

# Follow my advice and there'll be no complaining next year

You want the true meaning of Christmas? I'll tell you what it is. Complaining.

Everybody complains about everything. They complain about shopping, baking, preparing for relatives, finding the right present, having to make Christmas dinner, busy malls, stress, spending money and fruitcakes.

And here I am complaining at Christmas about people complaining about Christmas.

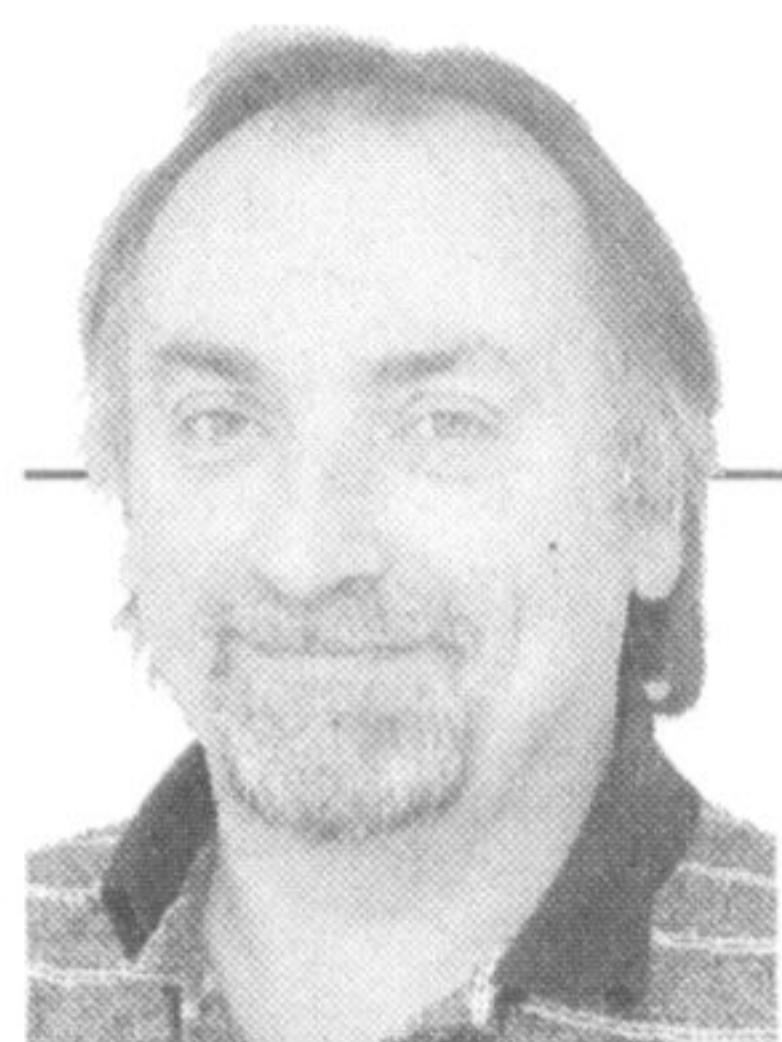
This year a lot of people were complaining that it didn't seem like Christmas. If you were whining, then it certainly did.

I genuinely like Christmastime, but I'm no better than anybody else. This column was originally intended to be about the 10 things I don't like about Christmas. I had plenty to talk about, too, but how terrible they make Christmas movies to the lack of original new Christmas songs. Have you ever seen a worse movie than Christmas with the Kranks? Fruitcake I don't mind, no complaints there.

How did something that's supposed to be so good, get so bad?

It wasn't always that way. When we were kids we loved it, but when we look back we often have complaints or unpleasant stories about that, too.

Oh, we can find pockets of good cheer and spirit. Dashing through the snow on a one-horse open



On the loose

with MURRAY TOWNSEND

sleigh is nice. Doing something charitable makes us feel good about ourselves and helps other people. And I wouldn't trade anything for the thrill of watching my granddaughter put Christmas ornaments on the tree, or telling Santa what she wanted for Christmas - two books and some candy.

Those are all great for sure, but the negative seems to outweigh the positive, and there's clearly little time to enjoy all the good things. How many people have you heard come right out and say they hate Christmas? A lot, I bet.

I'm not just another pretty columnist, you know. I have a solution. If you want to bake something to thank me, I wouldn't hold it against you.

Christmas is supposed to be about giving, for one thing. But it seems pretty obvious that giving is very stressful. That's the root of my solution.

Half of you are going to love this solution, and the other half is going

to love it the next year.

You're going to need an agreeable partner, or family. A husband or wife will do nicely. Or sister or brother. And a coin.

Then you flip the coin, making sure to call it in the air.

The winner does absolutely nothing over the Christmas season. No baking, no shopping, no cooking, no cleaning, and best of all, no stress. Just sit back and enjoy all the good things about Christmas while the other person does it. The next year you alternate.

It's going to be terrible for one person, but great for the other. That's better than it being bad for two people, and there's always the next year to look forward to.

There are some complications with this solution. Mostly, if it's a married couple, the woman tends to do most of the work most of the time. Too bad. Men can learn. And if it's the other way around, women can learn.

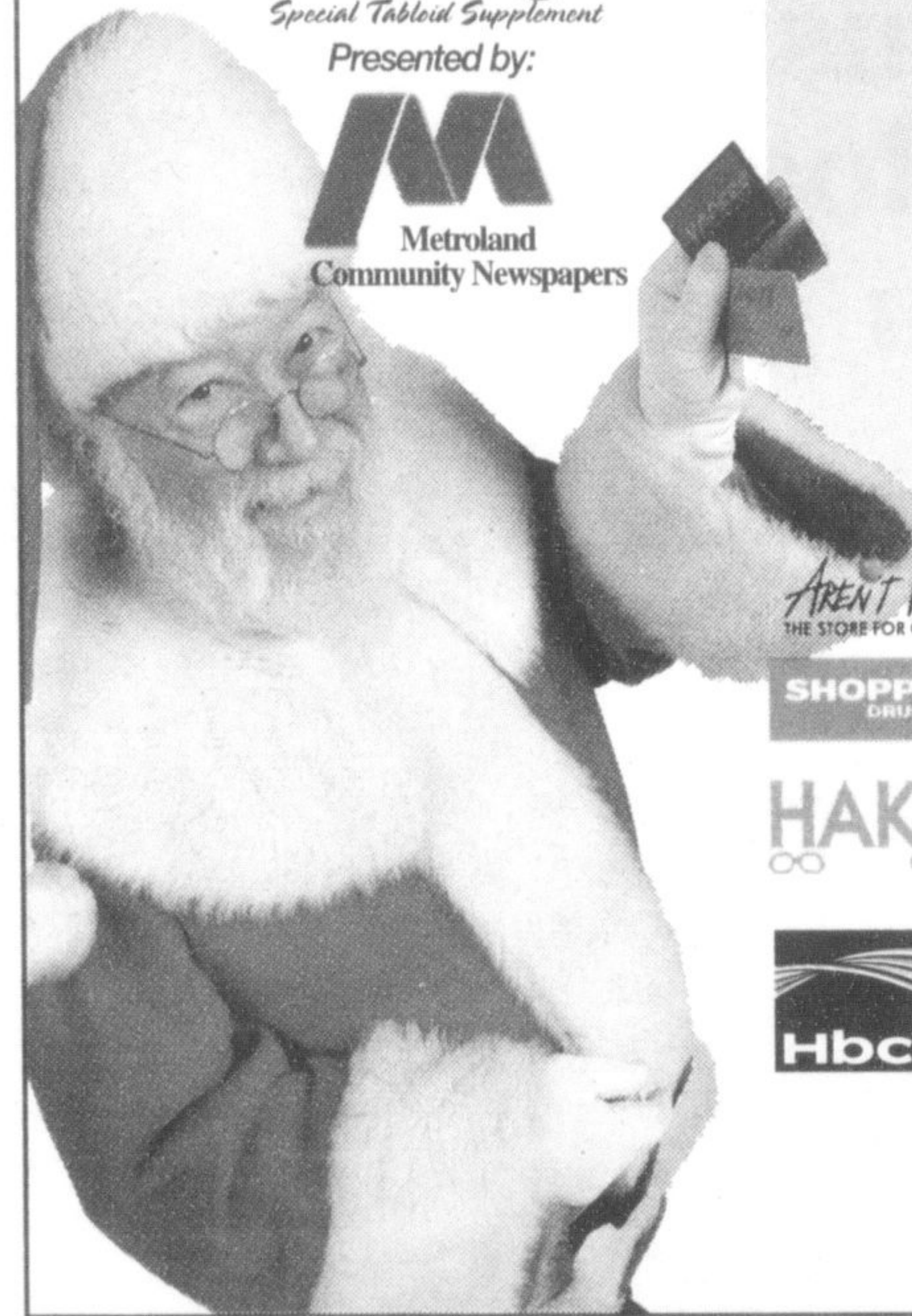
The most the person with the year off might have to do is make out a list of presents for the other person to buy. That's not too bad. And of course, they can still do the things they like. If you like baking, keep doing it. Do it more. Do some for me.

Think of how nice it will be to receive rather than give. Every other year, no stress, no worries, no complaining... no chance.

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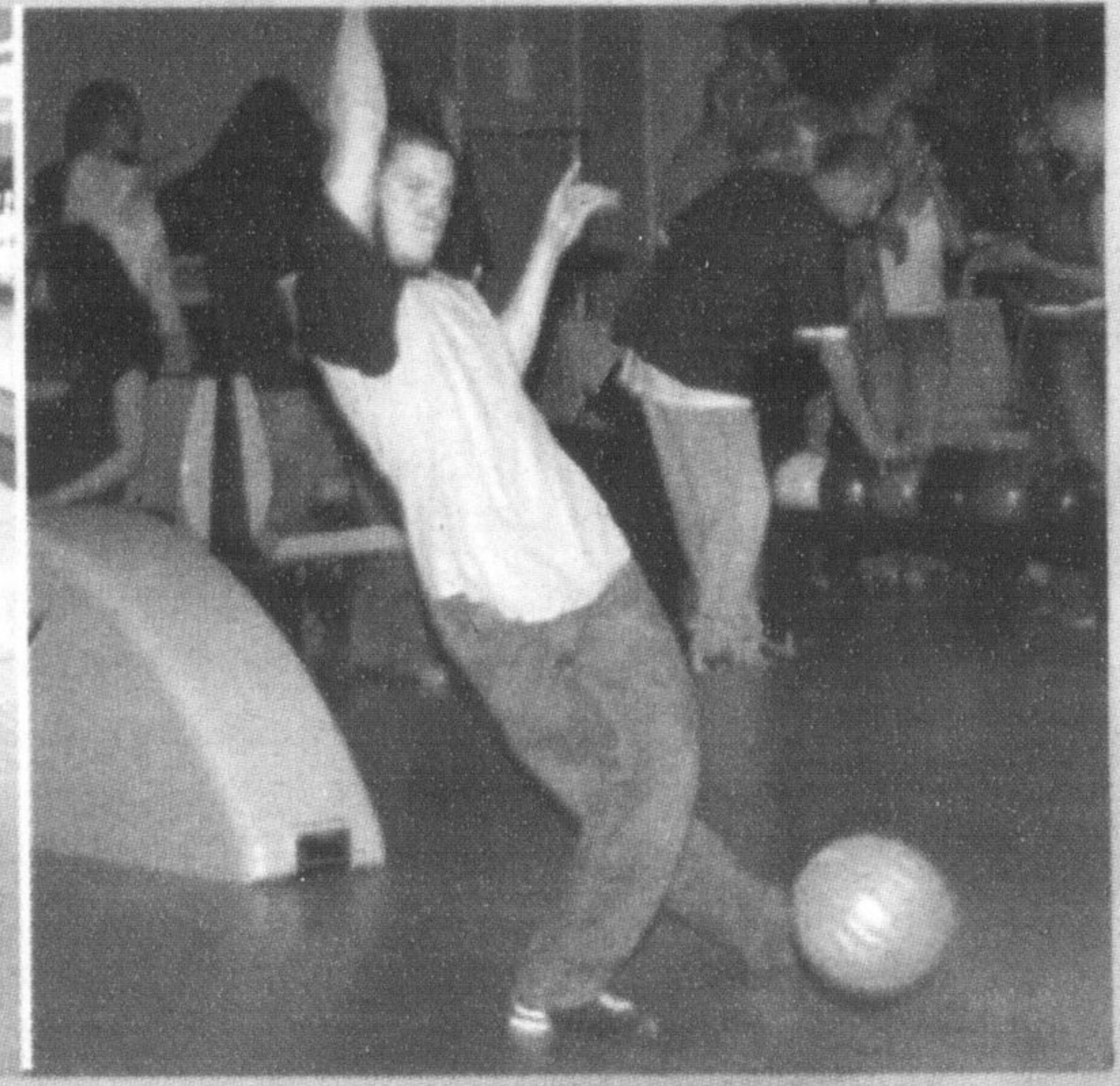
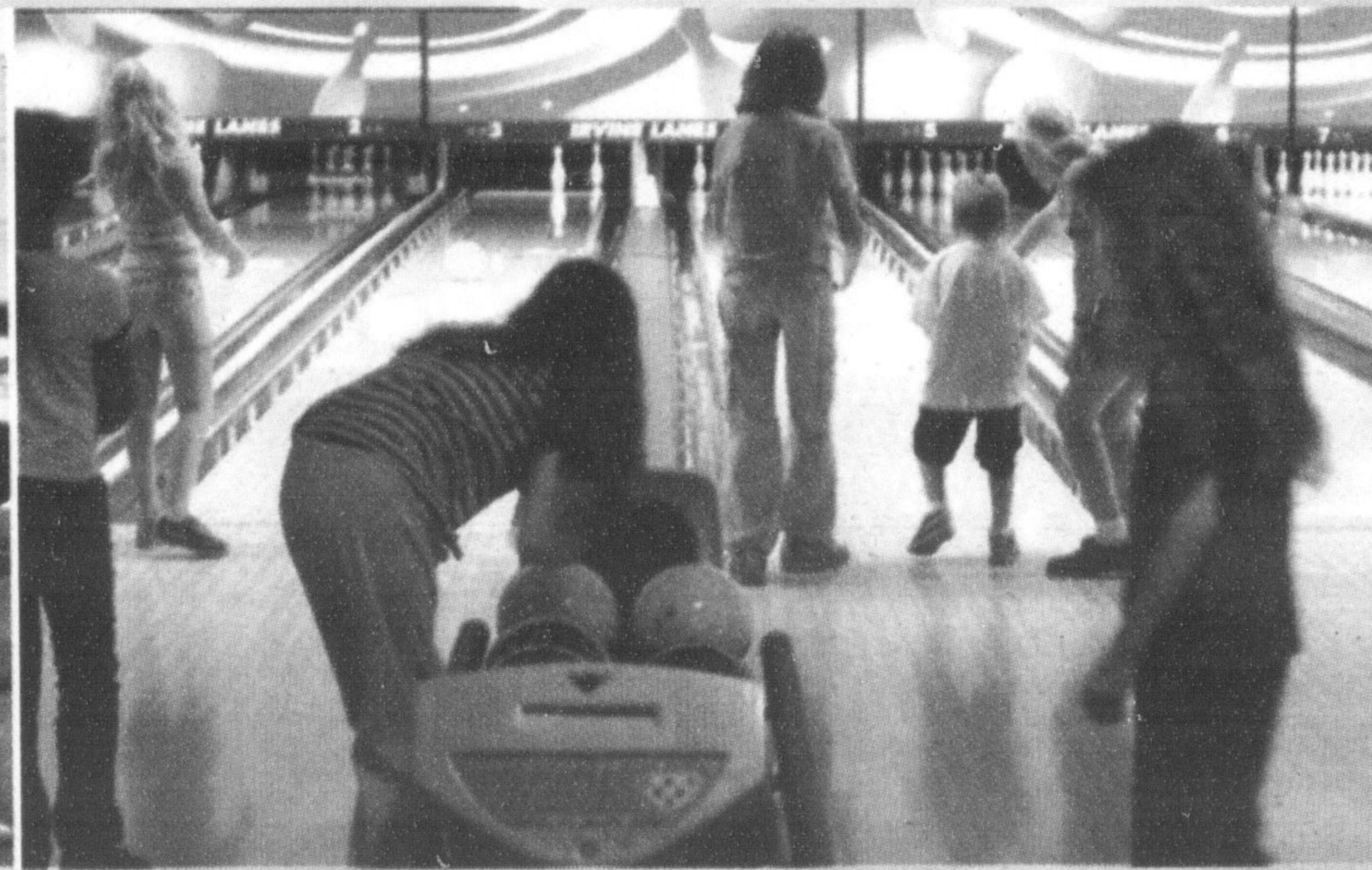
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