up with Maggie as they went into the next verse.

Dad looked over, and they smiled at each other, as Mom continued to sing along with Maggie, as her many other Christmas songs were played.

It was certainly a magical evening, when my mother was suddenly able to sing in spite of the fact she couldn't talk, and recall all the words to her Christmas records she had collected so many years ago.

Maggie played the records over and over, and after giving a good night hug and kiss to her grandfather, came bounding home, just glowing with Christmas spirit.

"You know what, Dad?" she beamed at me, bursting in the door, "Nana and I were singing Christmas music tonight. She was actually singing tonight."

I looked at my 14-year-old daughter's excited face. Mom had really been singing.

It was certainly one of Mom's good days.

And she continued to have good days, right through the holidays, enjoying her Christmas dinner with her children and grandchildren, as well as gathering with some old friends for New Year's Eve.

Throughout the holidays, Dad often spoke of "Maggie's miracle," and how she had made magic happen in their home that night.

On January 7 of this year, one short week after New Year's, Mom suffered another stroke, this time robbing her of her ability to talk, swallow, walk, and all the functions on her left side.

She remained in the hospital until late spring, and eventually was admitted to the Bennett Health Care Centre, where she now resides, relying on the staff to keep her comfortable.

But Dad still speaks of Maggie's miracle, that night, a year ago, when she visited, "to do some serious decorating."

And with that visit, presented him with the gift of a beautiful Christmas miracle that he will never forget for the rest of his life.

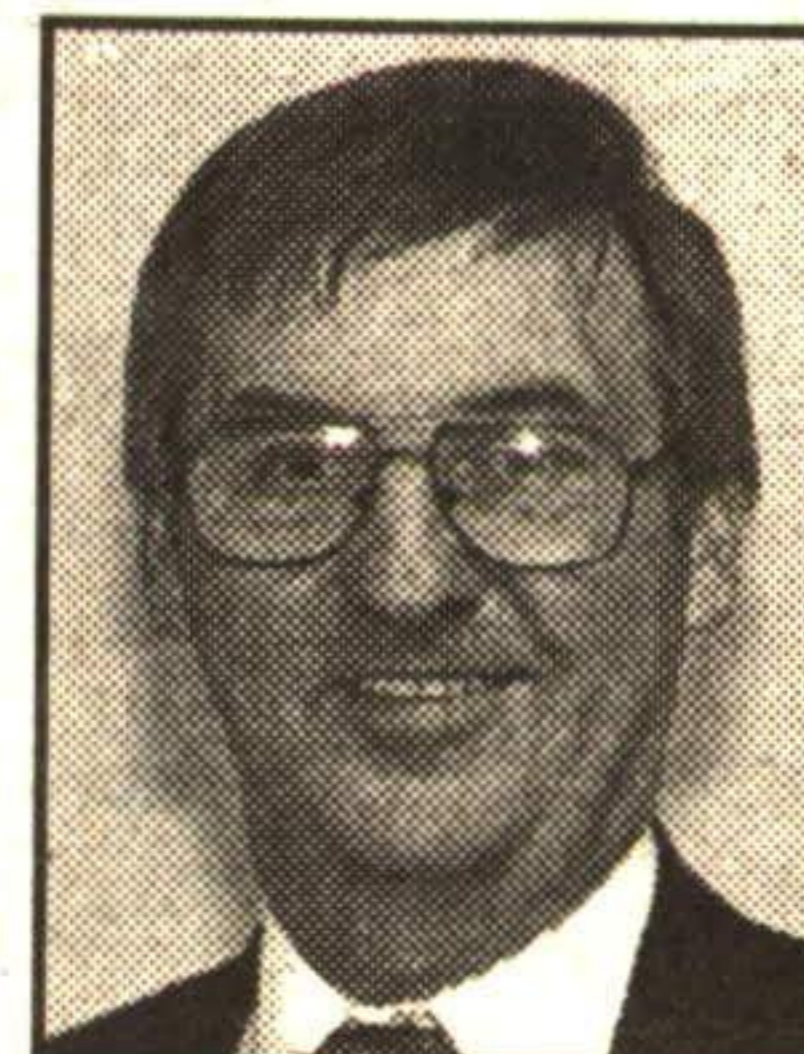
During this festive time of year, our thoughts turn to those who have made this year a success.

Many thanks & best wishes to all of our Customers...have a Safe & Happy Holiday Season.

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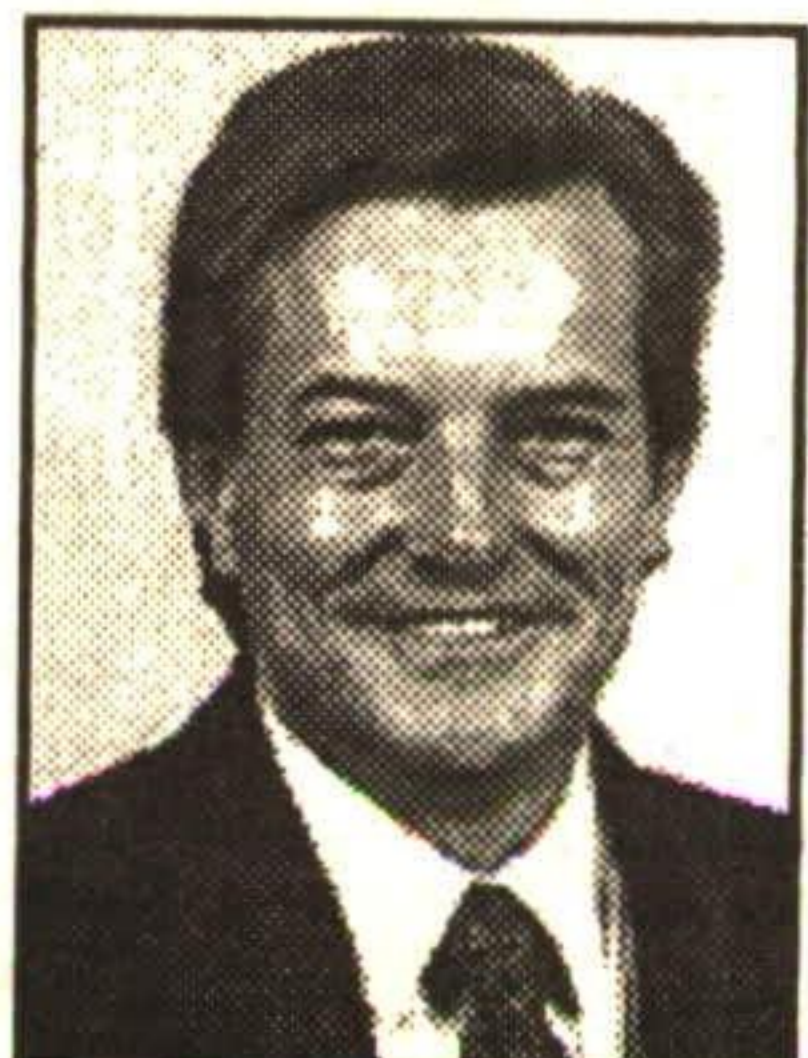
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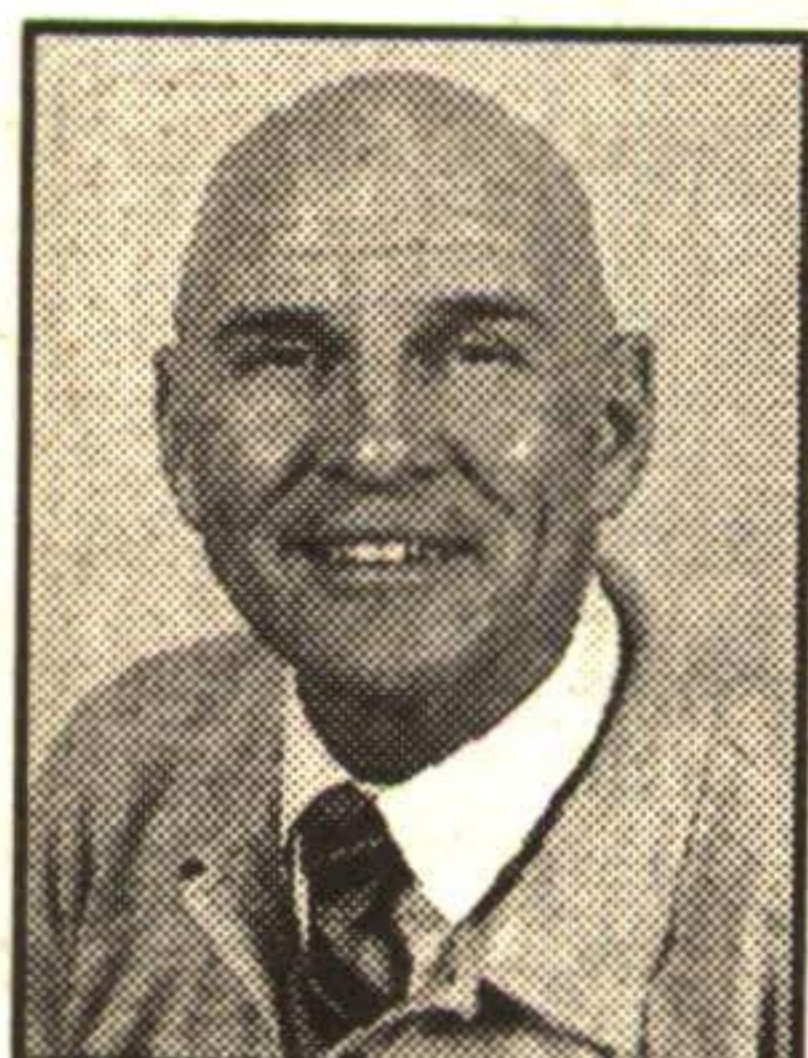
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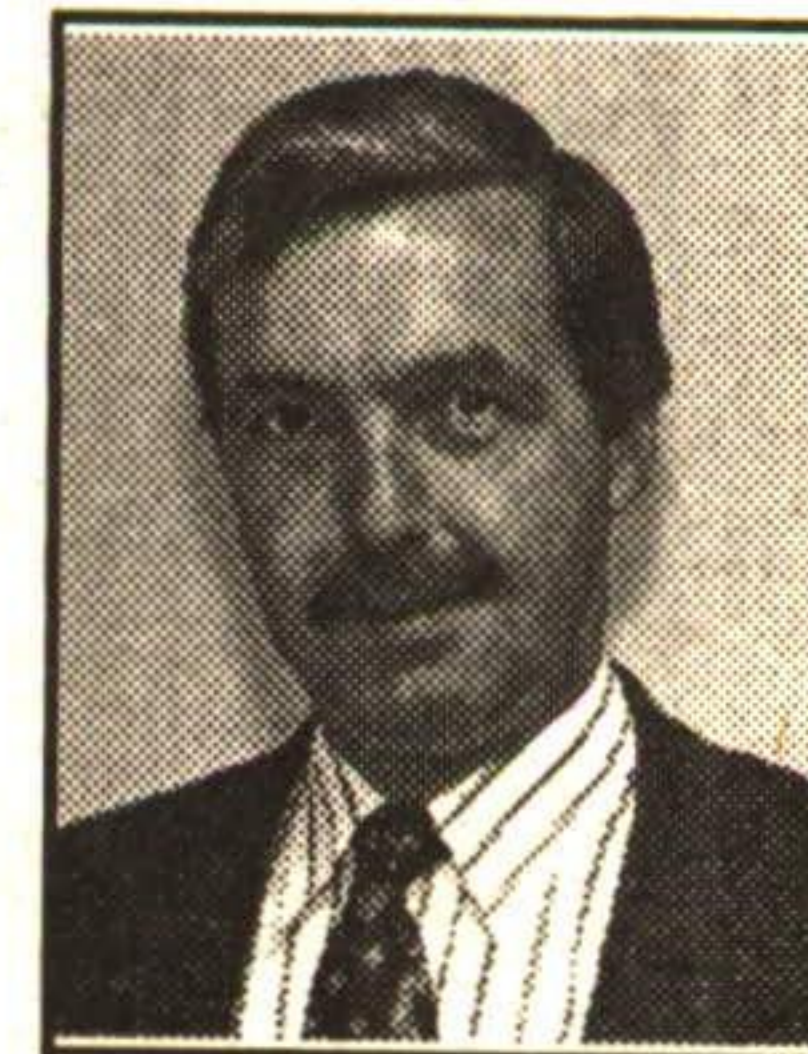
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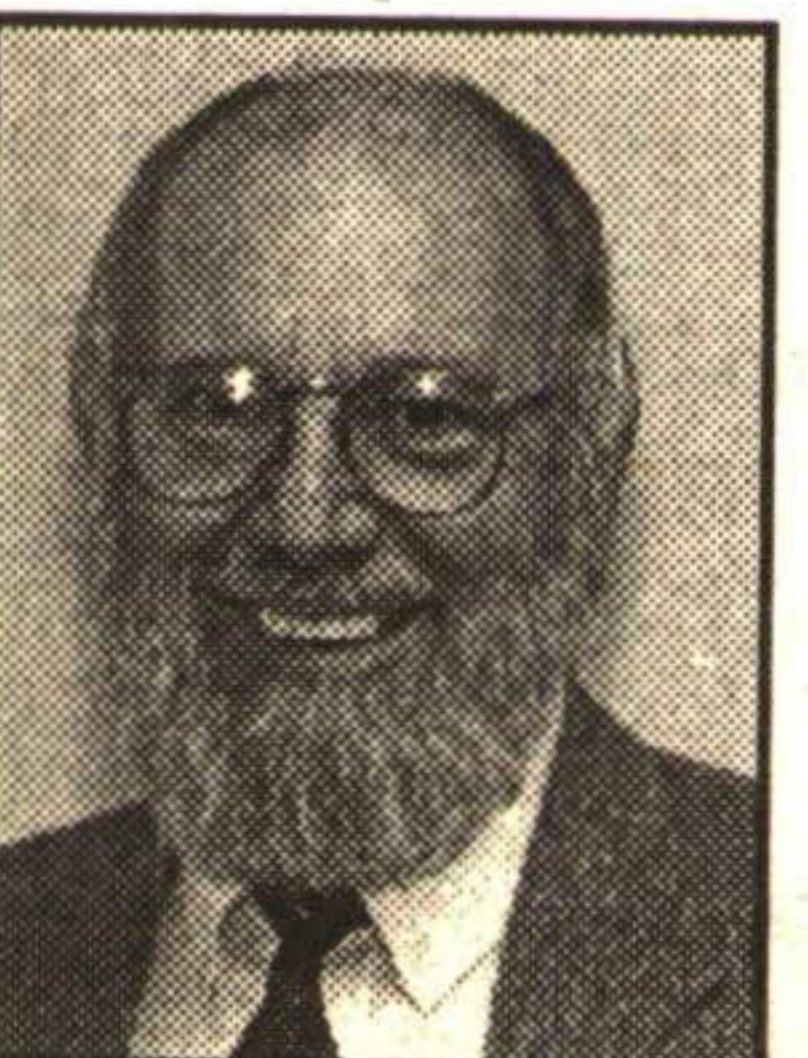
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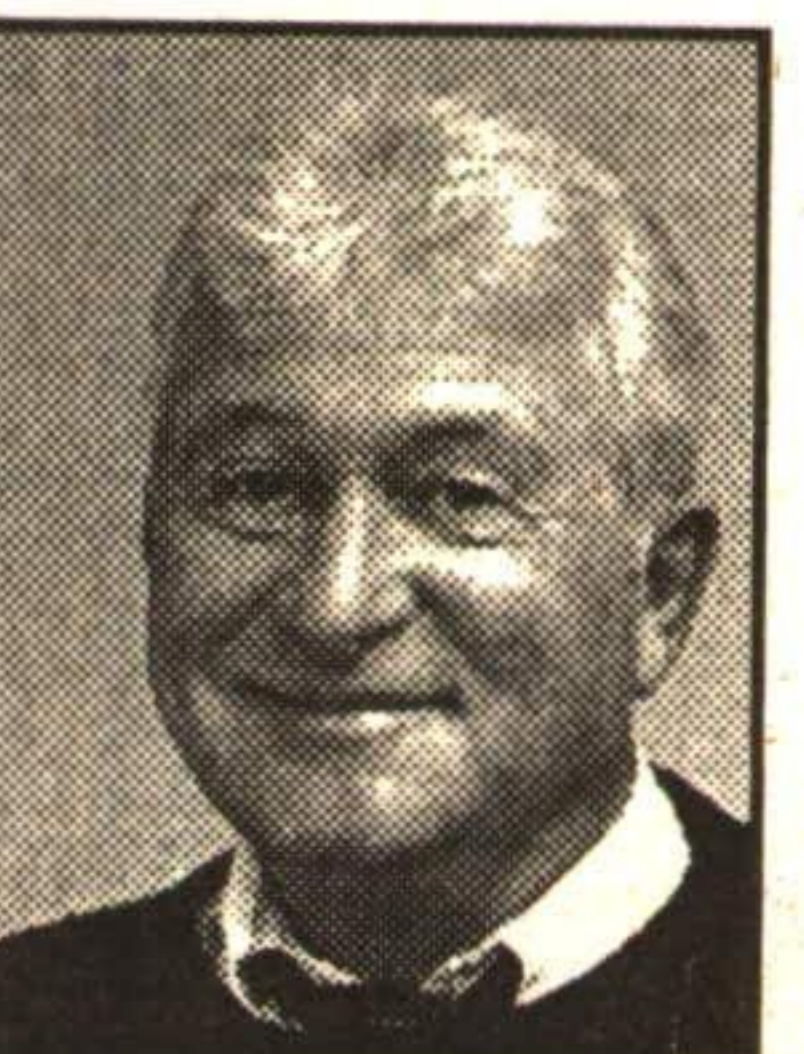
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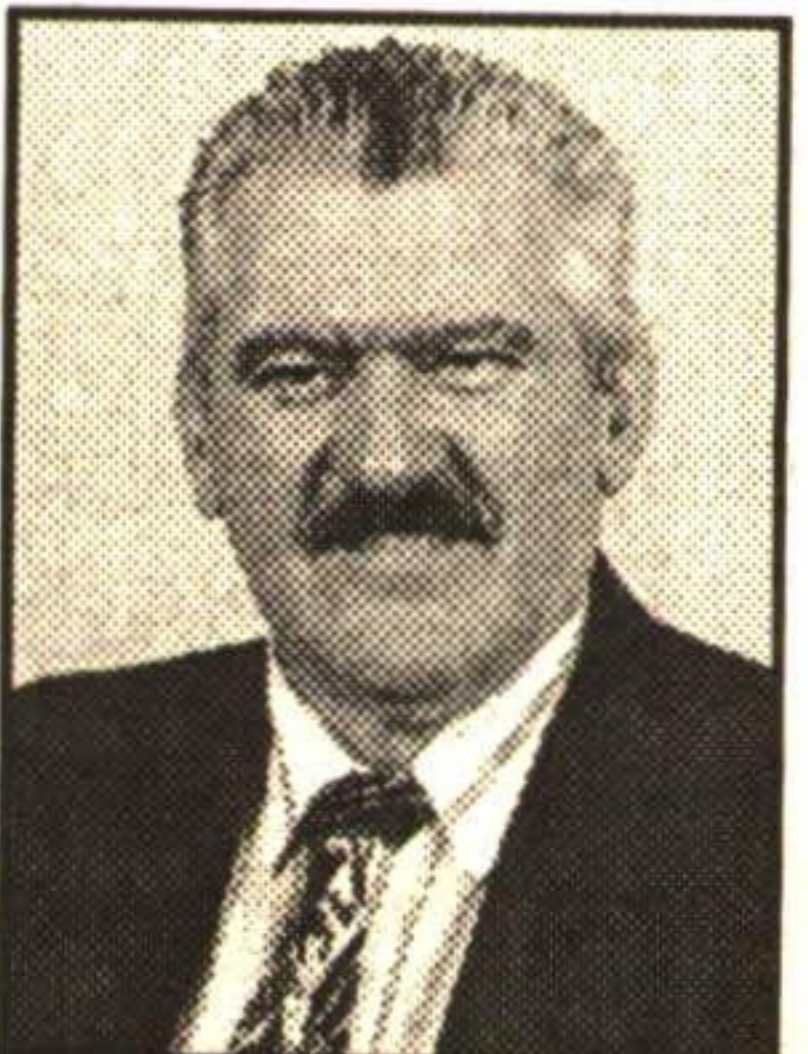
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