

SANTA'S LAMENT

BY IRENE STEWART

This whole bit started in November when I made that last trip down to my annual Santa Claus parade. While I was busy shaking hands with all the children in the store, and noting what each wanted for Christmas, my eight reindeer were tethered in a nearby parking lot. Naturally, with nothing to do but rest and listen to passers-by, they couldn't help but overhear some very disturbing gossip. It seems there was serious talk of the postmen going on

strike for more wages. Even more upsetting was the news of the garbage men being on strike. The idea of scrounging around the city picking up a free meal from overstuffed garbage cans brought a naughty smirk to the reindeer's faces, and, no doubt, gave them their big idea. All the way home things seemed to be progressing normally, although I did notice a decided lag in their steps, and a listlessness to their leaps over the roof tops. I put this down to a natural

strike and let-down after the rush and excitement of the journey down to town. As I unharnessed and bedded them down back home, I thought how much good a few weeks rest would do them while I noticed that Mrs. C. did not greet me with her usual warmth. Instead she seemed quite despondent. Of course I figured that with me gone so long and all those Christmas gift watches to pack, she just naturally had too much TIME on her

hands. A week of real work went by but her depression still persisted. Finally I asked "Whatever is the trouble, my dear?" With that the little woman broke down and cried, "Please don't think me childish, but I can't help feeling low. You see, while you were away I kept busy packing all those television sets. Since each one had to be tested, I decided to listen to those detergent commercials and try them all out to see which one we should use to keep your whiskers really white. Instead of being

able to choose which one would be best, all I succeeded in doing was to get a nasty case of rough, red hands. Just look at them. Aren't they a sight? I sure dreaded your coming home to see them. Nobody wants to hold hands with a cactus. Oh me! Not being an Aqua Velva man myself I did my best to soothe my wife, assuring her that, since 'hand-some is as handsome does' I greatly admired her strong, capable hands regardless of their colour. This seemed to have the

desired effect for she perked up and dug in to help me get on with the Christmas packing. With this accomplished I went out to the shed to harness the reindeer. To my amazement those pesky deer wouldn't budge. They just lay there glowering at me. No amount of coaxing, cajoling, prodding or pleading could move them. "What in the world has gotten into the creatures? This could be real serious." I thought as I tugged at each of them. Comet just

shied away from me. Dasher stomped the turf with all four feet. Vixen turned her back on me and flicked her tail. Finally Prancer got it across to me that they were on strike. "We don't intend to haul one more load unless you promise us three larger meals per day, much thicker lichen to lie on, shorter hours, and a month's vacation in Algonquin Park. That is our last word!" Can you imagine the nerve of those animals? After the way I've taken care of them all these years to have this happen. However, I simply couldn't manage without them. It was too late to round up more deer and train them in time for take-off so I had to meet their demands. To make up for lost time Mrs. C. and I had to rush like mad to get them into harness and off across the snow. I admit I had to use my whip a few times to make up for lost time. For awhile everything went fine. Then Prancer began to feel his oats and started to show off a little as we raced over Cochrane. He almost tore off a hoof on a rough eavestrough. Then while I was down a chimney near Cobalt, Dancer decided to try to do the Watusi on a slate roof and nearly sprained a fetlock. A gentle reprimand was enough to get things steadied down and under way in earnest.

Now I usually travel by dead reckoning, aiming for that very tall spire with the sharp weather-vane in North Bay. Here something went wrong. Whether I misjudged the distance or whether the deer were deliberately out to get me, I'll never know, but I pulled in a little too close to the steeple and the first thing I knew a runner got caught and overturned the sleigh, throwing me and the parcels all over the place. The first thing I felt was a sharp jab in the seat of my pants. The first thing I did was to let out a yell like a wounded coyote. In doing so I let go of the reins. Well sir, those dratted deer were so frightened they tugged and pulled themselves free. Then they took off over the roofs as though a pack of wolves was after them. They must have been half way home before I pulled myself together. My first impulse was to just sit there and say all the bad words I know. There I was skewered to that weather-vane like a struck pig. I was so disgusted that I could hardly move. All I wanted to do was go home, take a nice hot bath and forget the whole thing. "To heck with them all," I thought. Those kids really don't need me. There they are going around with their portable radios, portable televisions, walkie-talkies, cars, bicycles, surf boards, water and snow skis, and all the rest of the luxuries. Who needs me anymore?

The longer I sat the clearer things became. I found myself remembering those children in needy homes where the gift of warm clothing, a toy, a bit of candy, an orange or a new hair ribbon brought comfort and joy to poor little meagre lives. "Ho! ho!" I sighed and started to pull myself together scarcely noticing that I had lost one of my shoes. Somewhere in the back of my mind I seemed to hear the words "If ye have done it unto the least of these my children, ye have done it unto me."

With a guilty look around I shamefully and stiffly got to my feet. "Don't sit there feeling sorry for yourself, you old goat. Rise and shine and be quick about it. You've wasted enough time already," a small voice urged me.

Thanks to my fur-lined suit and thermal underwear the damage to my seat was not so bad. After applying a band-aid to my cut, and gulping a couple of snorts of hot buttered you-know-what from my thermos which I kept strapped to my back I gathered up as many packs as I could and continued on my journey. So here I am again, a little sore of foot, stiff of joints, aching of back, and a year older.

Oh well! Merry Christmas anyway.

Saint Nick.

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TURKEYS FRESH KILLED OVEN-READY **53¢** lb

AVERAGE WEIGHT 4 TO 5-LB, VAC PAC

DUCKS GRADE "A" OVEN-READY **57¢** lb

PORK **SAUSAGE MEAT** LB **49¢**

SX BRAND VAC PAC **POLISH SAUSAGE** LB **89¢**

SAU SEA SLEEVE OF **SHRIMP COCKTAIL** 3 4-OZ JARS **1.09**

SUPER-RIGHT BRAND SMOKED **BACK BACON** 1/2-LB PKG **79¢**

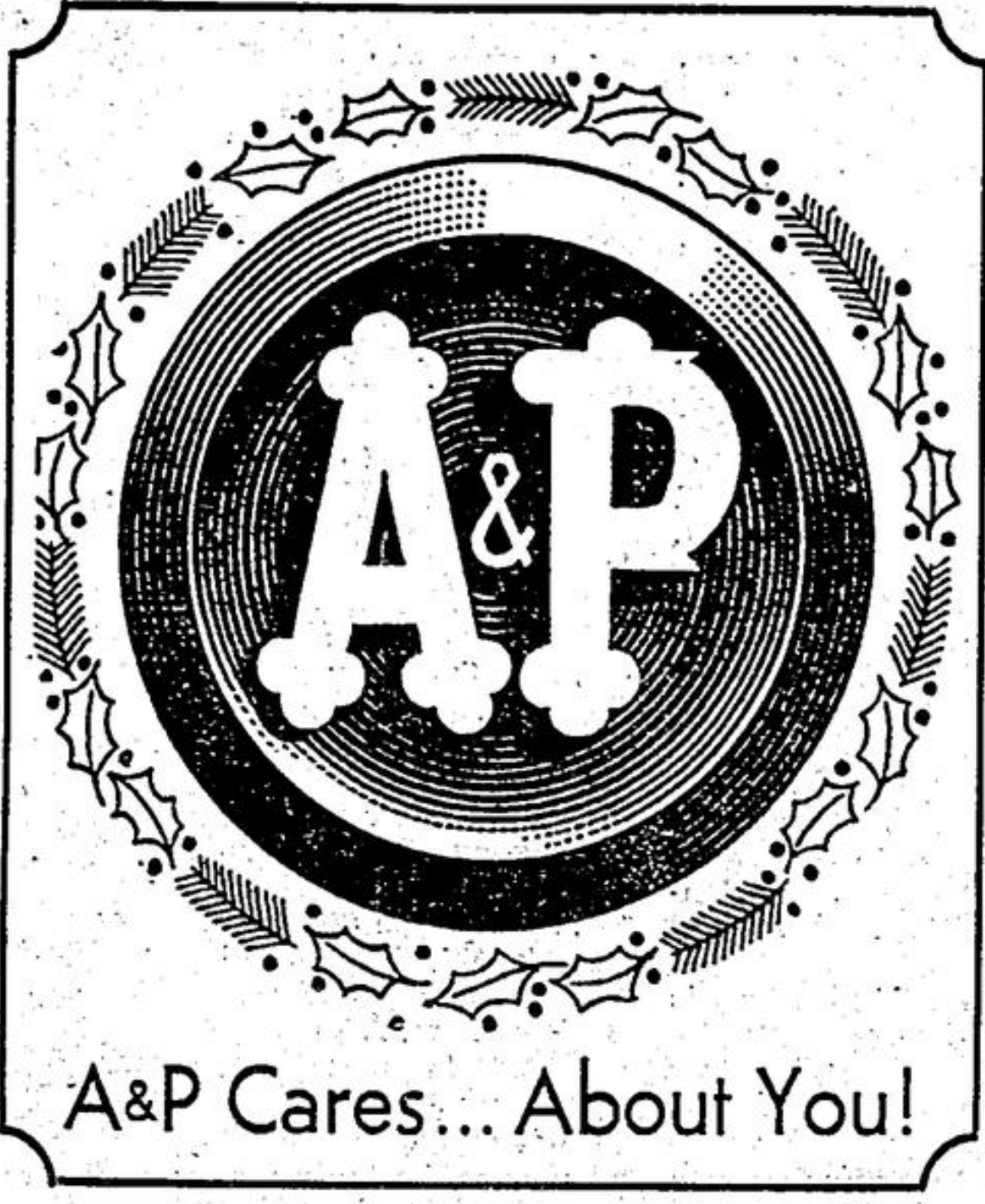
"ALLGOOD" SMOKED SLICED RINDLESS NO. 1 GRADE **SIDE BACON** 1-LB PKG **79¢** \$1.49 2-LB PKG

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lb **69¢** 5 1/2 to 7-lb

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Sea Sealed **HADDOCK FISH & CHIPS** 16-oz pkg **39¢**

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- Heavy Duty Aluminum Foil, 18" wide **REYNOLDS WRAP** 25-ft roll **65¢**
- Hostess **POTATO CHIPS** 12-oz pkg **59¢**
- Heinz Fancy Quality **TOMATO JUICE** 2 48-oz tins **75¢**
- Maxwell House (30c Off Deal) **INSTANT COFFEE** 10-oz jar **1.49**
- Ross Brand (Parchment Wrapped) **MARGARINE** 3 1-lb pkgs **89¢**
- "The Real Thing" - A&P Brand Fresh **ORANGE JUICE** 32-oz btl **39¢** 64-oz btl **75¢**
- A&P Brand **EVAP. MILK** 4 15-oz tins **59¢**
- Martin's **APPLE JUICE** 3 48-oz. tins **89¢**

A&P FANCY QUALITY **TOMATO JUICE** 3 48-oz tins **95¢** SAVE UP TO 28c OVER OTHER BRANDS

A&P FANCY QUALITY **SWEET PEAS** 5 14-oz tins **89¢** SAVE UP TO 24c OVER OTHER BRANDS

SAVE UP TO 23c OVER OTHER BRANDS **A&P PINEAPPLE- GRAPEFRUIT DRINK** 3 48-oz tins **1.00**

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YUKON CLUB **GINGER ALE or SODA WATER** 8 30-oz btl **99¢** (Plus Bottle Deposit)

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Regular - Ginger Ale, Lemon-Lime, Orange, Kola or Root Beer. No additional charge for Low Cal Ginger Ale or Kola. Makes Up To 140 Cups. Costs Less Than 1c per Cup.

A&P Brand **INSTANT COFFEE** 10-oz jar **1.19**

Shirriff **CHIP DIP** (All Varieties) 2-oz pkg **29¢**

Coloured **MILD CHEDDAR CHEESE** lb **65¢**

Cross & Blackwell **PLUM PUDDING** 1-lb tin **89¢**

Jana Parker **PLAIN POTATO CHIPS** 14-oz foil pkg **69¢**

Jana Parker **RIPPLE POTATO CHIPS** 11-oz foil pkg **59¢**

Mary Lou Assorted **CHOCOLATES** 1-lb box **89¢** 2-lb box **1.59**

Excel Salted **MIXED NUTS** 14-oz vac pac tin **89¢** (in the Shell)

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So Fresh—So Low In Price! A&P Produce!

- Florida Fresh, Pascal, Sweet, Crisp, Jumbo, No. 1 Grade **CELERY STALKS** stalk **19¢**
- NONE PRICED HIGHER AT A&P California Fresh, Green, No. 1 Grade **BRUSSELS SPROUTS** lb **29¢**
- NONE PRICED HIGHER AT A&P New Jersey, Kiln dried, Perfect for Turkey Dinner, No. 1 Grade **SWEET POTATOES** lb **12¢**
- NONE PRICED HIGHER AT A&P A Real Christmas Treat—Jumbo Size 6's—ROYAL **HAWAIIAN PINEAPPLES** each **59¢**

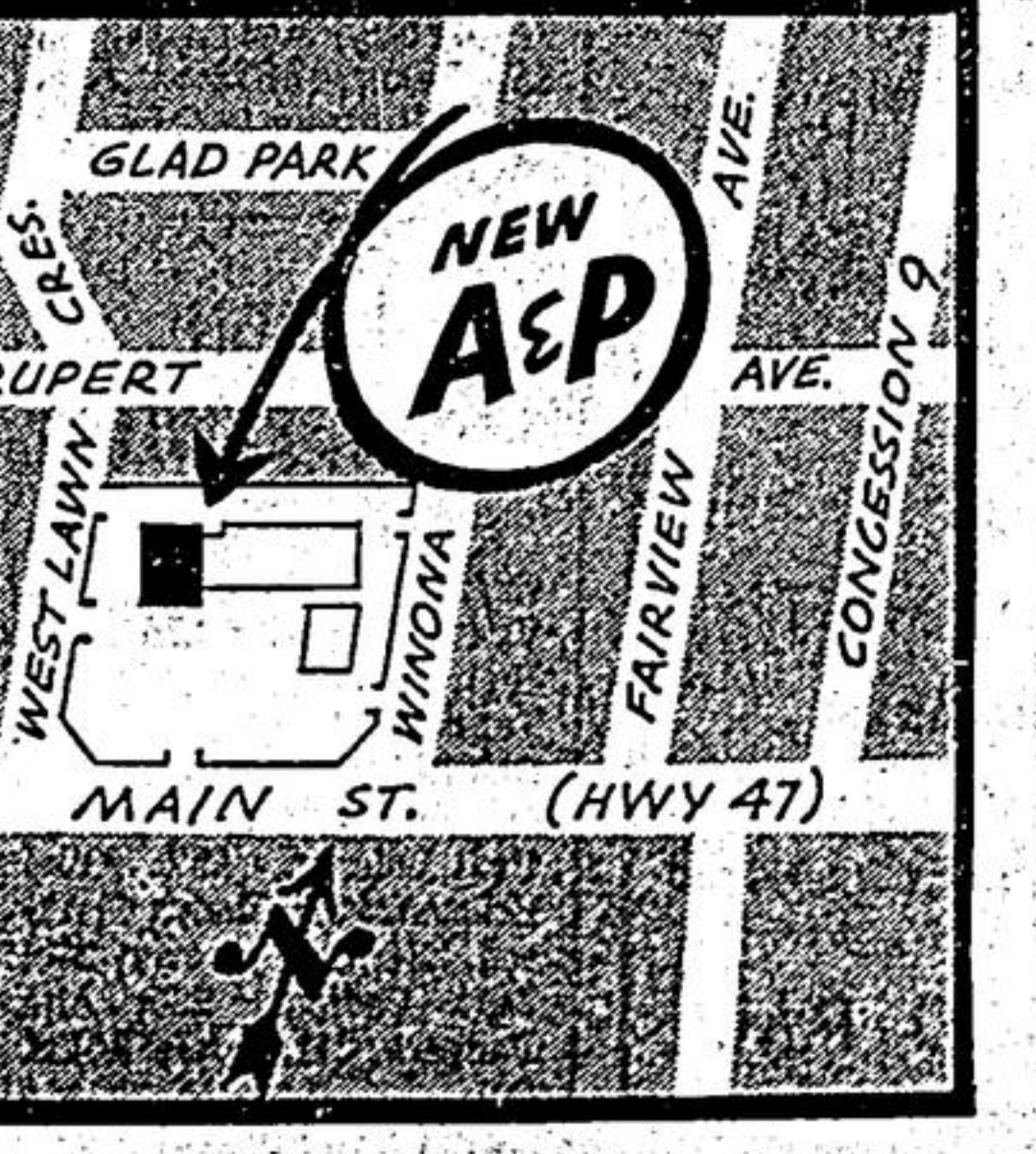
CALIFORNIA, LARGE SIZE, SWEET EATING, No. 1 GRADE, SIZE 88's, NAVEL

NONE PRICED HIGHER AT A&P

ORANGES

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399 MAIN STREET W. STOUFFVILLE



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