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THE TRIBUNE

Comment & Opinions

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EDITORIAL

May we all enjoy the luxury of peace this season

The frantic race through the malls is over. The preparations are nearly finished and now with the Big Day is upon us, it's time to relax and enjoy the ultimate and most precious gift of the season — peace.

It's something we in Canada too often take for granted. In too many countries Dec. 25 is just another day of tears, fears and bloodshed.

The idea that families of different religions and cultures could each worship and celebrate in their respective traditions is an impossible ideal.

The season of good will towards man is just a dream, as neighbour fights neighbour or sect distrusts sect.

In too many of the world's hot-spots, the most joyous day of the year is marked by the same torturing and killing as the other 364 days of the calendar. There is no respite, no good will towards others, no escape from landmines ... no peace.

Your holiday may not be perfect. Perhaps there's not enough food on your table, or presents under the tree. Perhaps there's a silent family feud going on at your highlight dinner, or tensions of the day makes you yell at the kids. Maybe a loved one is ill.

Why not put aside these concerns and reflect on how lucky you really are? Think about other families who can't even dream to spend one day enjoying the luxury of peace.

Tell those close to you how much they really mean to you. Say thank you to a parent or relative who has always been there for you. Show your children what the joy of the season really means.



Vandalism has hit more than just Christmas lights

Dear Editor,
I have just read in our local newspapers about acts of vandalism. Unfortunately, there are some people in Stouffville who don't enjoy Christmas decorations.

Due to vandalism, we have had to remove most of our lights from the Stouffville Station and Christmas hadn't even arrived yet.

We have managed to deal with all the bulbs that have gone missing on several occasions, but the final straw was when we arrived at the station to find some of the strings had been ripped down.

Vandalism didn't start and won't stop with the Christmas lights at the station.

I think we have the most popular public telephone in Stouffville. How do I know that? Students almost have to line up to use it and this is on school days. This goes on most days and quite obviously at night.

Due to our popular telephone, we have a phone covered in graffiti (I love Eric, Jenny loves Mike & etc.).

They have now started writing on the side of the station and the posts. If you wonder where students buy their lunches, just look on the walk at the station on certain days.

We are very proud of the new station. It is an added attraction to the Main Street in Stouffville. How long will it stay nice if this continues?

There is a lot of time being spent to beautify the Main Street and it will be a shame if all the work falls prey to vandalism.

Has our society deteriorated to the point that we have lost all respect for our own and everyone else's property?

Tenant of the Stouffville Station

Children DO understand about giving

Dear Editor,
My name is Katie Di Tosto and I am eleven years old, and I would like to say something to Mr. Bell, who wrote to the paper about how kids don't give enough at Christmas ("Do children understand message of giving?" Dec. 18).

I think that it really isn't fair, that Mr. Bell made it sound as if all kids don't give enough, but what about those kids who do give at Christmas? What about those kids who do give an unwrapped gift to a church or charity? What about the kids who do know it is the celebration of Jesus' birth?

At my school, we have all tried to help the Sleeping Children Around the World charity. I see all the time when I go to the mall, little kids giving to the Salvation Army.

I'll admit, though, that there are a lot of kids who are selfish and rude. But who wouldn't be happy if they got a Nintendo 64, or Sony Playstation under the Christmas tree?

I think kids know that giving is important even without always being told.

So Mr. Bell, yes, a lot of kids DO understand the message of Christmas. I am one of them. Thank you Mr. Bell. Sorry if I insulted you in any way. Have a Merry Christmas!

Katie Di Tosto
Stouffville

Family cat is not so jolly

'Twas the week before Christmas and the shopping was hardly begun, Spasm was back at Le Chateau and the atmosphere was not so much tense as explosive.

To add to the fun, Malcolm's high school decided to hold commencement last Thursday, the one evening I was free to go shopping.

Mr. Wallethead, meanwhile, had spent much of the day vainly trying to stuff a misshapen Christmas tree into a stand which refused to accommodate it, and was venting his feelings in a manner that would have gone down like a lead balloon with the naughty and nice selection committee at the North Pole.

Earlier in the week, he had tried to attach his fax machine to one of our phone lines and had instead succeeded in cutting off all telecommunications to the outside world, further depleting our dwindling supplies of good will, comfort and joy.

Shrewdly recognizing that all was not calm and bright, I suggested we should vacate the old homestead and go out for dinner, firmly relegating the prospect of a sizeable veterinarian bill to the large area of my



Kate's Corner

Kate Gilderdale

brain reserved for denial.

We agreed to patronize somewhere inexpensive, reasonably close to the school and unlikely to feature Phil Spector's Christmas album and similar musical stalwarts of the holiday season.

Our ultimate choice was a haven of Mediterranean kitsch, one of those themed eateries which are made in California from polystyrene panels, papier maché pillars and wall murals depicting unbelievably blue skies and oddly proportioned fisher people.

Massive 'primitive' chandeliers, festooned with Christmas lights, plastic grapes and vine leaves, hung from the ceiling, and ancient civilization according to Hollywood abounded.

Crumbling walls in a white so dazzling you needed sunglasses were offset by faux trees, coyly-placed statues of male nudes and a raft of medallions and decorated urns. The decor was so busy it made my eyes hurt.

The background music, although mercifully lacking festive ditties by the Ronettes, was of the thin, wailing variety you seldom hear outside themed restaurants and package vacations for people who prefer their Europe North-American style.

The food, however, was excellent and reasonably priced, the waiters were attentive and we left for home in a more mel-low frame of mind.

By Saturday afternoon, the score was Mr. Wallethead - 1, Christmas Tree - 0.

Our Charlie Brown spruce was upright, as straight as it could be given its natural inclinations and firmly anchored to the genuine plaster wall.

Spasm continues to star in his own medical soap opera, and is currently back on drugs (four pills a day) and wearing a catheter.

Given his continuing health problems, efforts to curtail the usual expenses of the season to be jolly have been implemented.

Instead of exchanging gifts and cards this Christmas, we are letting our friends know that a pill has been swallowed by Spasm in their name.

Ode to freedom

LETTERS

Dear Editor,
With all of the hustle and bustle at this time of year sometimes we do forget. If you have a minute, read this and remember!
Dedicated to all those that serve.

THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

'Twas the night before Christmas, he lived all alone in a one bedroom house made of plaster and stone. I had come down the chimney with presents to give, and to see just who in this home did live.

I looked all about, a strange sight did I see, No tinsel, no presents, not even a tree. No stockings by the mantle, just boots filled with sand, on the wall hung pictures of far distant lands. With medals and badges, awards of all kinds, a sober thought came through my mind.

For this house was different, it was dark and dreary, I found the house of a soldier, once I could see clearly. The soldier lay sleeping, silent, alone, curled upon the floor in this one bedroom home. The face was so gentle, the room in such disorder, Not how I pictured a soldier. Was this the hero of whom I just read? Curled up on a pocho, the floor for a bed?

I realized the families I saw on this night, owed their lives to these soldiers, who were willing to fight. Soon roared the world the children would play, And grownups would celebrate a bright Christmas day. They all enjoyed freedom each month of the year, Because of the soldiers, like the one lying here. I couldn't help wonder how many lay alone, on a cold Christmas Eve, in a land far from home.

The very thought brought a tear to my eye, I dropped to my knees and started to cry. The soldier awakened and I heard a rough voice, "Santa, don't cry, this life is my choice; I fight for freedom, I don't ask for more, My life is my God, my country, my Corps."

The soldier rolled over and drifted to sleep, I couldn't control it, I started to weep. I kept watch for hours, so silent and still, And we both shivered from the cold night's chill. The soldier rolled over, with a voice soft and pure, whispered, "Carry on, Santa, It's Christmas Day, All is secure." One look at my watch and I knew he was right Merry Christmas, my friend, and to all a Good Night!

-Author Unknown
Nancy DiGiovanni, Stouffville

Ideal tree impossible dream

There are two types of people in the world, I figure: Tree types and non-tree types.

Tree types are those who insist on trekking into the woods each December with an impossible ideal of what a Christmas tree should look like firmly wedged into their minds and nothing will deter them from locating that particular tree among the thousands that annoyingly have grown up around it, presumably to protect this pinnacle of coniferous evolution from the axe.

Non-tree people are those willing to make the gloomy descent into the basement, drag the tree box from the cobwebs, and spend the better part of a perfectly lovely late-fall day sticking little plastic branches into corresponding plastic notches.

I am a tree type. Just last weekend, I encouraged friends of ours, Pat and Kirsten to get over their bouts of the flu, drop their plans to drive up to the gas station to pick out a tree, in favour of hopping in the truck with Kim and myself, and of course, our dog.

They brought along their basset, making the party an even six. It was a beautiful day, as I said, so I encouraged Pat and Kirsten that trundling around a tree farm could be hard work. They, on my advice, wore fall coats, and no hats.

I took over the expedition at once. I am somewhat obsessive about my holiday traditions. I was willing to let others in on the tree-getting action, but at a price: We would look until I found the perfect Scotch pine, no matter what the cost.

I could feel my plan began to unravel immediately on arrival at the tree farm. The wind picked up viciously and when the wagon driver who was taking us out to the main cutting area asked if we needed anything to make the job easier, like a saw, Pat chattered, "D-d-do you have a sweater?" We got 10 feet into the trees when a shivering



Minute with Mair

Andrew Mair

Kirsten piped up, "Found one. We're done."

I was incredulous. Not only had they found a tree, which, I might add, was not even a Scotch pine, but they claimed it was the nicest tree they'd ever had. While Pat set about sawing his find, I dragged the rest past trees of all sorts; firs, spruce, and pine; all the while ignoring the murmurs from the group trailing behind me saying "What's wrong with this one?"

I was looking for a really big tree. Since moving into our new house in fall, I've been staring into one corner of our living room. The corner is ideal for a Christmas tree, and with 10-foot ceilings, it is ideal for a really big Christmas tree.

After two hours of going from tree to tree under increasingly dark skies, Pat and Kirsten were patiently sneezing. The two dogs were whining quietly.

"Fine," I sighed. "Here it is," I announced, with a just a sprinkling of bitterness. "It's too big," suggested Kim. I really should have listened to her.

It took two of us to cut, and all four to carry. It must have weighed 300 pounds. The tree salesman wanted to charge me more. It hung off the front and back of the truck. It almost blew off twice.

I finally got the behemoth home. But it was ten feet, one inch. It had to be cut. By the time I finished cutting, trimming and pulling out branches, my tree was reduced to a dismal six feet, two inches — the same height as the one Pat picked up last year at the gas station. Happy Holidays.

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Patricia Pappas
Publisher

Andrew Mair
Editor-In-Chief
Tracy Kibble
Editor

Debra Weller
Director of Advertising
Mike Rogerson
Retail Advertising Manager
Stacey Allen
Classified Manager

Barry Goodyear
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Vivian O'Neil
Business Manager

Pamela Nichols
Operations Manager

about us

News (905) 640-2100
Retail sales (905) 640-2100
Classifieds (905) 640-2874
Distribution (905) 640-2100
Fax (905) 640-5477
E-Mail thetrib@istar.ca
6244 Main St., Stouffville, Ont. L4A 1E2

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