

Editorials

Information-honestly, openly and freely shared-
is the hallmark of democracy

12 Yuletide days

THE TWELVE DAYS of Christmas are familiar to most people, chiefly as the raison d'être of a fabulous giftfest comprising such unlikely presents as swans, geese, leaping lads, dancing ladies and the immortal partridge in its pear tree, star of innumerable Christmas cards.

Everyone, of course, knows Christmas Day itself (which, depending on which calendar you are using, is either the first of the Twelve Days or just prior to them), as well as Epiphany, Jan. 6, the Twelfth Day (according to some systems of counting, the 13th), which signifies the close of the Christmas season. But how many people can recite the Holy Days which fall between the two?

The concept of the Twelve Days probably originated as a Teutonic, Christian holdover, which was seized upon by the Church as a convenient link between Christmas and Epiphany, and only a few of the days are traditionally celebrated.

These are St. Stephen's Day (Dec. 26), St. John's Day (Dec. 27) and Holy Innocents Day, also known as Childermas (Dec. 28).

St. Stephen's Day honors the first martyr of the Christian church, who died a gruesome death by stoning in 33 A.D.

Because St. Stephen is the patron saint of horses, the date was considered propitious for such activities as sweating and bleeding horses.

In Sweden, where the holiday was most extensively observed, it was traditional for peasants to travel—sometimes a great distance—to neighboring farms to care for each other's horses on St. Stephen's Day.

Also in Sweden, St. Stephen's Day was customarily celebrated with horse racing, presumably a throwback to pagan purification rituals which were centered around horseback riding and races.

St. John's Day is associated chiefly with the tradition of drinking wine which has been blessed, and which was believed to render the imbiber safe from the effects of poison throughout the coming year.

This custom commemorates a cup of poisoned wine which St. John the Apostle drank when challenged by a pagan priestess to do so as a test of God's power. Miraculously, St. John drank the wine without ill effects, having first made the sign of the cross over it.

Variations on the theme in regions of Europe have believers drinking consecrated wine to protect them from a wide assortment of ills: not only poison, but lightning, ill health, a poor harvest and spoiled wine.

This has caused speculation among scholars that the drinking—sometimes to excess!—of wine on St. John's Day arose as a holdover from a pagan wine sacrifice.

At any rate, wine drinking on Dec. 27 was so widespread that certain 17th century German scholars wittily suggested that Weihnacht—the German name for Christmas—might well be changed to Weinnacht, wine night.

Childermas, the last in this triad of holy days, marks Herol's massacre of the innocents, by which means he hoped to kill the infant Jesus.

It is, according to tradition, a particularly unlucky date. No one, if he could help it, would begin something on that day. King Edward IV of England went so far as to postpone his coronation, originally scheduled for Holy Innocents Day, and King Louis XI of France categorically refused to transact business on that date.

Leaving matters of state aside, housewives in Cornwall in Southern England refused to scrub their abodes on Childermas, and their counterparts in Northhamptonshire eschewed doing the wash.

Needless to say, it was not a popular date for weddings, and no one with his wits about him would consider donning new attire for the first time on Childermas.

Customarily, children were whipped (presumably, not too hard) on Holy Innocents Day, possibly to bring home Herod's cruel slaughter.

More likely, this, too, is the survival of a pre-Christian ritual, as adults, as well as children, traditionally came in for their share of whipping.

That it was not considered punitive but was a boon is indicated by the almost universal ritual of rewarding the whipper with sweets or nuts; presumably the beating—frequently accomplished with omnipresent evergreen branches—was supposed to cause the expulsion of evil spirits.

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Test results are in

Dear Editor:

The following are those girls who passed tests on December 8th at our Low Test Day. I would appreciate it if you could publish these results in an upcoming edition.

Dutch Waltz Pauline Buttineau, Carrie Ann Lacroix, Yvette Buttineau.

Canasta Tamara Zwicker.

Swing Jennifer McNamara, Jennifer Zwicker, Cara Deschambault, Danielle Labatte, Laurie

Robillard, Kathleen Marchildon.

Ten Fox Julie Forget.

Willow Shelly Sauve.

Fiesta Figure Shelly Sauve.

First Figure Shelly Sauve, Kristin Spearn.

Second Figure Kimberly Ann Roszmann, Leah Zwicker.

Thank you kindly for your attention to this matter.

Carol Baker
Test Day Chairman.

Favours marsh open, but...

Dear Editor:

I would like to see the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre kept open but I firmly believe that it should stand on its own feet financially. With the help of volunteers and the elimination of free admissions I am certain that this can be accomplished.

As a local businessman I would be pleased under the suggested circumstances, to give

financial support. I am sure that other local businessmen would follow suit.

One of the main reasons why our Country is in such trouble is that far too many people want something for nothing.

Yours truly,
Denis Bonyun

Please favour our request

Dear Editor:

The Big Brothers of Midland-Penetang have been active in our community for the past ten years.

During that period an average of twenty-eight

little brothers have been successfully matched with a big brother.

We are a non-profit association that is directly involved with local boys aged 6-14 who do not have a man in their life. We feel that it is important for boys to have a man they can turn to as they grow up.

A Big Brother is a man who volunteers a few hours each week to be a friend to a boy. They go out together, talk together and learn together. It is hoped that through this match, a boy will get the individual attention and encouragement that he needs to develop his full potential. A Big Brother provides an example to a boy. A chance to see what it means to be a man. But mostly having a Big Brother provides a chance to do things he might not get to do. To have some fun.

Seeking pen pals

Dear Editor:

Hello! I'm a middle-aged woman looking for Pen pals who are alarmed by the growing threat of nuclear war. And I'd like to consider things from the Bible's perspective.

My health limits my activities, but I will answer all sincere letters. 1 Thes. 5:3.

Thank you,

Lynne Eytel
Rd No. 5 Box 224
Clarks Summit, Pa. 18411
U.S.A.

Christmas is for sharing

Dear Editor:

The child of Bethlehem has affected all of human history and, therefore, the story of Christmas is not simply a matter of a lovely tale, or of the singing of Carols or of bright lights; Christmas is the essential message that we are all called to share in the love that God has given in that Child of Bethlehem.

This Christmas will be real for us all if we have some part in caring about the hungry in Ethiopia and throughout the world, the homeless and the refugees, and unemployment in our own midst which is so seriously affecting our young people. The possibilities are before us for sharing the resources we have, and making this a better world in which to live. Active caring can happen and with it Christmas will be meaningful to all of us.

May I wish on my own behalf, and that of the Anglican Diocese of Toronto, a very Happy Christmas to all of you.

The Most Reverend Lewis S. Garnsworthy
Archbishop of Toronto and Metropolitan
of Ontario.

The Big Brothers BOWL FOR MILLIONS will be held between Feb. 2-9, 1985. And we are pleased and proud to announce that Brian Orser will be our Honourary Chairman for the second year.

You and your employees have been a major factor in the success we have experienced and once again we are asking for your support.

During this period bowlers will be asked to obtain pledge contributions to help our cause. Our request to you is that you consider supporting your employees who are helping our cause.

Your financial and moral support will insure that we achieve our goal.

Without your participation and financial support our efforts would be fruitless.

Please favour our request with your approval.

Sincerely,

-Jim Blackwell
President

Letters

The Penetanguishene Citizen welcomes Letters to the Editor. They must be legible, signed (by hand), and carry the writer's address and telephone number for verification. Pen names are not allowed and anonymous letters will not be published. Letters published by this newspaper do not necessarily reflect the opinion of this newspaper, its publisher or editor.

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