

# The Search for Christmas

(continued from page 18)

(Mrs. Jackson was sandwiched between a bus and the curb. Ahead of her a car had swerved across the front of the bus. She couldn't leave her car. She couldn't attract anyone's attention to find Louise. Besides would it be safe? She was almost panicky.)

Opposite the store was an old church, much older than the store. Once it had been a fashionable place; now it was downtown, shabby, looking tired out. However it was still in use.

Louise noticed that quite a number of people were going into it, many of them children. It would be warm and dry and safe, Louise thought; she would go inside for a moment or two.

But once inside Louise forgot all about Mrs. Jackson, for the children were practicing a pageant. She edged her way towards the front pew and sat down. She slipped off her wet coat, and pushed her hood backwards, releasing a red-gold mop of curls.

Almost immediately she was absorbed into the sequence of events about the Nativity. It didn't matter that the players were wearing everyday clothes — poor ones at that; that the church was ill-kept, painless, well-worn with age and use. Louise was walking the road to Bethlehem.

The producer was an able woman and she knew her business. She got the cooperation of the children and adults alike. She impressed them with the fact they were taking part in a worship service, and it was only as they worshipped that others would be led to worship.

She was also an artist and knew the effects she intended to have. There was to be a great fan of angels in the finale of the shepherd scene. She arranged the children with a true eye, but she didn't have all the material needed. There was a gap in the front centre and no child fitted that gap.

Suddenly she caught sight of Louise — and in the next second Louise was in the gap. Her halo of curls surrounding her innocent, round, intelligent baby face, seemed to turn her into a symbol of a heavenly messenger.

"Perfect," said the producer; "exactly the child we needed."

The rehearsal continued. The angelic host made another appearance in the last tableau.

"Next rehearsal will be the day after tomorrow, at the same time. Everybody — and I mean everybody — must be here promptly."

Louise came down to earth with a gasp. She would have to explain at once. "I don't belong here," she said. "I — I just came into the church to get warm."

"Well — you must come for the sake of the pageant — for this church. Who is this youngster?" The producer turned on the minister as if he were accountable.

"I've never seen her before in my life." The minister was as perplexed as Louise.

"I've forgotten all about Mrs. Jackson," Louise wailed. "I was to wait for her, and she never came, and I got cold." She dissolved into tears.

The minister managed to get the story straight, and then went off to a pay telephone across the street.

Louise's mother had been called by a desperate Mrs. Jackson, and had just notified the police. She was so relieved to hear her daughter was safe! And so grateful! If the minister could find a reliable taxi and send her right home, that would be best.

Within the hour Louise had been bathed, tucked into bed, and brought her supper. Grandfather who had been a dinner guest, was with her as well as her parents. Explanations were made and Louise was exonerated. She added between bites: "I have to go back to the church for a rehearsal on Thursday."

"But, my dear you don't belong down there. They'll find another little girl," her mother told her.

"No one else will do. They need me for a centre piece." (There was no pride in her voice; just a statement of fact.)

"The pageant is very, very important to all the people. It is their great Christmas celebration. God needs me to worship Him. She said so."

"Who is she?" "I don't know," and Louise returned to her supper. "I have the minister's address. I'll talk to him," said her mother.

But the producer forestalled her. She must

have Louise. She knew it was an imposition, but it was also a necessity. She told a little of the church's history, how it was serving a forgotten district, how it carried on in spite of insuperable difficulties, how people like Louise and her family must help them.

"I couldn't say 'no'," Louise's mother looked worried. "It's a matter of getting her there on Thursday and Saturday and Sunday."

"I thought you were busy at our own church on the weekend," her husband reminded her.

"I am. And on Thursday too."

"Tom will take me," said Louise confidently.

"Tom is too young for that district."

"I can't possibly make the rehearsal," said her father, "although I could manage the Saturday and Sunday."

"God needs me, Grandfather," Louise looked entreatingly at him.

Grandfather had never been able to resist Louise. "I'll have to make arrangements," he said gruffly.

"Are you sure it won't be too much for you?" his daughter asked.

"I'll find a corner and sleep," he replied.

But he didn't. The minister found him and something in each responded to the other. In a short time Grandfather had heard all about the church, and the area, and the problems.

"I'm no businessman. We need a good businessman here. The church treasurer can add and subtract; more subtraction than addition". The minister sighed.

"You need some help," Grandfather agreed.

The whole family managed to get down for the Sunday evening performance. It was, as Louise foretold, an act of worship. And somehow Louise was a centre piece, devoutly worshipping. People came

out of the church very quietly, much moved, and with soaring hearts.

**Epilogue**  
It was Christmas night. Grandfather with Louise on his knee, was sitting beside the fire. Graham was deep in a scientific book, his most exciting Christmas present. The children's parents were talking quietly. Tom was studying the flames.

It had been a marvellous Christmas. Grandfather and Louise had both been far more peaceful than usual. And Grandfather loved the Mother and Child. The statue was there on a table, and the flames lighted up the faces, giving them an alive appearance.

Graham's card had a place of honor on the mantel piece and beside it was the original of a newspaper copy of the fan of angels. (The minister had seen to that.)

Grandfather turned to Tom's father. "I have been wondering whether you couldn't do without me at the office?"

Tom's father stared in amazement. "But, Father, what would you do?" he gasped.

"I've been thinking. Something about this Christmas has changed my perspective. As Louise says: 'God needs me in that little church'. I really can make a contribution down there."

"I have been trying to throw my weight around in the office because I was afraid I'd be ignored. I'm not afraid any longer. There is work to be done, worthwhile work. Eh, Louise?"

Louise had no idea of what he was talking about, but she was quite willing to agree.

Tom smiled to himself, and gave a contented sigh. He wasn't at all sure why they had succeeded, but he was filled with gratitude.

He looked round at his family and they also were content. Christmas Past, Present and Yet to Come was Benediction.

## Maple Superiors winners by 8-7

Mario Massarella and Brad Demeo led Superior Propane Pee-wee-Bantams of the Maple house league to an 8-7 victory over Maple Farms December 14.

Massarella scored five goals and one assist while Demeo scored a hat trick and one assist. Glen Amodeo also scored one assist.

Scoring for Maple Farms were Peter Morris, with two, Philip Notaro, two, Bill MacDonald and Barry Key, one each. Assists went to Peter Morris, Macdonald, Key, Sandy Todd, Allen Rotz, Rick Bayley and Tony Legere.

Maple Lions and DH&A tied 5-5. Scoring for the Lions were, Rob Bayley, two, Gordy Cooper, two, and Doug Shaw, one. Assists

went to Bayley, Conte Dominic and Fabio Alessandrini.

Scoring for DH&A were Peter Snowdon, two, Brian Hasselvelt, Doug Hay, Ernie Chefero. Assists went to Snowdon, Hasselvelt, Hay, Chefero, Dennis Flemming, David Plant and Ron Hay.

Maple Dominion Engineering Welding Atoms took on the first Richmond Hill atom team December 12 and lost 8-0.

Maple played well, but Hill has a fine team and deserved the one-sided win.

In Stroud December 15, the atoms tied 4-4 with Maple goals coming from Mark Fortin, Branko Kordez, Scott Usher, and Sandy Grant. Assists came from Sandy Grant and Harold Kaiser.



**Greetings**

Make merry! Be cheery! It's Christmas!

We'd like to extend our good wishes to friends everywhere. For your kind patronage, our hearty holiday thanks.

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## rock talk by paul jones

By Paul Jones

(York, England — A group from England (Newcastle to be exact), that is beginning to hit the airwaves in Canada is Splinter. Splinter consists of Bobby Purvis who writes most of the material, and Bill Elliot who sings most of the leads to their material.

They are the first group, excluding Ravi Shankar, to be released on Dark Horse Records. Dark Horse Records is that new record company formed by George Harrison and distributed by A&M Records.

George is very enthusiastic towards the music of Splinter, which is clearly influenced — in terms of melody and mood — by the works of the Beatles. As Bill Elliot has recalled with satisfaction his feelings towards the Beatles, "The Beatles meant everything to me, in those days, and they still epitomize the sheer joy in making music for us. We've not tried to copy their sound — only their spirit."

Just before my departure from Canada, I recall seeing a Billboard chart listing Splinter's first single — 'The Place I Love' in it. I have no idea how it's doing now, though I definitely think it's a pleasant tune worthy of success.

# Newcastle's Splinter beginning to travel airwaves of Canada

Presently, in Great Britain on the national charts, another song of theirs called 'Costafine Town' is doing very well. It's a melodic tune, quite infectious and hopefully will be released in Canada soon.

These two songs, plus seven more — including 'Situation Vacant' (another melodic tune) and 'Somebody's City' (containing some favorable guitar work and an infectious chorus making it similar, in sound, to the work of the Beatles in their 'Rubber Soul Era') are all on their first album — 'The Place I Love' (Dark Horse Records).

Generally speaking, the album is sort of a variety of folk rock. It took a year to complete and features some fine back-up work by Alvin Lee, George Harrison (who produced the album, but plays under the name of Hari Georgeson), Klaus Voorman, Willie Weeks, Gary Wright, Jim Keltner and Billie Preston.

If you like any music by the Beatles, or Simon and Garfunkel or Gallagher and Lyle, you're sure to like Splinter's music. In fact, I'll bet that you'll like Splinter even if you don't fancy the others I've mentioned.

### Wing's newest member

Paul McCartney and his band, Wings (consisting of Denny Laine — guitarist, formerly with Moody

Blues, and Linda McCartney — keyboards) are getting ready for a tour that will take them to Europe, Japan, Australia and the United States.

Coinciding with the release of their recent single — 'Junior's Farm' (Apple Records), Wings have acquired a new member, Jimmy McCullough — who'll be playing lead guitar. Although Jimmy had been recording with Wings earlier this year, it wasn't until recently that he agreed to join the band.

Jimmy McCullough, originally from Clydebank, Dunbartonshire, Scotland, moved to London at the age of 12. At 15 he turned professional, playing in various groups, including Stone the Crows and Thunderclap Newman.

Amazed by Jimmy's work, Paul invited him to play on the song — 'Junior's Farm', and now that Paul McCartney and Wings will be touring, Jimmy has been offered a full-time job with the band. If you haven't heard his work before, you can hear him on 'Junior's Farm', where he plays lead guitar, or on McCartney's new album, or when they come to America this spring.

Although it hasn't been confirmed yet, I'm sure Paul McCartney and Wings will also play in Toronto this spring. Paul has always, since the days of the Beatles, had a soft spot for Toronto, a city he feels is an important centre for rock music.

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