

Local Citizens Describe - - -

# "My Most Memorable Christmas"

In the lives of most men and women there's usually one Christmas Day that, for some special reason, stands out above all the others. It may have been a Christmas away back in the days when "all the world was young — and every lass a queen". Or it may have been just a Christmas or two ago.

It may have been a Christmas Day when much of it was spent peering from a muddy ditch through a periscope over the dun-coloured, misty fields of Flanders, while shivering men a few yards away looked back as machine guns cracked, denying "peace on earth and good-will to men." Or it may have been a day in a later conflict with palms on a Pacific island providing a striking contrast to the cedars and pines of Canada.

Again, it could have been a Christmas which, through its very simplicity, stood out in strong contrast to all the others.

"Which was YOUR most memorable Christmas?" "The Liberal" decided to ask a number of residents of Richmond Hill and district. Here are the answers.

**MARRIED 'GLORIOUS' GIRL**  
Here's the one that Richmond Hill resident Douglas H. Storms, spark-plug of the movement which will eventually see Richmond Hill with its own hospital, and president of the York Central Hospital Association, remembers as his most memorable Christmas Day: "It was December 25th, 1917. It was the day before I married the most glorious girl on earth — and she still is!"

**OUT OF THE LINE**  
The First Great War provided George Hill of Richmond Hill, Hardware, Yonge Street South, with his most memorable Christmas. "It was my first Christmas in France," he said. "We had just come out of the line. I was with the 127th Battalion — that was the 2nd Battalion Canadian Railway Troops — which was raised from the York Rangers. The place was called 'oh gee whizz' — oh, it was somewhere near Villiers Bretonneux. We had a turkey dinner and the officers served us. We spent the rest of the day burning and everybody mixed up officers and all. It was a real rest day."

**CHILDHOOD MEMORIES**  
Childhood days provided the most memorable Christmas for Reeve Wilfred Dean of Mark-

instead of interviewing, was interviewed.

Mrs. Eleanor Charuk, the newspaper's correspondent in Oak Ridges, gave a typical mother's reaction. "It was Christmas, 1952, when we were living in a flat in my mother's home in Toronto. Our baby Sandra was eleven months old. She was fascinated by the lights. She was just walking and had a wonderful time with the doll carriage we got for her. That was as wonderful a Christmas as anyone would want."

**LOVELY THOUGHTS IN HOSPITAL**

For another Richmond Hill resident, William Neal, car dealer of Yonge Street South, long-time leader in civic affairs and first Mayor when the Hill was incorporated as a town, the First Great War also provided the most memorable Christmas. "There were two of them," said the former infantryman. "The first was my first overseas — the first time I had ever been away from home at Christmas. The second was the next year when I was in hospital in the old town of Shrewsbury, England, after being wounded. It was one of those things that you call V.A.D. hospitals — a big old house turned into a hospital. I was the only Canadian there and they used to treat me royally. But they had funny ideas about Canada. They used to ask me about wolves and Indians and they would ask me if I knew someone in Canada. On Christmas Day there wasn't much that they could do for you, except treat you as nicely as possible. You just laid there and thought about the good Christmas at home and wondered when you were ever going to get back to them."

**BORROWED DECORATIONS**

A member of Richmond Hill Public School Board, Mrs. Irene Worell, also went back to New Brunswick for her most memorable Christmas Day. "There were so many of them," she said. "When we were young our father had to work in the north every Christmas and the first Christmas Day that we were all together was really memorable. However, there was one Christmas that was outstanding. It was after the war and my husband was going to Mount Allison College in Sackville, New Brunswick. I was working in the library on the campus. We went out into the woods to get a Christmas tree and hauled it in ourselves. It was right after the war, as I said, and you couldn't buy a decoration anywhere. But one lady in Sackville lent us her material and we had our own decorated Christmas tree after all."

**ANOTHER FAMILY MEMORY**

For still another parent Christmas became memorable because of the family. Harold Sanderson, long-time resident of Church Street, vice-chairman of the Public School Board and altogether likely to be 1962 chairman, said, "Our most memorable Christmas was the one when our first daughter Jean was old enough to appreciate what was going on and to begin to understand what Christmas meant. She is now in Grade 9 at high school."

**MEETING-IN-LAWS ORDEAL**

For another Richmond Hiller the most memorable Christmas brought a bit of an ordeal — meeting her "in-laws". War bride Edna Taylor was brought east by her husband "Chuck" Taylor, Yonge Street Jeweller and president of the Yonge Street Business and Professional Association, to meet his parents, then living in Toronto. "I expected to see Toronto looking like Victoria and Vancouver, with their flowers," she said. "Instead they took me through short cuts where I saw garbage cans instead. I wanted to go home. However, we afterwards moved to Richmond Hill where things were better."

**FIRST CHRISTMAS HOME**

"The first Christmas home from the war," said Mayor James Haggart of Richmond Hill, asked about his most memorable one. After being away from his family and friends for five years, that one topped them all, in his opinion.

**FIRST ONE AT HOME**

"It was the first one in my own home after I was married," said Manager Tom Mills of the S. S. Kresge Company Ltd. in the Richmond Heights shopping centre. That, said the native of St. Thomas, was in Sarnia where he was also with Kresges. He has been with that firm for fourteen years, incidentally. His wife was a Toronto girl and the two met while he was working in that city.

**CHRISTMAS IN HOLLAND**

"My most memorable Christmas was spent in Holland," said Don Watson, CFGM news editor, announcer and commentator. "We had had six months of Spartan living and, at the time, we were in an abandoned monastery. On Christmas Day in 1944 the army came through with two bottles of real beer, genuine turkey and a military version of plum pudding. On

top of that a concert party came to entertain us and one of the girls tossed a piece of mistletoe to the troops. I was the lucky one who caught it — and you can guess the rest."

Don Watson, at the time of his most memorable Christmas, was a sergeant with the 4th Armoured Division.

**AFTERNOON OF BRIDGE**

"One of my most memorable Christmases," said Principal Garnet L. McDiarmid of McConaghy Public School, Richmond Hill, "was one of the two spent overseas in the Air Force. We were stationed at Torquay in Devonshire and I remember that on that day we were served extra Canadian food. It was a pleasant experience after wartime rations. I remember seeing liquid refreshments served, too, by a padre. I remember, also, playing bridge all afternoon."

**CAROLS IN THE MOUNTAINS**

"In 1948 I spent the Christmas season in the Welsh mountains at a reunion of the Snowdon group of Scout Climbers and Mountaineers. After a tedious journey from London to Llanberis I struggled through a snowstorm to the Rectory where I was to be a guest, thinking of all the sensible warm places where I could have been. The ruck-sack on my back was getting heavier and I was getting tired at every step when through the noise of the wind I heard the beautiful voices of a Welsh choir, singing carols." So said Colin Burgess, president of the Richmond Hill Junior Chamber of Commerce, recalling his most memorable Christmas Day.

"I could not be far from the church next to the Rectory, I thought, so with renewed spirits I struggled on. This was the start of a Christmas holiday that seemed to be filled with singing and I realized for the first time the important part music played in bringing to us the true, joyful Spirit of Christmas. Whenever I hear carols being sung today my memory always recalls the Welsh choir I heard on that memorable Christmas in 1948."

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