

stouffville comment

Looking good for 1994

A new year, and new hope. Let us make 1994 better than 1993. Working together, we can overcome any challenge, and there are many that are still facing us from last year that must be addressed.

Looking at these challenges, be they economic, political, religious or social, from a fresh vantage point can often lead to solutions.

The year 1993 was not one that will long be remembered as particularly favorable.

Still in the midst of a recession, the outlook in the community was certainly not at its brightest.

But predictions are part of what make new hope spring forth in a new year, and already, the prognosticators are optimistic about 1994. Let's do all we can to make their predictions come true.

News item: Prentice wants cat licences



Disaster strikes despite best intentions

How was your holiday? Our Christmas was marvellous, and despite doing all our shopping at the last minute, there were few snags in our Yuletide plans.

Until after Christmas, that is. We arrived back home on Boxing Day, full of Christmas cheer and egg nog.

We went out for a couple of hours and when we returned, our holiday took a decided turn for the worse.

In her exuberance to be back on familiar ground, the Fabulous Mrs. Beasley took it upon herself to investigate the Christmas tree further.

She had already consumed about \$50 worth of decorations from the lower-branches before

Christmas, but we had anticipated this, so we didn't put anything of any real sentimental value within her reach.

She also managed to get hold of a string of lights, pull them off and chew the cord into a thousand tiny fragments. She did the same with our one and only extension cord. To combat further intrusions on our festive decor, we surrounded the tree with our dining room chairs whenever we went out, and this seemed to deter her curiosity. We put those smelly green things that are supposed to keep dogs off shrubbery all over the tree as well, as an insurance policy.

It was with great dismay to see our plans had failed, for when we returned, there was our tree,



leaning precariously against one of the chairs. On the floor, in little tiny pieces, lay our tree top Santa Claus. He was our pride and joy, complete with fur-lined velvet coat, tiny handcarved toys in his sack and a plush white beard with a ceramic face.

We stood there, mouths open, as the now-not-so-Fabulous Mrs. Beasley lay among the ruins, tapping her tail quietly on the

rug. Around her lay bits of Santa's beard; his ceramic face, now cleanly shaven, lay in a corner surveying the scene of carnage. His coat was stripped of his fur, which now lay like little dead mice all over the carpet.

His sack was emptied of its contents, and the tiny toy trains and dolls, trucks and parcels looked like Godzilla had come stomping through Toyland.

With a sad heart, I picked up Santa's remains, and gave him a decent burial.

We propped up the tree again, moved the chairs back and began to make provisions for a temporary tree top.

Just then, it became very cold

in the house. We had run out of furnace oil on the coldest day of the year. In a mad scramble, I rushed to make a fire while Kim called the oilman.

In our haste to deal with a new crisis, we forgot about the tree.

Suddenly, there was a tremendous crash, and the tree was on the floor. Not a single decoration remained on its branches.

We looked at each other. We looked at the tree. We looked at the decorations all over the floor. We looked at the dog, who was sitting forlornly in the corner.

Despite my insistence every year that we not take the tree down until Epiphany, our's was the first one at curbside in 1993.

It is hard to be a humbug

"Remember that as a teenager you are at the last stage in your life when you will be happy to hear that the phone is for you." Fran Lebowitz.

I reflected on this sage observation when the phone rang one morning a couple of weeks ago. "Hi mum. It's me." Pause. "Clare." I forbore to say that when a young female called and said 'hi mum,' the chances it could be anyone else were practically nil.

A sixth sense told me that my daughter, who spent most of the inaptly named holiday season hanging out at other people's houses, was not calling just to say hi.

My uncanny parental instincts turned out to be depressingly acute. "We're at the park," she continued cheerfully. "We've been tobogganing and we're soaked. So we wondered if you could pick us up." A warning light flashed in my



added brain. Notwithstanding the fact that it was still the season to be jolly, my immediate reaction owed more to Scrooge than Santa.

The fact was, I was working; deep in the process of trying to drag from my brain a bunch of bon mots that would not cause my readers to nod off or seek refuge in Bruce's Sports Notes.

"Who exactly," I inquired, "is us?"

"Let's see," said Clare. "There's Allie, Brent, Sherry, Jamie, Kristy, Laura, Ryan... I think there are eight of us altogether." I reminded her that I didn't have a school bus in the driveway, just a battered

1986 Tercel with a seating capacity of five, including the driver.

"That's O.K.," she assured me. "You could pick up one lot, drop us all off at our place and then go back for the rest."

Well, I said, weakening dangerously, I was in the middle of a rather important piece of deathless prose, due that very afternoon. Clare was sympathetic but unmoved. Everyone else's mum, she explained stoically, was at work. Bowing to the inevitable, I set off for the park to be greeted by a group of damp and dishevelled kids.

Before I could say Bah, humbug, four of them were in the car, laughing and talking and shivering and thanking me so sweetly for picking them up that I was forced to smile.

You can't even have a bad mood around here without someone ruining it.

Stouffville Tribune

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Canadian Publications Mail Sales Product Agreement #439010
 Published every Wednesday by Metroland Printing, Publishing and Distributing at 9 Heritage Rd., Markham, Ontario L3P 1K3 Tel. 294-2200. The Stouffville Tribune, published every Wednesday, at 6244 Main St. Stouffville is one of the Metroland Printing, Publishing and Distributing group of suburban newspapers which includes: Ajax-Pickering News Advertiser, Aurora Banner, Barrie Advance, Brampton Guardian, Burlington Post, Collingwood Connection, Etobicoke Guardian, Georgetown Independent/Action Free Press, Kingston This Week, Lindsay This Week, Markham Economist & Sun, Millard Express, Milton Canadian Champion, Mississauga News, Newmarket Era Banner, North York Mirror, Northumberland News, Oakville Beaver, Orlia Today, Oshawa Weekly This Week, Peterborough This Week, Richmond Hill/Thornhill/Vaughan Liberal, Scarborough Mirror, and Uxbridge Tribune.

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