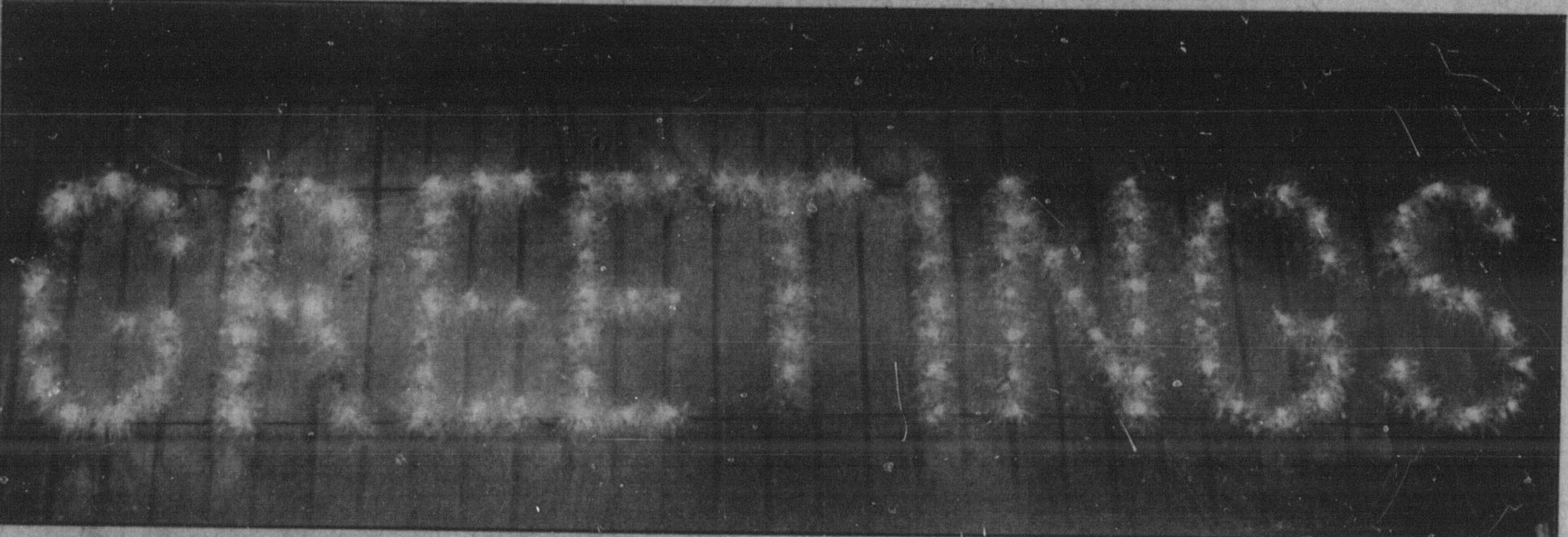
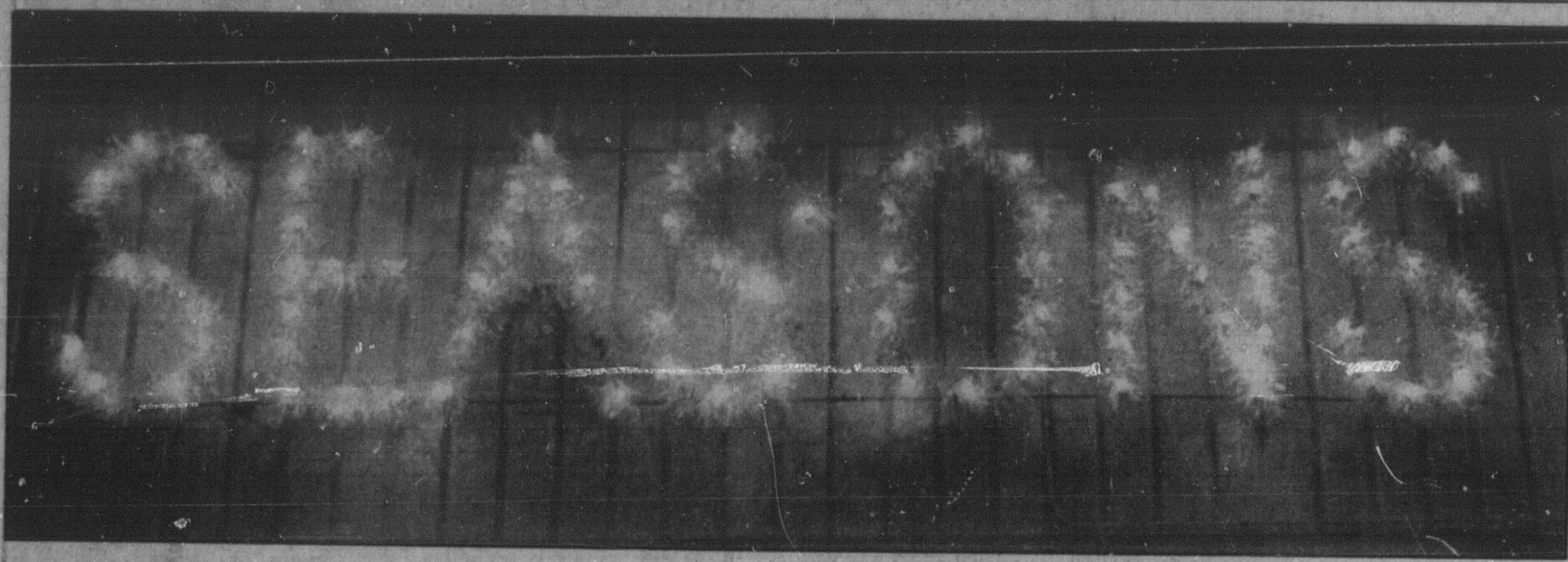


Champion Perspective

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Toys, toys, toys. That's the dream of every small person at this season, but retailers report that parents are spending fewer of their dollars on toys and more on practical gifts for their children and other loved ones. Here Marcus Cutler admires one of the many items on display at Zellers in Milton Mall.

"Seasons greetings" is more than simply an expression of good will and fellowship at this time of year. For merchants throughout the country, including Milton, it is the herald of an important season.

For many retailers, 1982 has not been a good year. Business has been sliding as the demand for goods and services shrinks in the face of soaring layoffs and a mounting concern for the most basic things of life.

Now the major buying season of the year is upon us the merchants are praying for increased sales.

"Normally the Christmas season should be a good one-third of our business," says Ruth Jarman, owner-operator of the Basques Gallery, on Main St. Milton.

"That's what it should be, but so far it isn't looking like that this year," she added.

"We hope that November will be twice the volume of the other months and that December will carry us through the lean times of January, February and March," she added.

To date, however, the first part of the 1982 Christmas season hasn't provided the volume that retailers have been hoping for, she said.

"This is supposed to be a buying time of year, but right now people just aren't buying," Mrs. Jarman said. "Hopefully it is going to improve."

Mrs. Jarman added that in 1981, a similar cycle was experienced where shoppers held off on their purchases until much later in December, "so that the bulk of our business was done in the few days after Dec. 15."

Despite their advantages, shopping malls are no less vulnerable to the winds of public demand, according to Clare Henderson, marketing manager of Milton Mall.

"For the majority of retailers Christmas is certainly the most important part of the year," he said, "but I think we are going to have to start looking at alternatives and not rely so heavily on the one festive season."

"Considering the shape of the economy however we haven't been doing too badly," he added.

Mr. Henderson also identified the trend of later shopping for Christmas gifts, and remarked that changes in the weather are also important in getting the public mind into the holiday spirit.

Sandy Martin, promotions director for Milton's Downtown Business Improvement Area, said some promotional schemes have been planned by that group, but admitted that the program is hindered by a lack of money.

"I have my doubts about the extent of the things we'll be able to do," she said. "Right now I'm trying to figure out how to rob Peter to pay Paul."

Included in the promotions, she said, are a draw for a weekend trip, Santa Claus wandering the streets starting this weekend and a window decorating program for high school students.

"That's about all we have going. The budget is relatively small and we have spent most of it already," she said.

Other businessmen are taking an aggressive approach to promote themselves during the holiday season.

Ray Domenico, managing director of the Mohawk Inn, in Campbellville, has designed a "Merry Merry Party" for Dec. 17, the Friday before Christmas week.

For \$8.75 each, 100 people will partake of a buffet luncheon, with the services of a DJ thrown in for those who want to dance away the afternoon.

Mrs. Jarman said it is much harder for a merchant to cope with depressed sales figures during the Christmas season than at other parts of the year, because they are not expected and that has a devastating effect on the morale.

"I have to realize that stock like mine is luxury items and people don't have to give nice things for Christmas," she said.



Christmas is supposed to be a season of beauty and happiness, and local merchants have a wide range of merchandise designed to help foster that atmosphere. Sales are down however, and some retailers may not enjoy the season as they would like. Debbie Sims, of Milton Greenhouses, shows off a wreath, one of many items available to add to the Christmas spirit.



Gift wrapping is one of many services merchants offer in an effort to get people into their stores to spend their Christmas dollars. Marilyn Smith of Harris Stationery shows how it's done.

Stories by Steve Arnold
Pictures by Murray Rosin

Save the trees Bouwman pleas

Every year thousands of families face the choice—to buy a real Christmas tree for their home or to simply erect the tired old artificial standby that has served for so many years.

Now, a Milton nursery man may have an answer that will allow both a real Christmas tree, and a chance to spruce up your property in the bargain.

Art Bouwman has developed a scheme to sell potted Christmas trees, with the idea that they be planted at the end of the Yule season.

"I figure that there are just too many trees going to waste every year," he said. "There must be at least two million in the Metro Toronto area alone."

He explained that the trees come in a pot and after the Christmas festivities they should be stored in a safe and protected place.

He advised the trees be secreted in a protected corner of the yard, or placed in a pre-dug hole and surrounded by leaves. "The only place not to put them is in a place where they are exposed to extreme cold and get no moisture" he said.

Mr. Bouwman said there are several advantages to his live trees over ones that have been cut and stored especially for sale at this season.

"These would definitely be nicer than one that has been cut down," he said, adding that over six years a homeowner could develop an attractive screen for his property with the potted trees.

"The big advantage is that because they are potted, people don't have to be bothered putting up all kinds of gadgets to hold the trees up," he said.



Every year thousands, perhaps millions, of evergreen trees give their lives to beautify homes during the Christmas season. Nurseryman Art Bouwman, of Milton, has a novel idea to keep the beauty of these trees throughout the season. This year he is selling potted trees to be decorated for the holidays and then planted for future enjoyment.



Christmas is a time when local merchants stretch to make enough money to carry them through the lean months in the first quarter of every year, just like Jennifer Hallett was stretching for this bauble during a recent visit to Milton Mall.