

From bizarre to weird, 2000 had its share of oddities

Preparing for the Y2K crisis, we laid up an extra can of pork and beans

BY FRED SIMPSON
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The new millennium broke the sound barrier with its usual predictions of boom, doom and gloom but, as usual, we managed to stagger through the next 364 days.

Along with the sound and fury, the year had its moments of light or, perhaps, bizarre episodes.

In actuality, this article would have been reduced to a mere HELP if all the dire predictions about Y2K had come true.

As the new year hovered on the scene there were continued alarms that the Y2K computer bug would send the world's computers crashing.

Some people even stored up home provisions such as canned food, candles and other such survival kits, waiting for the technological shoe to drop.

Personally, this writer confidently laid aside an extra can of pork and beans in the cupboard.

Just in case.

Well, as everyone knows by now, nothing happened.

As one company president dependent on his computer system surviving all Y2K assaults said (with a sigh of relief):

"Quite frankly, when I think about it all, this Y2K thing has been blown out of proportion ... we were not concerned here in the least."

Sure.
The rest of 2000 couldn't offer quite

as much theatre as the Y2K hype, but it had its moments of comedy or, if you prefer, near tragedy.

Let us not duck the issue any longer. For example, what red-blooded York Region resident could stop a tear from fighting its way to an eyelid after reading about the case of the Peking duck.

The Peking duck was reportedly stolen during Aurora's annual charity hoe-down last September.

An onlooker said he saw a woman grab the duck and run off with a guy. I don't know if she's going to eat the duck or not.

The owner, Chris Golla, sent a plea out to return the duck intact and, lo and behold, it was returned.

Intact and alive.

SAFE AND SOUND

The duck had been found by a man on the same grounds she had disappeared from earlier.

"When I went by the duck and saw it, to be honest with you, I thought it was a plastic duck," he said.

Despite the happy ending, the episode inspired a letter to the newspaper criticizing the owner of the duck for bringing a pet to an event of 4,000 people, "many of whom were drinking".

What else to say, but thou cackles too much, lady.

Aaah, another one.

Certainly every member of an East Gwillimbury council was delighted when one resident showed up with one of those lovable (eek!) tarantulas in tow.

The resident, Kent Breedin, brought documentation to assure council tarantulas were harmless.

His aim was to have the municipality exempt his pets from an exotic animal bylaw forbidding tarantulas and



The case of the missing duck owner Chris Golla lost one of his two Peking ducks at a festival in Aurora. The duck was recovered.

turned down by council. He said there were already exemptions to the bylaw for ostriches and buffalo. Why not tarantulas?

Said Councillor Frank Kelly: "I wouldn't want one next to me, but he seems to have loads of proof they are harmless."

A Toronto zoo expert said that "like any animal, they can bite. All spiders are venomous per se, but generally they're not dangerous".

The sequel to the story is that the request of the tarantula's owner was

declared the tarantula's owner.

"It's basically unconstitutional. I'm being prosecuted...for doing something that is not harmful."

There are some years even a tarantula can't win in.

Onward to more enlightening topics. And, of course, Elvis lives on as a senior citizen in the year 2000 if only in the minds and hearts of all his also-aging followers.

Keeping the spirit of Elvis alive was Newmarket's Dorian Baxter.

Baxter, an Anglican minister and admitted Elvis fanatic, performed his services in Presley regalia, such as bejewelled jumpsuit and caps, long sideburns and blue suede shoes.

Baxter claimed he used Elvis' religious faith and gospel music roots to bring the power of Jesus Christ to people.

Let's hear one for 'You ain't nothin' but a hound dog, one more time.

Halloween 2000 also produced a mini squabble when a Richmond Hill resident accused a municipal garbage truck driver for spitting off his hollowed-out Jack O Lantern pumpkin, which had been on the front lawn.

GRINCH-LIKE STORY

Cries of the Grinch that stole Halloween rented the airwaves for a couple of days.

The mean streets of Richmond Hill had struck again.

Said former pumpkin owner, David Menzie:

"I'm incensed because I just can't believe that anyone seeing a pumpkin that big and two weeks before Halloween could possibly think it was garbage to be picked up."

The eruption had a fairytale ending when the municipality promptly delivered not one, but two pumpkins (one already hollowed out) to the Menzie property. Peace was restored in Pumpkin Hollow.

The year 2000 will be a memorable one for Newmarket's Leslie Roth who survived being hit by lightning twice.

Roth walked away with just a splitting headache after being hit by lightning twice within a minute while on a kayaking trip in Northern Ontario.

Proving, of course, that lightning can strike twice in the new millennium.

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