



Into the Winterama spirit

Do you recall the year when Tessier's entered District High School's Queen of Hearts. We'll give you a hint, it was a couple of decades ago. Winterama parades always high light the annual late February event and from all reports this month's parade ought to be the biggest and best yet.

Sons and hairs; a case of family hairedity

Shirley Whittington

In our household of four males and two females, guess who is the most hair-brained?

Do the women continually fuss with brushes and two-way mirrors? Are the females the ones who pout if there's no creme rinse?

Not on your fingerwave.

One of us has handled her hair herself since she was eight or nine, with little fuss and great success.

The other resident female has resigned herself to looking like the before pic in the Clairol ads.

It's the guys in the clan who make appointments with the hair stylist and argue about whose turn it is to use the blow dryer.

Although two of our sons have left home, they still drop in every so often to have dinner and wash their hair. They bring their own shampoo. They can't stand the budget brand I buy by the pink, viscous gallon at the local discount store.

One weekend one of the boys brought a friend home from college.

Did they spend a lot of time talking about girls, booze and motorcycles? I don't think so. They compared hairlines.

Since both of them are sprung from a long line of human billiard balls, they are naturally concerned about how long it will be before girls will be running their fingers along their skin instead of through their hair.

Just last week, one of the boys, (the good natured one) erupted in a tantrum — the first one we've witnessed since he was 10. Was it a failed math test? A parental order to clean up his room? Neither.

Somebody had stolen his favourite comb from its hiding place in the bathroom.

(Actually it's kind of nice that he's using a comb again. For a while he was using a rake, which made us wonder what he was

cultivating up there.)

When the men in the family stop worrying about the hair on their heads, they start fussing about the hair on their faces.

On those occasions when they are all together, do they discuss Superbowl statistics? Argue about torque and transmission? No indeed. They conduct spirited debates on the merits of blade shaving versus electric razoring.

Their sideburns have gone up and down more often than the elevator at the CN tower. Their latest whim has been to shave them off altogether.

The Squire has fewer hair worries simply because he has fewer hairs.

When he says he's going to wash his hair, that's exactly what he means. He has so few he can kind of rinse them off one at a time, like philadendron leaves.

He has a moustache — an adornment he grew at the request of the women in the family. We felt he needed some shrubbery to add interest to what would otherwise be a treeless landscape.

But what's this? The Squire has rebelled.

He says he's going to shave off his soup strainer. He wants to feel free and clean and as smooth as a bean.

You might think that all this fussing about hair — about sideburns and neck trims and dandruff and split ends and beards and moustaches — you'd think it might give the men in the family high blood pressure. I hope it doesn't.

A newly discovered remedy for high school pressure minoxidil - has a hairfying side effect. It grows hair on the head, and all over the face — on the forehead, the cheeks and upper lips.

Imagine! We'll have a new generation of urban gorillas.

The whole thing is enough to curl your face. Meanwhile my daughter and I go sensibly and calmly about our business, and try to ignore the hairy hysteria of the men in the family. They have this gorgeous curly hair with which they fuss continually.

We have straight lank locks which we make the best of.

I guess it's just a case of family hairedity.

Bless you all for keeping in touch

Bill Smiley

Due to the vagaries (and I could think of some other words for them) of our mail system (system?), this column has been getting to readers at some peculiar seasonal times.

My Christmas column, written in November, appeared after New Year's Day in many papers. My New Year's column, written in early December, has appeared in mid-January. A letter from my daughter, written on Dec. 10, reached me on Dec. 31. First-class something or other.

So this one, written Dec. 31, 1980, will be my Valentine's Day job for 1981, and perhaps you'll get it by the March break.

Looking ahead at a new year is more dispiriting, very often, than looking back at the old one. At least you know that the old one can't be any worse than the one that's coming up. That applies to years, dogs and women.

Some pretty darn nice things happened to me in 1980. Generally speaking, it was a rotten year, but there were some bright moments that helped dispell the gloom.

First of all, I read an article in the Toronto Star, with a headline: Teachers suffer

highest burnout rate. This highest cheered me immensely, because it proved something I'd known for years, and we're always cheered when we're proven right, even though we prophesy that the world will come to an end next Tuesday. And it does.

Some of the statements in the article might be considered a bit alarming, but they made me feel kind of special.

I quote: "On average, teachers die four years younger than the rest of us."

And next to air traffic controllers and surgeons, teachers suffer the most stress of all professions."

You see the cheery note there? I could have been a surgeon or an air traffic controller.

The author of the book on which the article was based stated flatly that many parents and school boards consider teachers, "No more than glorified babysitters and are prepared to treat them as such both through working conditions and salaries."

Did you get the key word there? "Glorified." Saints and martyrs are glorified, though I haven't heard about too many babysitters reaching that status, though there

are some who should be.

And there isn't a babysitter in town who makes as much as I do. So I'm happy.

And another nice thing happened to me in 1980. I made a speech to honor students at a high school banquet. Honor night speeches are usually about everything except honor. Mine wasn't. And I received a fine tribute about it from a teacher, Burton Ford.

"Your presentation to Honor students here was damn good."

It was refreshing to an old boy, like myself, to hear it acknowledged that the Bible and Shakespeare are the models for correct English.

In a time when old values and ideas are constantly being demeaned and even discarded, it was very refreshing to me to hear a teacher talk about Honor." Thank you, sir.

Not all the letters were like that. Cassie Stafford of St. Thomas rips me up a bit, though she always sends along a poem at Christmas. She claims I am influencing her children's thoughts about sex, even though they are all out of high school by now. Her letter ends, "My own writing is deteriorating from reading your column each week." Me too, Cassie, and thanks for the poem.

From The Corner Store in Newtonville comes a note from Gwen McOuat: "This is

not a school paper. It is a love note. I think you are terrific and I love ya." Thanks, Gwen.

She encourages me to get on with putting a book together, and guarantees it will be on display in the Corner Store.

Just before Christmas, an old friend, who worked with me on a steamboat resort ship on the Upper Lakes back in the Thirties, was on the blower.

He was the head bell-hop, and a consistent failure in medicine and dentistry at the U. of T. He is now a successful dentist in Vancouver, which says something about something.

He may be a good dentist, but his memory is not so hot. He claims we once went to a whore house in Detroit. I have never been in a whore house in my life. Knowingly. And I don't ever expect to be. Knowingly.

Then there's always the Christmas card from my old friend and critic, from Westport, who invariably signs his card Your TV Repair Man, and gives me a verbal cuff on the ear, slap on the back and tells me to go on saying it like it is.

Bless you all, and the many others who have written encouragement, vitriol, and just good old-fashioned gossip about the good old days, when our hearts were young and gay, and a hamburger was a dime, and a Pepsi was a nickel.