

Wrapping not my strong suit

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drag out their presents from their hiding places.

Then I'd start wrapping. I don't know how to wrap presents, never have and never will. I'd go through a couple rolls of tape, getting it tangled on my fingers and in my hair. I'd cut the paper, usually not big enough for the present and have to start all over again. Then I'd forget which present was for which daughter because I hadn't marked them, and have to start opening them up and rewrapping them.

I'd watch Scrooge on TV while doing this, because it was always on, the old black and white version being my favourite. This was already well past midnight, and when I finally finished, the worrying still

wouldn't stop. Had I got them enough, was everything even, would they be disappointed?

I'd end up being exhausted when I went to bed, and a little sad. I'd think about how I had to do everything myself all the time, how I didn't get the chance to do much for me. None of this was my usual train of thinking, but there are no sports on television on Christmas Eve, and I'd just get a little down.

Parents know that feeling. You're stressed out, overworked, underpaid, always worrying about something, always something to clean or fix. It's never ending. It hits you at different times.

Then Christmas morning and Christmas Day would come and everything would change. The kids would be excited and

happy, you'd see the family, you could eat yourself into oblivion – my personal talent – and all would be good again.

Now that I'm older and look back on those times, I don't feel sad, I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to do it. I think of them as happy memories, not the fleeting sadness I might have felt at the time. I wouldn't trade anything I was doing for my kids for anything I could have done for myself.

So what would I say to the person who was feeling down about thinking they lived their life for others?

In the final analysis, what you do for others, or think you're doing to help others ... it ends up being yourself who benefits as much as them.

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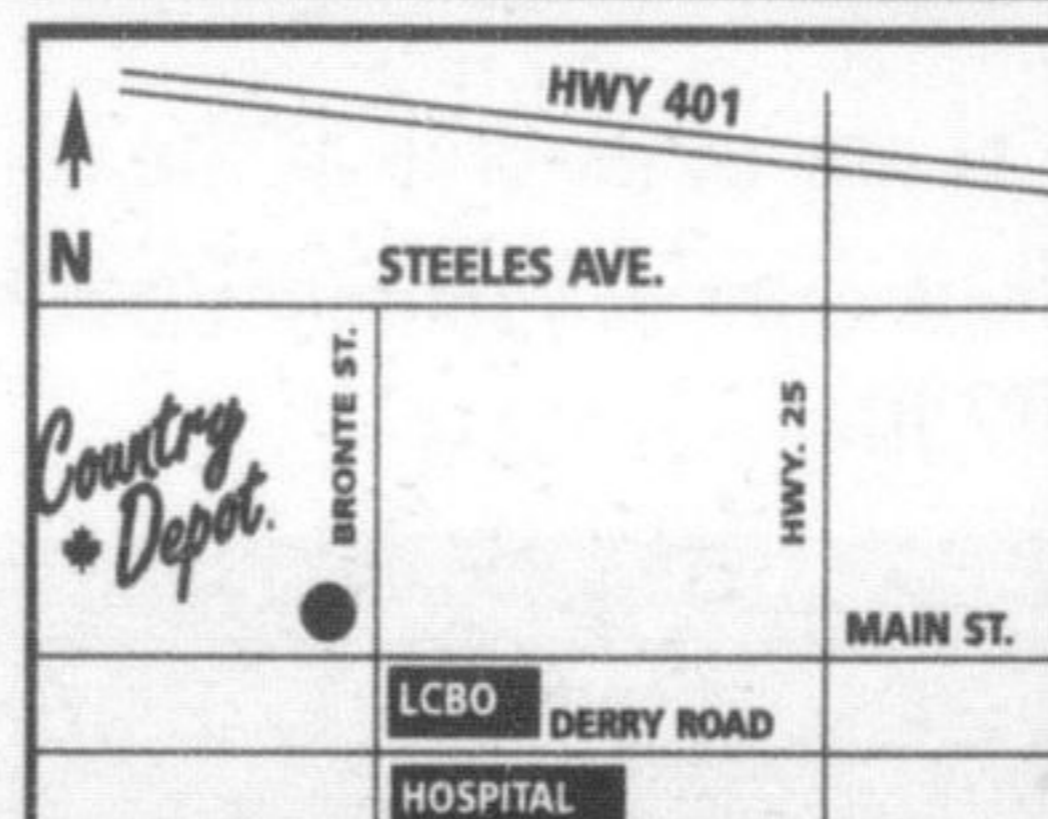
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