



The Eastender

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December 23, 2008

Your environmentally friendly community newspaper

Volume 8, Issue 4



A young girl sporting a Santa hat makes a last minute request to Santa during a visit to Place d'Orléans on Monday. Fred Sherwin/Photo

Talks fail to yield early Xmas present

By Fred Sherwin
The Eastender

OC Transpo supporters hoping for an early Christmas present maybe out of luck as three days of negotiations have so far failed to yield a breakthrough in the two week old transit dispute.

OC Transpo's 2,300 drivers, dispatchers and mechanics have been on strike since Dec. 10.

Negotiators representing the Amalgamated Transit Union and the City of Ottawa agreed to go back to the bargaining table on Saturday.

The main sticking point heading into the resumption of negotiations was scheduling.

The city wants to take over the scheduling of drivers in an effort to make it more efficient and save as much as \$5 million identified by city auditor Alain Lalonde.

The union is reluctant to give back concessions it received in the last three contracts. They are especially worried that if the city were to take over scheduling, seniority rights may be compromised.

CLICK HERE TO CON'T p2>

Woman forced out of home after making surprise discovery

By Fred Sherwin
The Eastender

Residents living in homes built before 1980 are being advised to check their attics for possible damage caused by last winter's heavy snowfall after a woman in Convent Glen found several damaged trusses in her roof.

Janet Berkley was doing a routine check of her attic when she noticed a support post had fallen near the entrance to her attic. A quick check around the attic with a work light turned up a number of damaged trusses where the joints had come apart.

She immediately called a contractor who came out to take a look around and informed her the roof was on the verge of collapse and that she should call her

insurance company.

The insurance company, Unifund Assurance, sent out their own contractor who refused to do any work on the roof until a structural engineer was brought in to assess the damage. After making his own inspection the engineer recommended that the house be evacuated immediately to allow for the repairs to go ahead as soon as possible.

As a result, Ms. Berkley has had to move out of her house and into a two bedroom hotel suite downtown with her border. The repairs, which were originally supposed to take a month to complete, may now take as much as two months to finish. The second floor ceiling must be completely removed so that workers can repair the trusses

from inside the house. The total cost could exceed \$50,000.

"At first I thought it was a bit of overkill because you couldn't really tell there was any damage. The doors all closed properly. There were no cracks in the walls. The guy said that he could see a the ceiling sagging in the master bedroom, but you have to look pretty hard to see it," says Berkley who was planning to host Christmas dinner for her son and daughter.

She's now planning to spend Christmas at her daughter's house in Ottawa. Her son, who is visiting from out of town, will stay with her at the hotel suite during the holidays.

"On the one hand it's a real nuisance, but on the other hand I'm happy I found it before the

roof collapsed," says Berkley who has nothing but praise for her insurance company. "They have been absolutely fantastic."

A friend of Ms. Berkley's found similar damage in his own attic after she told him what had happened. Rather than hire a contractor, he managed to repair the trusses himself.

In both cases the houses were built prior to 1980. Ms. Berkley's home is a Costain model built in 1977. The amount of heat a home releases, the slope of the roof and the amount of wind and rain are all factors in the weight of snow a roof can accumulate. The best way to ensure your roof is in good shape is to inspect the trusses yourself. If you see any signs of damage you should call your insurance agent right away.

Community briefs

Shenkman partners receive \$80,000 Trillium Grant

ORLEANS – The future residents of the Shenkman Arts Centre recently received an \$80,000 grant to help prepare for an expected increase in programming and registration once the doors open next spring. The East Ottawa Arts Council, MIFO, the Orleans Young Players Theatre School, the Gloucester Pottery School and the Visual Arts Centre Orléans have all been busy preparing for move. Probably the most important step has been to try and gauge the impact the new facility, and the exposure that will no doubt come with it, will have on their programs. The grant will help the groups position themselves and modify their respective programs for the expected deluge. The partner groups have already begun working with consultants on board governance, strategic planning, organizational development, human resource and volunteer management, financial management, marketing and communications – areas that are not usually covered through normal fundraising efforts.

Green's Creek toboggan hill officially open to sledders

ORLEANS — Sledders and toboggan enthusiasts will be happy to learn that the Green's Creek toboggan hill has been officially declared open just in time for the holidays. Monday's snowfall combined with the first snowstorm of the season last Tuesday have created near perfect conditions on the hill. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for the canal which still remains closed despite the recent cold snap. According to the NCC, the canal needs 10-15 days of sustained temperatures of -15 degrees or colder. At last report, Environment Canada was forecasting above normal temperatures for Christmas and Boxing Day. Last year, the NCC did not officially declare the canal open for skaters until Jan. 25.

Far east end hit by second power outage in two weeks

ORLEANS — Residents living east of Tenth Line Road were left without electricity for the second time in two weeks on Monday thanks to an unscheduled power outage that lasted from 10:30 p.m. to 1:30 a.m. Tuesday morning. More than 17,000 Hydro One customers living in the former municipality of Cumberland were left without electricity for up to 12 hours on Dec. 7 when a scheduled power outage turned into a massive power failure.

Bus strike likely to drag through the holidays

> **CONT'D FROM PAGE 1**

The union has already rejected an offer that would have seen salaries increase by three, two and two per cent over the three year term of the contract as well as an increase in sick days from six to eight and a \$2,000 signing bonus commiserate with changes in the scheduling system.

Prior to the resumption of negotiations, the city was adamant that the scheduling issue was non-negotiable, while the union refused to go back to the bargaining table unless scheduling was removed from the equation entirely.

With public demand rising for the two sides to at least start talking, both sides finally agreed to drop their respective preconditions and sit down with a federal mediator.

A strict media blackout has made it virtually impossible to get any information on whether there's

been any movement on the key issues or not.

The only insight into the behind closed door negotiations was provided by ATU president Andre Cornellier during a visit to the main picket line at OC Transpo headquarters on Monday.

Cornellier told a reporter from the *Ottawa Sun* that he wasn't very optimistic about the way the talks were proceeding.

He also said that he was reluctant to give the striking drivers any "false hope".

There is no word yet on whether a fourth day of talks will be held on Christmas Eve should the two sides fail to resolve their issues on Tuesday.

Even if they were to reach a tentative agreement it would take several days for the buses to start rolling and at least a week before they are back to full service.

Opened and closed during the holidays

By Fred Sherwin
The Eastender

Ottawa City Hall and all six Client Service Centres, including the Orleans Client Service Centre on Centrum Blvd., will be closed Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day.

The city's recreation facilities will be operating on modified schedules during the holiday season. Please check with ottawa.ca, or the facility for revised schedules.

All branches of the Ottawa Public Library will be closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day. Branches usually open on Wednesday will close at 3 p.m. on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. Please visit www.

BiblioOttawaLibrary.ca for a complete listing of library activities, locations and hours of operation.

There will be no curbside garbage pick-up on Christmas Day and New Year's Day. Christmas Day's pick-up will take place on Boxing Day, and collection will be delayed by one day for the rest of the week. Both New Year's Day and Jan. 2 collection will be delayed by one day. Please refer to your collection calendar or call 3-1-1.

Christmas trees will be collected on the regular garbage collection day during the week of Jan. 12. Residents are reminded to remove all tinsel and decorations from the tree before leaving it outside for pick-up.

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"Providing quality legal service to Orléans and area for the past 30 years."

Painful anthology provides therapy for the soul

By Fred Sherwin
The Eastender

Arlene Ben-Zur has been to hell and back and has lived to write about it. Her journey is contained in a new book entitled *Cancer of my Soul: A Personal Battle For Survival Against the Odds* in which she retells the abuse she suffered at the hands of her late father and two ex-husbands, her battle with Cushing's disease and her painful separation from her granddaughter.

Ben-Zur began writing about her experiences in a journal three years ago. The process became a form of therapy for her. Over the course of three years she had enough material to put into a book. Her hope is that other women might see themselves in her story and avoid the pitfalls that she has suffered.

"If I can just touch one person's life with this so they won't go through what I went through, or maybe someone might read it and it will give them the impetus they need to change their situation, that would be amazing," says Ben-Zur.

Ben-Zur's heart-wrenching journey began when she had the misfortune of being born after the death of her sister Shelley, who passed away from cancer at the age of three. Her own mother died of cancer when Ben-Zur was 15. Through it all she suffered a litany of physical and emotional abuse at the hands of her father, which eventually led her to try and commit suicide at 16.

"My father hurt me more than anyone else in my lifes," Ben-Zur writes in her book. "From my earliest memory, he expressed his dislike for me, despite the fact that I was at the top of my class, and well loved by my peers and teachers ... He told me over and over again that I was ugly, fat, stupid, and a slut, and that no one would ever love me."

Her two marriages, the first to a wealthy young man in New York, and the second to a Yemenite Jew in Israel, followed the same pattern as her relationship with her father. They were both incredibly abusive and destructive.

Even when she finally found true happiness with a man after her divorce from her

second husband, it was destructive in that he was already married. When her lover's wife found out about their seven year affair, Ben-Zur made a clean break.

Around the same time she met her current partner Jamie and the pair have been together ever since. A year and a half ago they moved to Orleáns to escape the turmoil in Israel and live a more peaceful existence. Ben-Zur also had a chance to move next door to her childhood friend Marilyn Dow. The pair had promised each other years ago that if they ever had a chance to live next door to each other they would.

While Ben-Zur has lived through many traumas in her life, it hasn't all been bad. Her marriage to her first husband produced two daughters, Lee Anna and Rhonda and her second marriage resulted in the birth of her son Avi.

In an effort to get as far away from her first husband as possible, she moved to Israel where she opened a successful English school in Ber Sheba. Professionally, it was the most fulfilling and rewarding time of her life. But personally, she had to suffer through a second abusive marriage and the heartbreak of a doomed love affair before finally meeting her soul mate and eventually moving to Orleáns.

Through it all, she has managed to keep a wonderful sense of humour and an incredibly positive outlook on life. Writing the book was both physically and emotionally draining, but now that it's finished she can now look forward to the future with hope.

"The most difficult part was reliving everything that had happened. I cried through every single page and every word," says Ben-Zur. "But once I finished it was like a huge weight had been lifted from my shoulders and now it's gone."

When she finished her manuscript she showed it to Raymond Coderre at Baico Publishing who instantly fell in love with it and agreed to publish it.

Ben-Zur now wants to try her hand at writing children's books and possibly get back into teaching, but first she has a date with someone very special. Her granddaughter's foster parents have allowed for



Orléans author Arlene Ben-Zur shares her harrowing life experiences in a new book entitled 'Cancer of my Soul: A Personal Battle For Survival Against the Odds'. Fred Sherwin/Photo

the two to see each other for the first time in three years. Allie and her younger brother Matthew were put into foster care in Israel after Ben-Zur's daughter Rhonda had to be treated for mental illness following the birth of her second daughter.

The book is actually written as a type of letter to Allie, who Ben-Zur has only seen once since December 2004. The young girl is now eight.

While "Cancer of my Soul" will no doubt strike a chord with female readers, especially those who have been in an abusive relationship or have struggled with a life threatening illness, its message will resonate with anyone, male or female, who has the ability to feel compassion and empathy for their fellow man. It is exceptionally inspiring and reminds us all that the human spirit can conquer all.

Cancer of my Soul: A Personal Battle for Survival Against the Odds is available at the Baico Bookstore at 294 Albert Street (near Kent St.). It can also be ordered online at www.baicopublishing.com.



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Handful of east end residents take Christmas light displays to the next level

By Fred Sherwin
The Eastender

The east end of Ottawa is a Christmas light enthusiasts paradise. Drive down any street in Chapel Hill, Queenswood Heights, Fallingbrook or Convent Glen and the night sky is aglow with thousands of brightly coloured lights and assorted decorations.

But while most people are happy hanging a few strings of lights and one or two inflatable bonhommes every year, there are those who take the tradition to an entirely different level.

Gilles Leger got caught up in the Christmas decoration craze when he bought his first house in Cumberland Village. He started out like most people by hanging a few strings of lights from his eavestrough. But as the years passed by he added more and more lights along with several home-made cutouts.

In the 1990s he moved to Princess Louise Drive in Fallingbrook, where his display grew even larger and started attracting people from across the east end. Then in 2000 he moved to his current residence on Belcourt Blvd., just south of St. Joseph.

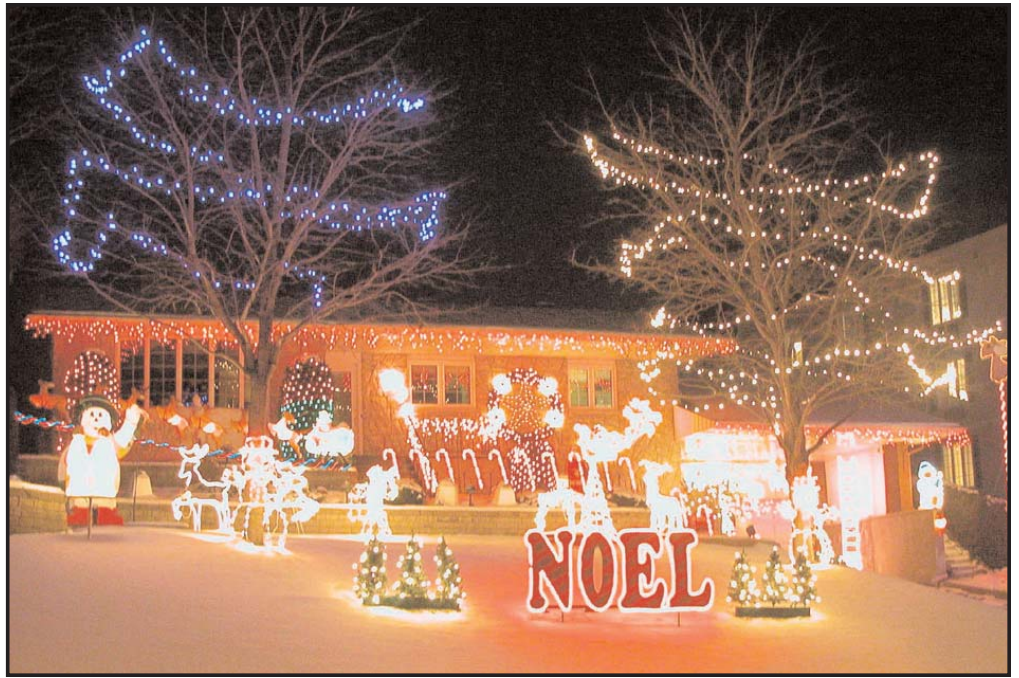
"I remember the first year my neighbour across the street asked me if I was going to hang any lights and I said, 'Oh yeah, a few.' On the Saturday, I started at six o'clock in the morning and worked to six o'clock at night. The next day I started at six o'clock in the morning again and around noon I saw him come out of his house with his wife and get in the car to go out and I said to my wife, 'You wait and see, he's going to buy more lights.' And sure enough he came back with all these shopping bags filled with lights and decorations. I just had to laugh," says Leger.

Today, the neighbour's house, which sits across the street from the Legers, is an attraction in its own right, as is the house beside it.

Decorating your house for the Christmas season can be contagious, just ask anyone living on Taffy Lane. The most famous street in Orléans attracts thousands of visitors every year and for good reason, almost every house on the street is decorated to the max.

On a street where most of the homeowners go out of their way to provide a good show for the people driving by, Peter Abercrombie has taken the art of Christmas decorating to an entirely different level.

Among the hundreds of items that are on display in his front yard are two Nutcracker soldiers measuring exactly six feet tall (as stipulated in "Babes in Toyland"), a giant wood cutout of Frosty the Snowman, a large cutout of the Grinch, a flying squirrel inspired by *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*, assorted Disney characters and over 12,000 lights all programmed through his computer.



The Leger residence on Belcourt Blvd. has been wowing Christmas light enthusiasts for the past eight years. Fred Sherwin/Photo

Abercrombie first started decorating his house after returning from a French language course in Quebec in 1984. As part of the training program, the students had to work on various projects together. Their first assignment was to decorate a house for Hallowe'en. The group ended up doing such a great job they decided to do the same at Christmas. When the course ended Abercrombie took some of the decorations home and used them on his house.

A lot has changed in Christmas lighting in the past four decades. Today, there are a lot more varieties of lights and decorations have gotten much more complex. Ten years ago icicle lights were all the rage. Then came string lighting, curtain lights and lights in the shape of bows and stars. Inflatable figures are now all the rage as are energy efficient LED lights which are a huge improvement over the old seven watt bulbs.

Marc Chenard owns the home on the corner of Champlain Street and Jeanne d'Arc Blvd. in Orleans Wood. His penchant for Christmas decorations has been handed down to him by his father and grandfather, both of whom spent hours decorating their homes for Christmas.

Folks like Chenard and Abercrombie spend hours upon hours setting up their displays every winter. By his own count, Leger spent 42 hours setting up his display this year, which includes 18,200 lights, and he didn't even come close to using all his decorations.

"Oh yeah, you should see my garage. I only used a quarter of what I have," says Leger without a hint of exaggeration. "I still have 25 inflatables that I didn't get a chance to use."

Even with his huge stockpile of decorations, Leger still keeps an eye out for the

latest gadgets.

"I'm always looking for something new. I'm working on something for next year already," says Leger, breaking into a huge grin. "I'm going to do an entire gingerbread village with 25 different pieces."

Asked why he goes through the time and expense every year, Leger barely skips a beat.

"I just love it. The comments I get, you just wouldn't believe. A couple of years ago the door bell rang at about 10 o'clock at night and it was a woman bringing me a gift. She wanted to thank me for taking the time to decorate the house and said that it reminded her of growing up in Nova Scotia. I hear that type of thing all the time," says Leger.

Chenard has a similar story. In 2003, he answered his door and was met by a young woman with tears streaming down her face.

"She was an exchange student from Afghanistan and had never seen anything like it before," recalls Chenard. "She said, 'Your house is so beautiful', and I said, 'Oh yeah, let me show some other houses', and I took her on a tour."

Andre Rollins, whose house on Smith Road in Navan is one of the most lavishly decorated homes in the east end, tells of the time a young girl knocked on his door and asked if Santa was home.

"I do it for the kids," he says simply when asked why he continues to go through all the trouble in setting up the display every year.

That pretty much sums up the motivation of all the Christmas light-o-logists in the east end. So if you get the chance, pile the kids in the car, stop by Tim Horton's for some hot chocolate and take a tour of the amazing Christmas light displays that can be seen right in our own backyard.

Prepare to be amazed on Christmas light tour

By Fred Sherwin
The Eastender

One of the most popular family traditions at Christmastime involves piling the kids into the car and going for a drive around the neighbourhood to see the Christmas light displays.

Five of the best displays in Orléans are all within a stone's throw of each other near the corner of St. Joseph and Orléans Blvd. The most well-known is Taffy Lane which runs off of Fortune Drive near the Orleans United Church on Orléans Blvd.

The street has been featured in magazines and newspapers and on radio and television for years. Pretty well every resident on the block decorates their house, and the combined effect attracts hundreds of sight-seers every year.

As you come out of Taffy Lane and turn back on to Fortune Drive, take the next left on to Sugar Bush Court which has a wonderfully decorated house at the end of the cul-de-sac.

From Sugar Bush drive back to Orléans Blvd. and turn left. Go over the bridge and continue on to St. Joseph Blvd. where you will turn left again.

Two streets down on the left is Dussere Street. Turn left and drive to the bottom of the hill where you will run into Cholette Crescent. On the righthand side you will see the the Giroux residence which is among the nicest houses in Convent Glen South.

As you come back up Dussere Street, turn left on to Cousineau Street and then left again on to St. Jean. Once you're on St. Jean take your next right which will be Joseph Drouin Avenue, home to one of the most spectacular light displays in all of Orléans.

As you drive around Joseph Drouin Ave. you will back come back to St. Jean Street, go up to St. Joseph Blvd. and turn left.

Once you're back on St. Joseph, keep an eye out for the Pioneer gas station on your righthand side and turn right at the corner on to Belcourt Blvd. On either side of the street are three beautifully decorated houses, including the Leger residence which is on the righthand side of the road.

At this point turn your car around and



Cholette Crescent

head back down to St. Joseph Blvd. To get to the next house turn left on to St. Joseph and then right on to Orléans Blvd. Once you reach Jeanne d'Arc Blvd. turn right again and take Jeanne d'Arc to Champlain Street. On the northeast corner is the Chenard residence, which other than Taffy Lane, is the most visited house during the holiday season.

If you haven't had your fill of Christmas lights there are still a few other houses that are worth checking out. One is at the corner of Leduc Crescent and Carrigan Drive in Fallingbrook. For the full effect stop your car and get out. Besides the fact that a lot of the display is blocked by a big snowbank at car level, you also don't get to enjoy the Christmas music that's part of the display.

Two other spots that are worth checking out are both in Avalon. The best way to get to them is to take Portobello Blvd. south off Innes Road. Drive down to Nantes Street. Turn left on to Nantes and then right on to Brianna Way. At the corner of Brianna and Descartes Street is a brightly lit house that makes use of mainly white lights.

Last but not least, no Christmas light tour would be complete without a trip out to the Rollins residence on Smith Road in Navan.



Joseph Drouin Avenue

The best way to get there is to take Tenth Line Road south to Navan Road and then turn left. When you come to a sign for Carlsbad Springs turn left. Follow Milton Road down the hill and take your first left which is Smith Road. The Rollins residence which employs a multitude of lights will be on your left.

Part of the fun of any Christmas lights tour is in keeping an eye out for other spectacular displays along the way. Outdoor Christmas decorations have enjoyed a resurgence of late, thanks in large part to the advent of LED bulbs which use a fraction of the energy older bulbs do.



Sugar Bush Court



Leduc Street



Fred Sherwin
 Editor & Publisher

Letters should be limited to 250 words.

The Eastender reserves the right to edit correspondence for length with a commitment to maintaining the integrity and spirit of the content.

To submit a letter to the editor to *The Eastender* e-mail the-eastender@orleansonline.ca.

Senate shenanigans

Christmas came early for Canada's 18 newest senators on Monday and Canadians should be outraged over some of the selections – most notably the choices of Mike Duffy and Pamela Wallin.

As someone in the profession, I can't even begin to express my dismay, befuddlement and outright anger over Harper's decision to elevate a pair of talking heads to the Upper Chamber.

It's almost as bad as when Jean Chretien appointed his communications chief and former CBC gabmeister Jim Munson to the Senate, which will go down as one of the nuttiest appointments in the history of

And don't get me wrong I'm sure that Duffy and Wallin are wonderful people, but that's not the point. Beyond the fact that the only apparent qualifications one needs to become a member of the Senate nowadays is being nice and promising to support Senate reform, the message the appointments sends out to the rest of the fifth estate is that if you play patty cake with the Conservatives you may just get a nice cushy \$130,000 a year job plus perks for your efforts.

It's wrong.

Surely to goodness in this great and wonderful country of ours there must have been somebody out there who is imminently more qualified for the position than either Duffy or Wallin.

As for the reasoning behind the rash of appointments, I'm all in favour of trying to reform the chamber from within, especially since the provinces have been so reluctant to deal with the issue, and gaining control of the Senate is the only way to do that.

With another 11 Liberal senators up for mandatory retirement next year, the Conservatives should finally have the numbers they need to enact true Senate reform and move in the direction of an elected Upper Chamber.

So memo to Lowell Green, Don Newman, Peter Mansbridge and the rest of the talking heads out there who haven't been appointed to the Senate, there's still hope for you yet.

– Fred Sherwin, editor

Inquisitive kids spark flood of Christmas memories

The other day I took my two sons to Toys R' Us to do a little window shopping before the put their list for Santa together. After picking out a few things, I made them put pen to paper to write a letter to the big guy thanking him for the gifts he brought them last year and explaining why they deserved a return trip this year.

At one point Jamie said something about not needing to mail the letter because they all knew who Santa really was. Wink. Wink.

The boys are both 10, which I suppose is when kids start to figure things out, although they're still between the point where they think they have it all figured out, but aren't quite willing to stop believing, just in case there really is a Santa.

His comment immediately made me think of the same period in my life back when I was growing up in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. My brother and I shared a bedroom in the Lakefront Apartments. I was about eight or nine at the time, which would have made him 12 or 13.

Anyway, I was bound and determined to catch Santa in the act and layed in my bed for hours waiting for the big guy to arrive and fill our stockings.

Then it happened. As I lay there with my eyes almost completely shut, I could barely make out a shadowy figure approach the foot of my bed and start filling my stocking. He then filled my brothers stocking before leaving the room without a sound.

About a minute or two later, I could have sworn I heard sleigh bells outside and ran straight to the window just in time to catch a glimpse of what I thought

was Santa's sleigh taking off from the roof across the street.

I immediately woke up my brother who wasn't nearly as impressed as I was at what just had transpired.

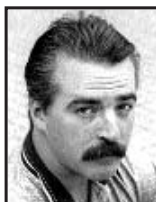
He tried to tell me it was probably our father and the two of us marched down to our parents room to see if it was true. But when we arrived Dad was sound asleep, or at least I thought he was. We woke him up just to make sure and asked him if he had been in our room.

When he replied sleepily that he had not, I knew in my heart that the figure I saw had to be Santa. There was no other possible explanation. Today, that story is one of the fondest Christmas memories I have. I can only laugh now that the show is on the other foot.

The only time I came close to getting "found out" was when the Magster was having trouble falling asleep a couple of Christmases ago. It was about four o'clock in the morning when she finally dozed off and I went straight to work putting together the boys hockey net and setting up some of the other toys.

I was just in the process of moving the stockings from downstairs to the kids' bedrooms, when who should walk into the kitchen but the Magster. Thank goodness I intercepted her before she caught me in the act. After I told her that Santa must have left the stockings in the wrong room, I quickly whisked her upstairs and we woke up her brothers to start our Christmas morning at the ungodly hour of 5:30 in the morning.

Such is what Christmas memories are made of. My only hope is that you have similar memories and will cherish them always as I have.



View Point

Fred Sherwin



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Legend of Santa Claus a mix of fact and fiction

By Fred Sherwin
The Eastender

He may be but a myth to millions of people around the world, but the legend that is Santa Claus is actually based on a real person.

The real-life St. Nicholas lived during the fourth century in what is now modern-day Turkey.

As the bishop of Myra, the real Nicholas reputedly gave marriage dowries of gold to three girls whom poverty would otherwise have forced into slavery.



Bishop of Myra

Nicholas' miracles also included restoring the lives of three children who had been chopped up by a butcher and placed in brine, and saving the lives of sailors by halting a storm at sea.

By the Middle Ages, devotion to the patron saint of children and sailors stretched throughout much of Europe and Russia.

After the Reformation, devotion to St. Nicholas died out in all the Protestant countries of Europe except Holland. There his legend lived on as Sinterklaas.

When the Dutch first settled in the New World in the 17th century, they brought their devotion to Sinterklass with them. Before long Sinterklass became Santa Claus and the legend of St. Nicholas was coloured with Nordic tales of a magician who punished naughty children and rewarded good children with presents.

The jolly old elf we celebrate today was sealed in our collective imagination after poet Clement Moore penned the now famous *'Twas the Night Before Christmas*, as a gift to his family in 1822.

In the poem, Santa is portrayed as a rotund elf with a miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer. Rudolph was actually a 1939 creation of the Montgomery Ward advertising department.

Moore actually borrowed some of his concept of Santa Claus from earlier writers such as Washington Irving who penned *A History of New York* in 1807, in which St. Nicholas rode over the treetops in a wagon.

In 1821, William Gilley wrote a poem about "Santeclaus" who was dressed in fur and drove a sleigh driven by a single reindeer.

It was Moore's poem, however, that would inspire caricaturist Thomas Nast to come up

with the image we've come to associate with the present day Santa Claus.

Nast's engravings featuring a portly Santa in a red suit with a wide black belt ran in the American magazine *Harper's Weekly* between 1863 and 1886.

The engravings featured Santa in a workshop, reading letters, checking his list and so on.

In 1885, Nast fixed Santa's address with a drawing of two children looking at a map of the world on which Santa's journey was etched from the North Pole to the United States.



Early American Santa

Santa's final transformation evolved through a series of Coca-Cola ads illustrated by Haddon Sundblom from 1931 to 1964.



Coca-Cola Santa

Coca-Cola still holds the trademark for their Santa design and Christmas ads featuring Sundblom's Santa continue to this day.

As for Santa's elves, their origin is murkier, although Europe's Christkindlein, or Christ child, travelled with dwarf-like helpers while delivering gifts in secret to children.

The idea of Santa delivering gifts at night has also been adopted throughout the world, although his delivery methods differ from culture to culture.

In countries like Holland and Spain, children leave their shoes under the tree filled with hay and sugar for Santa's horses. When the horses have their fill, the children are repaid with gifts.

In Sweden, a reindeerless Santa has to pull his sack of gifts through the snow.

Two surefire, can't miss holiday baking recipes

By Fred Sherwin
The Eastender

"My mother bakes the best Christmas goodies in the world." How many of us have uttered those same words about our own mother's Christmas baking?

I know I have, many times. So in the spirit of Christmas I thought I might pass along the recipes – shortbread and cherry loaf.

The shortbread recipe is actually my grandmother's on my mother's side and the

cherry loaf recipe is taken from my great-grandmother's original hand-written notes.

SHORTBREAD COOKIES

- 1 1/2 cups of butter
- 1 1/2 cups of shortening
- 1 1/2 cups of icing sugar
- 4 1/2 cups of flour

Cream butter and shortening together into a large mixing bowl with a kitchen fork. Be sure both ingredients are at room temperature before you start.

Mix in the icing sugar

about half a cup at a time. Finally, mix in the flour.

If your dough seems a little goeey, add more flour.

Roll dough out about a quarter inch thick. Cut out your cookies and place on an ungreased cookie sheet. Bake at 350°F for about 10 minutes.

CHERRY LOAF

- 2 cups of flour
- 1 cup of brown sugar
- 2 teaspoons of baking powder
- 1 16 oz. bottle of cherries
- 3 tablespoons of butter
- 1 egg

Cream brown sugar and butter together. Add flour, baking powder and a pinch of salt and mix together.

Beat the egg in a measuring cup and add the drained syrup from the cherries. If it doesn't come to an even cup and a bit of milk. Pour the liquid mixture into the dry ingredients and mix well.

Slice the cherries in half, and flour generously before folding them into the rest of the ingredients.

Bake at 350 for about 50 minutes to an hour.

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Keep fit in the comfort of your own home

By Fred Sherwin
The Eastender

As the days have grown shorter and the temperature has plummeted, it's become more and more difficult to stay in shape. One way to beat the bulge, maintain your waistline and stay healthy is to purchase or rent a piece of exercise equipment from Robertson Fitness Equipment on Innes Road.

At Robertson Fitness Equipment they have the latest in Treadmills, ellipticals, gym systems and exercise bikes made by such industry stalwarts as Reebok, Health-rider, Nordictrack, Weider and Proform to name a few. They also carry a complete line of free weights, workout benches, dumbbells, fitness balls, medicine balls, exercise floor mats, punching bags and much more from York fitness, Atf and the BY group.

Located in the same building as Robertson Rent-all at 4380 Innes Rd., Robertson Fitness Equipment has an extensive display of floor models for you to try. Being a Family owned business since 1992 enables Robertson Fitness Equipment to offer great pricing, solid warranties, free delivery and set-up of any purchased units (gym system set-up excluded) and piece of

mind knowing that you are dealing with knowledgeable staff that lives within our community.

You can purchase a Treadmill or an elliptical anywhere from \$699.99 to \$1,599.99, a recumbent or regular exercise bike anywhere from \$349.99 to \$699.99 or a home gym system anywhere from \$279.99 to \$999.99. They also offer 0% financing over 12, 24 or 36 months.

Of course, if you're not sure which piece of equipment would best serve your needs or maybe you're just not sure if you would even use the equipment for an extended period of time, you could always rent a new or used unit for as long as you need it and if you decide to purchase the equipment after a 30 day period, the rental and delivery fee will be deducted from the purchase price.

This is what they call their "Try it before you buy it" program which is unique in the industry and has been very successful since it was first offered to their customers approximately two years ago. Rental rates vary between \$85 per month to \$175 per month depending on the type of unit and model being rented.

Robertson Fitness Equipment is located at 4380 Innes Rd. next to the Bank of Montreal near Tenth Line Rd. and is open



Robertson Fitness Equipment on Innes Road has a large selection of exercise equipment for both sale and rental.

Fred Sherwin/Photo

7 days a week. For any additional information about the services they offer or the products they carry visit their website at www.robertsonrentall.com.

Local business

The perfect gift for that hard to buy for someone

By Fred Sherwin
The Eastender

Tired of trying to buy a gift for that hard to buy for person in your life who already has everything? Then why not consider giving them a gift basket from Forget Me Not Gift Baskets.

Owner Barb Paquette has been putting together gift baskets for every occasion under the sun since 1991.

Gift baskets are the perfect gift for the person who seemingly has everything because they are filled with unique and interesting items that invariably put a smile on the recipient's face.

Paquette can either work around a theme or a person's particular tastes and interests. Items can range from speciality cheese and other gourmet food items to golf balls, bottles of wine, hockey or theatre tickets and anything else you can dream of.

Best of all, Forget Me Not Gift Baskets will deliver your gift for you. Over the years Paquette has delivered gift baskets to destinations throughout the United States and Canada.

"Gift baskets are fun to put together. They're fun to buy and they're especially fun to get," says Paquette.

Gift baskets are the ideal gift for any occasion including wedding and baby showers, birthdays, Mother's Day, graduation, a new job, a company promotion or retirement, or as a housewarming gift.

But Christmas is Paquette's busiest time of the year. Gift baskets are especially popular as business gifts, or an expression of thanks. One of the more popular theme baskets is the Chocolate Lover's basket which contains a myriad of items for the chocoholic in your life. The possibilities are endless.

Paquette regularly visits gift shows in a constant search for new and interesting items.

"The fun part about the job is when someone asks me to put together something different or find an item that's out of the ordinary," says Paquette.

A large part of her clientele are corporations and small businesses which purchase baskets as thank you presents or to mark a retirement or a new hire.

When purchasing a basket for a client who's with another business, Paquette recommends that the company purchasing the basket have it delivered to the person's office rather than their home to make a lasting impression. She also recommends that businesses include corporate items such as coffee mugs, pens, etc.

Gift baskets can range in price from \$50 to \$200 or more depending on the items you want to include in the basket. In most cases they can be put together and delivered the next day.

"It's relatively easy and hassle free," says Paquette. "All you have to do is call



Barb Paquette is the owner of Forget-Me-Not Gift Baskets based in Orleáns.

Fred Sherwin/Photo

me up, give me a few ideas and leave the rest up to me."

To find out more about how Barb Paquette can help you put together a one of a kind gift for that special occasion call 720-5126 or e-mail sales@forgetmenot-giftbaskets.com.

Local sports

Louis Riel piles up the points against overmatched St. Peter Knights team

By Fred Sherwin
The Eastender

The Louis Riel Rebelles made a case why they should be considered among the contenders for the Tier 1 senior boys basketball championship this year after handing the St. Peter Knights a 41-point drubbing last Thursday.

The Knights actually jumped out to a 10 point lead and were up 15-5 before the Rebelles put together a 14-1 run to go up 19-16 by the end of the quarter. From there it was all Louis Riel as the Rebelles outscored the Knights 26-6 in the second stanza to take a commanding 23 point lead into half-time.

The smaller Knight team was stymied by the Rebelles use of the full court press which they were trying out for the first time this season. It also didn't help that St. Pete's was missing their main ball-handler Derek Mooney.

When they did manage to beat the press and get down the floor, their shots were off target more often than not. They especially had trouble at the free throw line where they were 13-for-31. The combination of too many turnovers, poor shooting and a lack of hustle on the defensive end of the floor spelled disaster for the Knights as the

Rebelles managed to extend their lead to 32 points in the third quarter on their way to a convincing 93-52 win.

It was the second impressive win in a row for the Rebelles who came back from a 17-point deficit against the St. Patrick Fighting Irish last week to beat the defending city champions by six points. Their record now stands at 2-1. Their lone loss came in their season opener against Colonel By in which they were missing three key players including two starters.

Rebelles' head coach Martin Gauthier is happy with the way his team has been playing so far, but he knows they have to get a lot better if they want to challenge the St. Matthew Tigers for the East Conference championship.

"I think we're a lot more athletic than St. Matt's, but they're superior technically. They're a very sound team when it comes to the fundamentals," says Gauthier.

The two teams will see exactly how they measure up against each other in three weeks when they're scheduled to play in the first game after the Christmas break. They may not have to wait long for a rematch either. Both teams will be playing in the St. Joseph Basketball Tournament that same weekend along with Knights who get to

play the Tigers the day after Louis Riel gets a crack at them.

The Knights should have Mooney back in the lineup when they face the Tigers, which will give them a huge boost. Because they're not especially big, the group of mostly Grade 11s have to rely on an inside out game and ball control to make up for their shortcomings under the basket.

"We're undermanned and undersized against almost every team we play, so we're not going to get a lot of rebounds," said Coventry. "We have to force teams to reach out and foul us with our ball movement and penetration and hope we do the job on the foul line and with our outside shooting. At the other end of the court we have to be aggressive on defence and force turnovers without getting into foul trouble ourselves."

The Knights coach was more upset with the Rebelles sticking with a full court press up 30 points than he was with his own team's play. In trying to defend his actions, Gauthier said that he didn't realize what the score was.

"To be honest with you, I didn't realize we were up that much," said Gauthier. "We didn't have a chance to work on it in practice and I came into the game with a set script on how I wanted to play the game."

Grads go into Xmas break on three game win streak

By Fred Sherwin
The Eastender

The red hot Cumberland Grads are hoping a 12 day layoff for the Christmas holidays won't cool off their play of late. After losing a pair of games on Dec. 9 and 12, the Grads have won three in a row including a 6-5 win over the Pembroke Lumber Kings on Sunday.

After falling behind 2-1 to the Lumber Kings on a late goal in the first period, the Grads came back with three goals in the second to take a 4-3 lead into the third period.

Daniel Sauve scored the Grads' only power play goal of the game at the 8:02 mark of the third to give Cumberland a two goal cushion which they would need after Zach Wilson scored on a penalty shot 19 seconds later.

Brock Plouffe opened the scoring for

Cumberland with a goal at the 5:51 mark of the first period. Ouellette's power play marker midway through the second period improved the Grads' lead to 2-0.

David Pacan put the Grads back in front by two on his second goal of the game at the 15:06 mark of the third. Pembroke managed to get one back with a minute and half left in the game, but the couldn't get the equalizer despite pulling their goalie for an extra attacker in the final minute.

It was a solid win for the Grads, who improved their record to 22-11-1-1, good enough for first place in the Robinson Division and fourth place overall. They lead division rivals Gloucester by six

points with two games in hand and they have three games in hand over Smith Falls who they trail by four points for third place in the overall standings.

Despite allowing five goal, call up Adam Mohr played well enough in goal for the Grads to earn his second win in a row since replacing the injured Adam Laderoute as their starting goaltender.

Pacan was named the game's first star with two goals and an assist. Brock Plouffe had a goal and two assists and Sauve had a goal and an assist. The Grads other goals were scored by Michael Nooyen and newcomer Mitch Gallant.

It was the Grads' second win of the season over the first place Lumber Kings against only one loss. After taking a break for the holidays the team will resume action on Jan. 2 against the Kemptville 73s in Kemptville.



David Pacan

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Artscetera

Belcourt Manor choir shares joy of music with fellow seniors

By Fred Sherwin
The Eastender

For the past two weeks a group of residents from the Belcourt Manor retirement residence have been touring seniors homes across the city to share their joy of music with fellow seniors.

“Les Jeunes de Coeur de Belcourt” is made up of 10 women and seven men including a former Catholic priest and a retired monk. The average age of the group is 80. Collectively they’ve celebrated a grand total of 1,350 Christmases, soon to become 1,367.

The choir was formed last summer by Belcourt resident and former choir master, Yvonne Lunney.

Lunney got the idea while entertaining her fellow residents at the piano every week. During the informal sessions a number of residents would join in. Over time, the numbers grew to the point where she decided to create a choir.

Their initial goal was to hold a benefit concert and record a CD which they did with great success in September. But what was supposed to be a one off effort soon turned into something bigger. In November, they started talking about holding a series of Christmas concerts at other Allegro residences in the region in an effort to raise money for the Ottawa Food Bank.

The chorus wrapped up their tour on Sunday with a heartwarming performance for their fellow residents, family members and friends at Belcourt Manor.

The first half of the concert featured a mix of French classics such as “Souvenir d’un Viellard” and “Tristesse”, along with a few Irish favourites like “Danny Boy”, “Molly Malone” and “I’ll Tell My Ma”.

After a short intermission the choir launched into the second half of the program which included holiday classics like “O Holy Night”, “Silver Bells” and “Silent

Night”.

Judging by the applause and the smiles on everyone’s faces, the audience was thoroughly entertained, although at times it was hard to tell who was having more fun – the audience or the members of the choir.

At 87, Iréne Grandmaitre is the oldest member of the chorus by a couple of months. For at least 60 of her 87 years, she has sung in a variety of choirs. When word spread that a choir was being formed at the Manor, she signed up immediately.

“Oh, this has just been wonderful,” Grandmaitre said during the intermission on Sunday. “It’s brought back so many memories. My father couldn’t sing a note, but he loved to hear my mother sing. She’s the one who taught all us kids. She taught me how to sing ‘Souvenir d’un Viellard’ in French.”

When Lunney first started to put the choir together, she had a difficult time getting the male members of the chorus to join in.

“They were too afraid to open their mouths,” said Lunney. “Eventually, I had to separate them and work on the guys separately.”

One person she didn’t have to coax too much was her husband Ed, who used to sing all the time before the demands of the Catholic priesthood cut into his rehearsal time. Lunney rose to the rank of Monsignor, before eventually leaving the priesthood several years ago and eventually marrying Yvonne.

Despite suffering from the effects of Parkinson’s Disease, Lunney is the featured soloist in the choir’s Irish numbers which he obviously enjoys. During “I’ll Tell My Ma”, there was a visible twinkle in his eye that could be seen from the back of the room.

Among the other choir members, Gerry Bernard was simply amazing while sharing



Members of 'Les Jeunes de Coeur de Belcourt' perform for their fellow residents at the Belcourt Manor retirement residence last Sunday. Fred Sherwin/Photo

soloist duties with Jaqueline Forest on “Tristesse” and Gisèle Sorel on “Panis Angelicus”. Both women were impeccable. So much so, in fact, that I one could easily imagine them performing as featured soloists with any chorus in the city.

The remainder of the choir is made up of Denyse Kingsley, Allan Yoxon, Gilles Bellehumeur, Murielle Wilson, John Charlebois, Madeleine Ségiun, Georgette Charlebois, Gisèle Gagné, Colbert Brulé, Jacqueline Bernard and Hervé Charlebois.

Sadly, however, the Lunneys have recently moved to another retirement residence, which has thrown the future of the Belcourt chorus in doubt. One can only hope that the remaining choir members will continue to sing together and stay young at heart.

Community calendar

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 24

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE at 5 p.m., 7 p.m., 9 p.m. and midnight at Divine Infant Roman Catholic Church, 6658 Bilberry Dr. (Behind St. Matthew High School).

SPECIAL CHRISTMAS EVE MASS at St. Peter Catholic High School, 750 Charlemagne Blvd. at 6 p.m. and 8 p.m.

CHILDREN’S CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE at 5 p.m., at Queenswood United

Church, 360 Kennedy Lane East. This service is designed with children in mind. Young people are encouraged to wear their pyjamas and join in the singing of Christmas carols and a dramatic reading of the poem “Let Every Heart Prepare Him Room.”

CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE at 7 p.m. and 10 p.m. at Resurrection Lutheran Church, 1325 Gaultois Ave. off Orléans Blvd. just south of St. Joseph.

INTER-GENERATIONAL CHRISTMAS EVE MASS at Queenswood United Church, 360 Kennedy Lane East at 7:30 p.m., followed by a candlelight service at 11 p.m.

CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE at 7 p.m. at Community Pentecostal Church, 1825 St. Joseph Blvd. (east of Jeanne d’Arc Blvd.)

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE at 7 p.m. and 11 p.m. at Grace

Presbyterian Church, 1220 Old Tenth Line Rd.

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES at St. Helen’s Anglican Church, 1234 Prestone Drive in Queenswood Heights. Children’s service at 4 p.m.; Candlelight service with contemporary music at 7 p.m. followed by a Candlelight service with traditional music at 10 p.m.

THURSDAY, DEC. 25

CHRISTMAS DAY SERVICE at Divine

Infant Roman Catholic Church, 6658 Bilberry Dr. at 8 a.m., 9:30 a.m. and 11:15 a.m.

CHRISTMAS DAY SERVICE 10 a.m. at St. Helen’s Anglican Church, 1234 Prestone Drive in Queenswood Heights.

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 31

NEW YEAR’S EVE DINNER AND DANCE at the Navan Curling Club. Roast beef and chicken buffett. Tickets \$50 per person includes party favours and a glass of champagne at midnight.