



Kids Go To Work

Deb Sorensen of Herbal Magic catches up on essential reading with Cole Didier and his mother, *Stouffville This Month* sales representative Dale Didier. Cole was accompanying his mother as part of the local Bring Your Kid to Work Day initiative.

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Stumbling through Stouffville with Bruce Stapley

Cutting Down On Christmas Tree Stress

At the risk of being dismissed as just another Christmas curmudgeon, I have sworn off a tradition that had become a rather integral part of our family's Holiday Season routine.

I will never again trudge back out to one of those cut your own Christmas tree farms with my kids and my trusty saw in tow. My aversion to the practice I once considered to be the perfect start to the Christmas season has been building for a few years.

It seems I could never find the right tree, that bushy, perfectly formed Scotch pine of my idyllic childhood recollection. It was either too short, too skinny, bent or twisted, or it was sporting a gaping hole on one side. So it wasn't without some trepidation that I set out with my two boys back in early December and headed the car towards one of the local Christmas Tree farms.

After an hour or so marching hither and yon across the width and breadth of the property, stopping every five minutes to check and see if the boys were still within shouting distance, I finally drew a line in the snow. "I'm not going to settle for another Charlie Brown Christmas tree," I proclaimed. "We'll try another place."

We drove off to the next farm, arriving to find a horse drawn sleigh whose job it was to drag the assembled masses and their trees to and from the far reaches of the property, then back to the check out gate.

I asked the driver to point us in the direction of the Scotch pines. "Over there," he replied, leading us to an area that turned out to be totally devoid of said species.

By this time my patience was wearing a tad thin. With company coming for dinner, the time was fast approaching when I'd have to make a mad dash for home to put on the roast chicken. I corralled the boys back to the car once again and sped off to the tree farm which had sent out a glossy flyer in the mail a few days earlier.

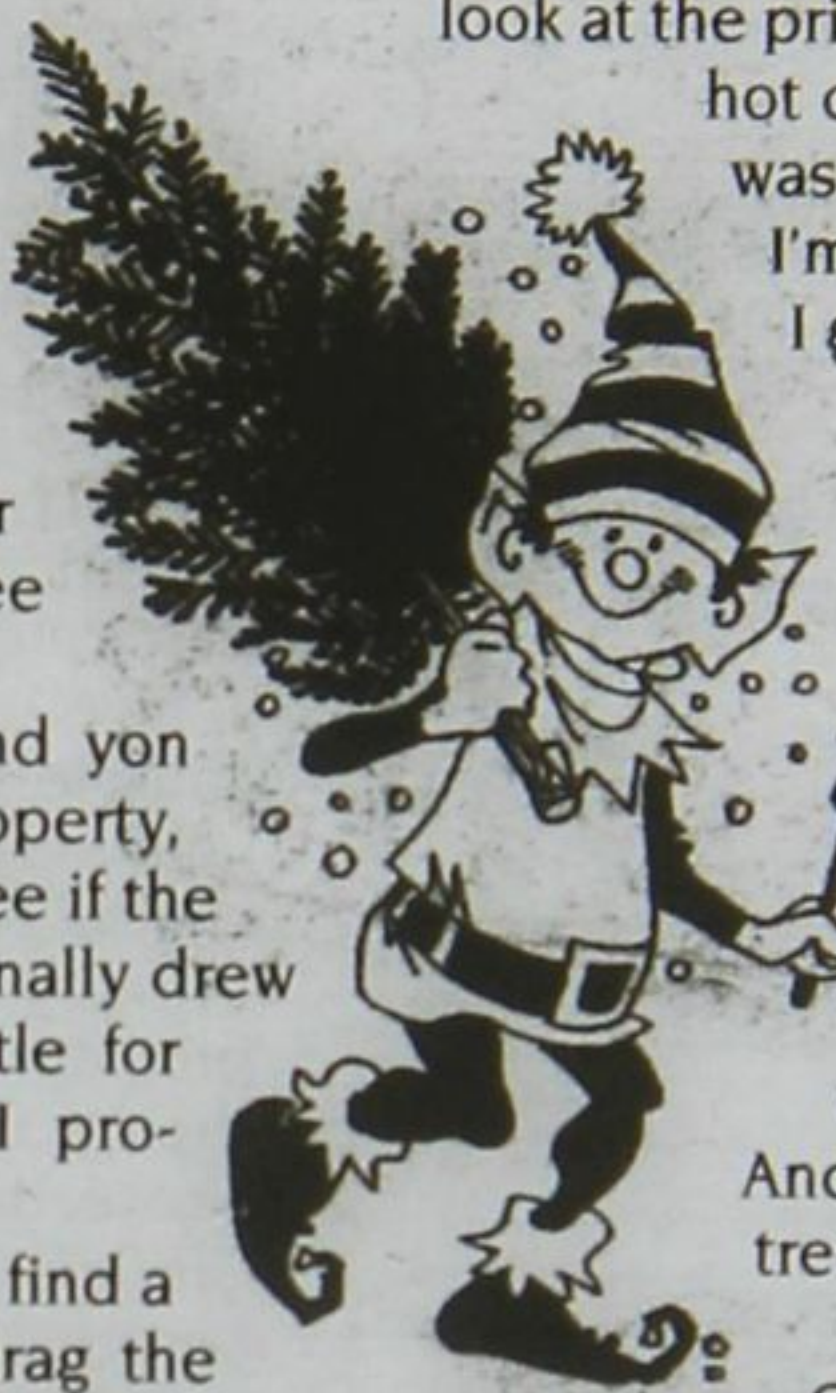
We were barely able to find a parking spot at this mother of all Christmas tree farms, such was the crush of festive humanity that had descended upon it. I took one look at the price list, howled in pain, then noted that the hot chocolate that was free at other tree farms was going to cost us a buck and a half here.

I'm not looking to buy stock in the company, I grumbled.

"That's it boys!" I bellowed. "We're going back to Stouffville to buy a pre-cut tree. And I'll make you real hot chocolate when we get home."

I drove home, put on the chicken, made the hot chocolate, then dashed off to the Lions' makeshift Christmas tree emporium in front of Sobeys. Five minutes later I was on my way, a perfect Scotch Pine in the trunk. And it only cost me half the price of other trees we'd seen.

Next year I'll remember to put the Christmas Tree on the shopping list along with the bread, milk and eggs.



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