

## Shirley Whittington



A young person I know has said this about carrots: "They are the least gross of all vegetables."

Any kid will tell you that gross vegetables abound. Turnips and parsnips have unfortunate textures, and smell of something unspeakable. So do Brussels sprouts. We once stripped our kitchen almost to the lath tracking down one of our famous smells, and eventually traced it to the refrigerator where an ancient broccoli was quietly stinking.

Not only does the carrot not smell, it is as sturdy as an old boot. Not so the cauliflower, easily bruised and browned-off. Nor the lady-like lettuce which wilts and faints on a whim. Nor celery, which it must be admitted, does not hold its age well. Or spinach which if unused transmogrifies into slimy green glop. Or the thin-skinned-temperamental tomato which catches the pox and goes off suddenly. But then—what can you expect from a fruit that masquerades as a vegetable?

Carrots are cheap too. Why doesn't the army use them as ammunition? Imagine a

battle field where the air was zinging with flying carrots! Nobody would get very badly hurt. Defense spending would plummet and the farmers of this country would become wealthy munitions magnates like the Krupps.

Carrots are also sensibly designed. Compared to the pineapple or the artichoke the carrot is a miracle of simplicity. Carrots lack bones, gristle, cores, seeds, stalks, thick skins and excess fat. When you buy a carrot, a carrot is what you get.

I don't know how you people out there manage with those enormous thick-skinned squash but I used to throw mine down the cellar stairs hoping to fracture them into pot-sized pieces. I have also sent the children down to the workbench with a cleaver and a recalcitrant vegetable, but don't tell the Children's Aid.

Difficult vegetables—the snooty avocados, artichokes, eggplants, celeric, or salsify—are not welcome in my kitchen. Most of them demand exotic sauces and funny forks, none of which we have time for around here.

## A salute to the super tuber

There is after all, something humble and endearing about the carrot. The carrot is the Don Harron of the vegetable world—vastly talented and beloved—but not, as the Bible says, puffed up.

Carrots, the only Day-glo vegetable on the parket, are pretty too. Your average white dinner plate stacked with mashed potatoes and a piece of boiled fish is pretty ho-hum until you lay on the brightly sliced carrot coins.

Carrots have played supporting roles with frozen peas for so long they have become type-cast. Fans of this self-effacing vegetable are often startled when a carrot bursts onto the menu in a creamy soup, with a couple of shrimp.

How about bare-naked carrots, raw and sliced and playing the role of crudites?

Last week a friend brought me some carrot-pineapple muffins—a treat as tender and light as a cloud. Carrot cake is not new, nor is carrot pudding. But have you ever tried carrot marmalade? There is also, for those who know how to squeeze it, carrot juice.

Off stage, a carrot can be used as the nose for a snowman or a Jack O'lantern. Those Illustrated Guides for the Indoor Gardener

usually have diagrams showing how to suspend a carrot fragment a tantalizing few centimeters above some life-giving water—a form of horticultural torture which produces a feathery plant.

I used to steal carrots from my mother's crisper to give to the milkman's horse. This was a deliciously terrifying venture for a city girl—to hold the carrot flat on the palm under the beast's velvety nose, and then have it disappear with a warm whuff and a loud crunch. I always counted my fingers afterwards.

Shakespeare understood carrots. Remember that famous soliloquy from Omelette? "Is this a carrot I see before me, the green fuzzy part toward my hand? It's not? It's a dagger? Good! I'll go cut up some crudites."

The year ahead is likely to be challenging, but take a lesson from the carrot. Be bright, sturdy, versatile, unpretentious and not gross.

And the next time you go out for dinner, take a bag of gold with you. Twenty four carrots.

## Bill Smiley



I don't know what to get my grandboys for Christmas, and that's a fact.

I know what I'd like to give them, and I know what they want, but neither one fits the bill. Except that they call me "Bill" and it's Bill who meets the bill.

What I'd like to give them is what we'd all like to give our children and grandchildren: a feeling of security, of being loved, health, happiness, good marriages, children of their own, acclaim in their chosen fields, whether it be pumping gas or pumping philosophy good and dear friends, dignity, honor, virtue, integrity, and enough to eat for the rest of their lives.

Pretty wild dream, eh? for children who will, if they are lucky, sail into the twenty-first century as young adults.

They'll have a feeling of security and love as long as I'm around. Health is dicey, at the rate our great leaders are allowing the world to be polluted. Happiness is something you experience, if you're lucky, two or three times in your life. They'll probably make lousy marriages, as so many do these days. I can't guarantee they'll even be any good at pumping gas—or philosophy—same thing. Their friends may turn out to be rotten traitors. Their dignity and all the rest is up to them. I can't even promise they'll have enough to eat for life, although they try to store up enough

when they're visiting to make do for years.

So, I can't give them what I'd like to. Nobody can, but God, and He doesn't hand out stuff like that at Christmas, or any other time. You have to grow, and roll, your own.

I know what they want. Nothing much. Simple, really. Just about three thousand dollars worth of electronic games: Star Wars, The Empire Strikes Back, and such. And new skates. And a rifle each. And a magic wand each. And anything quite expensive that is guaranteed smashable in eight seconds. And some explosives, to blow up their teachers. And a kitten each, and a dog each, and a horse each, and, if it weren't too much trouble, Grandad (Bill), maybe a small elephant each. Nothing fancy.

What I'd like to give them is impossible, realistically, and what they'd like to get is impossible financially and aesthetically. And grandmotherly. My old lady is sick of having kittens dumped on her. She'd have a stroke if the boys went off, after Christmas, and decided they'd had enough fun with their baby elephants, and were leaving them for Gran.

What I should give them is a suit each of long underwear, a Bible, and a one-hour lecture about the work ethic and saving your money for a rainy day. (I can just hear Balind, "But, Bill, it rains every day.") Those gifts would bore all three of us out of our skulls, although they're the kind of gifts I used

## This is what I like to give...

to get when I was their age.

It's bad enough trying to figure out gifts for the boys, but I come to a complete blank when I try to think of something for the Old Battleaxe. She has everything. After all, she married me. What more could a woman want? Except jewellery, furs, a new hi-fi, a private checking account, and two weeks in Mexico with an exciting man.

Well, she can't have them all. If she's willing to put up the air-fare, I'll go, reluctantly, to Mexico.

My son is another dilemma. He professes to be completely uninterested in material things, only in those of the spirit. And every time he leaves, after a visit, I'm missing my favorite shirt or jacket.

About the only thing I can give him is a couple of hours of my undivided attention, while he goes on about astrology, spiritual auras, the occult, and the very slim chance I have of getting to the next world and flapping around with a bunch of sourfaced "saved" who denied themselves all kinds of fun on earth so they could have no fun in heaven. It would be a real sacrifice, because I can usually last only about twenty minutes, when he gets going, without blurring something that starts with B, and heading off to the bathroom or some other sanctuary free of saints. That's what I'll give him. Along with the usual

cheque.

What about my daughter? I'd like to give her a twenty-four-hour-a-day baby-sitter, a job she loved, a rich, handsome and extremely understanding husband, two angelic sons to replace the wee devils she has, a total relief from the migraines she suffers. Along with the usual cheque.

And what about yours truly? You can't love other people unless you love yourself. So goes today's cant.

What I usually get for Christmas is the blasphemous job of trying to make the "&\$! Christmas tree stand up, the treat of making the turkey dressing, and the sensual delight of signing crisp new cheques.

This year, it's going to be different. I saw a letter on the bulletin board the other day. A couple with a terrific home, all modern gadgets, near Peterborough, would like to exchange houses for a week at Christmas with someone in our area, for the skiing. I'm going to write and make the switch, neglecting to tell them that our house included two grandboys, their mother, their uncle, and all the friends they drag in.

And if that doesn't work, I'll give everybody Gran for a year, a month at a time. It would be cheap, good for them all, and give me a chance to grow senile in peace.

And may your Christmas choices be equally easy.

## MPP's report

## It was quite a good year

The Christmas Season provides us with the opportunity to pause and look back over the achievements of the past year.

A busy year for MPP's at Queen's Park—much was accomplished to improve the health and safety of Ontarians at the home and on the job—much was done to provide jobs for those who needed them, and to strengthen business and industry to better meet the challenge of world competition.

This year we saw a boosted support to the Province's hospitals, as well as encouragement to hospital administrations to help them better work out their budget problems.

We are also seeing the

introduction of chronic home care throughout the province. This kind of care is especially required for the Province's elderly who would rather be treated in the familiar surrounds of the home rather than at a treatment centre.

We also saw new protection for children travelling on the roadways of the province.

Approved child restraint seats are now the law in Ontario. The Ontario Safety League, through local Jaycees, have set up a loaner program to help your parents who cannot afford to buy an approved restraint device right now.

Rules concerning school buses have been

tightened, especially the penalties for drivers who do not stop at a safe distance from school buses when they are discharging or taking on passengers.

During the summer, a committee of the Legislature looked at one of the disturbing aspects of North American Life—violence in the family. MPP's are considering what the province can do to prevent conflict in the home from becoming violent.

Jobs have been a concern for many people this year, and the Ontario Government has been at work to provide work for those who need it most. For example, in the spring budget the province started up a \$171 million

temporary job creation scheme this fall the province allocated another \$150 million to keep employment programs going through the winter.

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The work accomplished by these employment programs is necessary public works such as the building of access roads in timber areas, the surveying of natural resources, repairs and renovations to municipal roads, schools and buildings. Young people are not forgotten in the province's job creation

activities—the province has created the winter experience program to help those young people having trouble finding work through the winter months.

While ensuring that work is available for those who want work, the Ontario Government is also concerned about keeping the cost of government to a minimum.

That's why we introduced the inflation restraint package this fall—a package that, on average limits public service wage increases to five per cent—with larger increase for those on the lower end of the wage scale—and will influence the costs of provincial commissions.

The five per cent

guideline has already been influential in persuading Ontario Hydro from reducing its rate increase from a proposed 13 per cent to something little over eight per cent—that's a reduction of almost half!

The peace and harmony that this joyous season encourages should remind us that, while this year has been a difficult challenge for some, that all who live in Ontario are comparatively well off in comparison with the rest of the world who are fortunate that we do not live in fear, that there is still enough to eat, and that in our many resources we have great potential for future growth.

Ontario is known as

the province of opportunity and optimism—in past we have proven we can succeed because we know how to succeed.

Faith, confidence and ability have moved mountains in the past—they also created fortunes and spear-headed movements and programs that have been of great benefit to the community as a whole.

This Christmas, let the peace of the season enter your house and your heart.

Take advantage of the good fellowship and tranquility of the coming days—use this time to renew your confidence and strength so that together we will face the challenges of 1983.

# Warning still very much in effect here

YOU ARE AGAIN being warned to stay off local and area ice-covered rivers, lakes and bays.

Because of the recent mild weather, it is just too dangerous to risk life and limb.

There will be plenty of time to walk, skate, scoot and snowmobile on ice-covered waters later this winter once the deep freeze sets in...but for now...please stay off the ice.