

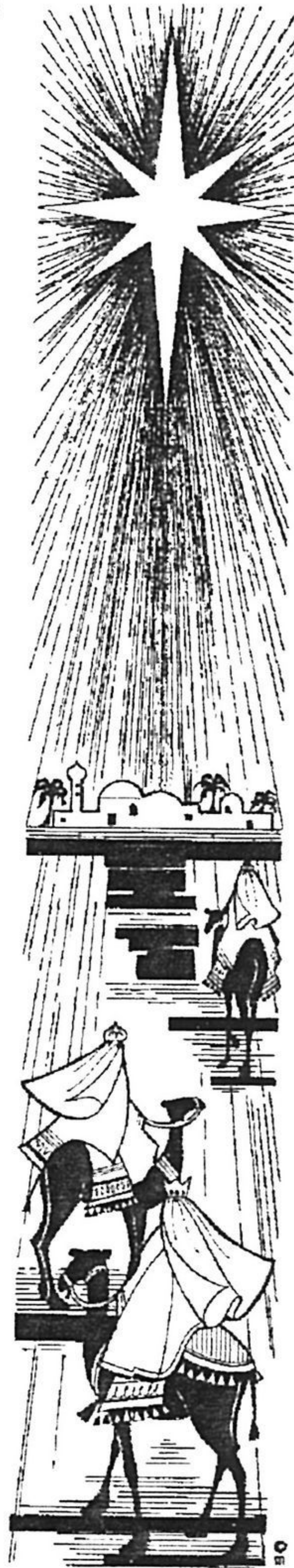
The Time the Magi Were Late

By Bill Brearley

It was nearly eleven o'clock on Christmas Eve when Jean had just sent John Junior to bed. She headed into the kitchen to talk to his father, John Senior, for you see the son was named for his dad; to eliminate household confusion all called the lad John Junior. Over coffee with a piece of cake they rehashed their financial plight. Earlier in the fall a neighbour had agreed to buy fifty acres of land which their farm did not need. Since they'd had the promise of this money, John Senior had upgraded his equipment. Now it seemed that the neighbour was in bankruptcy, thus he couldn't afford anything new. The family debt load, which had been enough before the purchases, now threatened the farm's existence. John Junior, listening at the hot-air register, heard all this, therefore, he prayed for a Christmas miracle.

Next morning, John Junior ignored his presents, waiting for mom and dad to get up, and went for a walk down to the shore. Where they lived on Long Point there was gravel, and a build up of broken shore ice. This morning, however, there was something else. Onshore wind and wave action had washed up a large cabin cruiser. Was this the answer to his prayers? Not waiting for any doubts to settle onto his faithful young mind, he ran home to awaken his parents. In a torrent of words, he explained their good fortune as an answer to his prayers. The whole family descended on the new arrival. Dad took the extension ladder down to the boat where they clambered aboard. It was well appointed with many cupboards. John Junior opened one drawer to find a stamp album. Mom and dad thought this might be a good time for the lad to start collecting some of those beautiful stamps that they'd seen in the post office.

After a brief look around, they returned to the farmhouse for breakfast. The boat was all the talk of the morning. It was the "Spindrifft" out of Oswego. Jean suggested that maybe it wasn't theirs by right-of-salvage, if it had just broken free of its moorings somewhere. John Senior agreed to call Father O'Connor and seek his opinion. Father O'Connor, despite his name, was an English priest recently sent out to the Picton Catholic Church. The priest told John Senior that, indeed, the boat was not his, and that he had a moral obligation to find the



true owner. Perhaps the OPP could help? John Senior reluctantly called the officer on duty who informed him that indeed the owner would be located.

Later in the day, a Dr. Javitts called from Syracuse. He was profuse in his thanks for their having located his boat. His only request was that they get a local contractor to get it out of the lake before it might be damaged. John Senior called Russ Cole in North Marysburgh. Russ was known to be expert at picking up and transporting large awkward objects such as boats. Soon the "Spindrifft" was sitting in the drive on Russ's trailer. John Senior was rather glum during Christmas dinner. His "gift" seemed to have drifted away on a wave of morality. Only the mincemeat tarts, that his wife had gotten from that Anglican Church in Waupoos, seemed to cheer him up.

About the middle of the day after Christmas, Dr. Javitts arrived with a tractor trailer to fetch his boat home. It required several hours to winch and slide the large boat from Mr. Cole's trailer to the American rig. Afterwards, the family and the owner went into the house for some late afternoon tea with tarts. John Junior, who had been remarkably quiet during the rescue and return of the boat to its owner, asked the man if he could keep the stamp album. Dr. Javitts choked on his tart at this point, for you see Dr. Javitts had converted some of his wealth into rare stamps which were stored in an envelope in the back of the album. He gladly relinquished the album, while retrieving his rare stamps. These nondescript stamps were worth close to one million dollars.

When talk turned to money and problems with money, something with which Dr. Javitts was all too familiar of late, he suggested he could buy the fifty acres that were for sale and use the area for recreation when he came to Canada. Well, it was after Christmas and the miracle did not happen in just the way the family might have wished, but isn't that what often happens?

Merry Christmas