

A Christmas reminiscence

By Rev. Michael Fleming

When I was a child, Christmas was a very special time. The smell of the tree, the roaring fire, the crack of walnuts being opened, the chaos of our cat chasing his pre-Christmas gift (a catnip mouse); all these were a part of Christmas. Late at night, we would come together in the living room to share even a few moments of family time around the scratched and battle-scarred piano which was my father's pride, joy and means of livelihood. With the light from the cleaners' across the road being cascaded by the mottled leaded glass onto the marred surface of Dad's Steinway, we sang our little hearts out. Traditional Christmas fare, unusual carols which Dad wanted to use at the special services at St. George's. But, the moment for which we children waited was always drawn out, heightened by the craftiness of my Father's delight in teasing with love.

Each year, Dad and Mom wrote a Christmas carol. This was then printed and sent to hundreds of people as their gift at Christmas. It was for this that we stood or leaned by the piano. We always wondered whether the carol this year was to be better than last year's; would the range of notes be too much for the three boy trebles and the soft lilt of a junior soprano? Would the words carry the same impact that last year's carol had?

This year, I miss not having a new carol to share with Sharon and my family. The composer is gone.

Rummaging through Dad's work papers recently, I found a copy of one of his carols. It was one which was very familiar to me, but I always thought that Dad and Mom had written it in the early days of their marriage. It was called, "we be silly shepherds". Written in 1936, when Dad was fifteen. I remember singing this carol for years and years. It was always one of my favourite works. It is a simple sing; the song of simple men. They were silly men; men who had been overcome by the sudden burst of glory on the world. As I read again the yellowed poetry and ran my fingers along the black notes, I began to think about those "silly shepherds, men of no renown".

The images of the hillside near to Bethlehem transformed the blizzard which raged outside the Rectory into a tranquil night so long ago. I could hear the sheep, the dogs, the snap of the fire, the sill men with their silly sheep huddled for warmth and companionship in the utter darkness. Then, the sky exploded with colour and with sounds that only they heard. Transfixed by the majesty which danced before them, they were the first to hear the Good News. No king, no lord, no hero was privy to the power of

that night. That night was a night for simple silly men.

With the silliness ringing in their ears, they went to the rude village below. There, they found the Child who had come to bring the fulfillment of all their dreams. They came just as they were. They did not stop to change clothes; they did not freshen up; they did not pause to warm themselves by the fire. Hearing the Good News, they rose and walked into the great unknown. The sheep they left on the hills.

Suddenly, I was startled into reality. Rev had snuggled close to me and was having a dream. His "little legs" were pumping, his jowls trembled, and he whimpered. I sang "We be silly shepherds" to my silly Saint Bernard. He raised his head, looked at me with the most sorrowful expression I could imagine and lay down. He slept, secure.

I stroked Rev's great head and gazed again at the carol which Dad had written forty-two years before. The last four lines began

to play in my mind. . .

"Seek we now thy presence with our gifts of love,
Felix brings a lambkin; I will bring a dove.

Baby Jesus, small and sweet, lo we lay them at thy feet,
Baby Jesus, small and sweet, lo we lay them at thy feet"

With Rev asleep beside me, the words overpowered me. The gifts of the shepherds were simple; love and care were the gifts that they gave to the child. It was exactly what He needed that night. If only we, in the midst of our Christmas, could remember that the greatest gift which we can give is the most simple and yet the most costly one to give: ourselves with all our imperfections. Then, we too, could join the true Christmas season, and sing softly and joyfully, "we be silly shepherds, men of no renown. . .

May your Christmas be filled with the peace and love of the Child. May the gift of yourselves be given to your children and to others as He gave the gift of His life to the world.

Meditorial

By Rev. James Paul

With the Christmas season descending upon us, one must think of securing appropriate gifts for our family and friends. There is a story told of a young man who, in his search for an appropriate gift for his fiancée, created a present which produced a lifetime of memories. A few weeks before Christmas this enthusiastic Romeo constructed several gigantic balls of snow. When the dark of Christmas Eve had arrived, he carefully rolled them down to his sweethearts home and fashioned a ten foot snowman. In the cloak of night he affixed, as the last piece of his creation, a large banner which he suspended between the snowman's woody hands. When the blessed morning came, the young woman gazed out her window to find a wonderful Christmas gift. On the banner, which the snowman held were these words, "Merry Christmas sweetheart, I love you".

This young lover created a truly ingenious gift, and yet, his Christmas message was merely a repetition of God's love-message. In John 3:16 we read; "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." When Jesus came from the glories of heaven to be born as a babe, we received a priceless gift of love. Our Creator had now entered this world bound by sin to become our Savior. In thirty three years this one life would die on a cross, the just for the unjust, to break the bondage of our sin. Truly, it can be said that when God gave His Son to be born that first Christmas morn, His message was "Mankind, I Love You". Have you received this priceless gift of God's love?

MARAUDER —

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house and because of the possibility that he wore a stocking over his head. He appeared to be about five-foot, eight-inches tall with bushy black hair and wearing a dark jacket.

"He never said a word," Mrs. Rombough said. "If it had been two or three of them with a knife or a gun they could have finished us off quickly. Meredith was fighting for his life and so was the

other guy."

Mr. Rombough was treated for cuts and bruises to his face and Mrs. Rombough suffered a loose tooth. They were treated by Doctor Frank Kinnaird of Russell. Police arrived at the scene within 15 minutes. There have been no arrests.

"I wish it had all been over before we arrived. Material things are not worth your health," she said. It was very traumatic afterwards.

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Christmas Wishes

On this special day, may you experience the blessings of Him whose advent into the world we commemorate; and may the joy that comes from serving him brighten the New Year — the Pulfers.

Celebrate the Birth of The Saviour by receiving the Salvation offered through his Redeeming Blood, God's only plan of Redemption. Peace be unto you — Robert and Georgie Gamble.

The Robert McCallums wish all their friends a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

A very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all our family and friends. — George, Lynda and Robin Martel.

Merry Christmas to our friends Richard, Rosemary and Charles Maundrell in St. Johns. — The Schroeters.

Bill Loucks, the Russell Village barber, wishes Castor Area residents Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Kenmore and Russell Baptist Churches

Minister: Rev. James Paul, Ph. 821-2144

Kenmore — Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Morning Worship Service, 11:15 a.m.

Russell Evening Fellowship, 7:30 p.m.

Sun. Dec. 17 — Special Christmas Program at Kenmore,

Sun. Jan. 7 — at Dan Cover's residence, North Road.

Sun. Jan. 14 — at John Mill's residence, Casselman.



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SCHEDULE FOR CHRISTMAS SEASON

December 17 — 9:00 a.m. St. Mary's, Russell

December 24 — 7:30 p.m. Christmas Celebration St. Andrew's, Vars;
10:30 p.m. Christmas Celebration St. Mary's, Russell

December 25 — 10:00 a.m. Christmas Celebration Trinity, Bearbrook

December 31 — 9:30 a.m. St. Mary's, Russell
11:00 a.m. Trinity, Bearbrook

January 7 — 9:30 a.m. St. Andrew's, Vars
11:00 a.m. St. Mary's, Russell

January 14 — 9:30 a.m. St. Mary's, Russell
11:00 a.m. Trinity, Bearbrook



*Souhaite a tous
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United Church news

Sunday School Party: Dec. 16 at 2 p.m.

Sunday School Pageant: Dec. 17 at 11:15 a.m. Music by Junior choir.

Special Christmas Music on Dec. 24 at 11:15 a.m.

Evening Service at 9 p.m.

United Church Women

U.C.W. Report

The Excelsior unit of the United Church Women of the Russell United Church met at the church hall for their December meeting. President Tina Campbell welcomed members and visitors. Kay Lake presided for the Christmas worship and Christmas thoughts were expressed by each one present. Reports were given by Helen Boothe and Isobel Steele. Lunch was served by Kay Lake.