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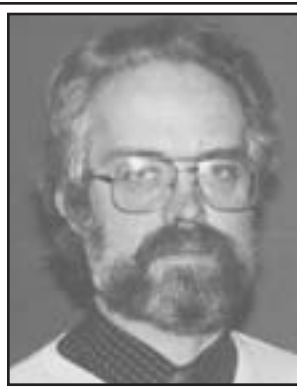
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**Bill's
Bulletin
Board**

By Bill Rea

Well, it's that time of year again.

Santa Claus is coming to town (I think there could be a catchy little song there).

His arrival in King is a little hard to pinpoint. It all depends on where one lives and what events one attends. There's a good argument that his first appearance in these parts was Sunday at the King Township Museum. And he's due to put in an appearance in Nobleton next Saturday, and then he'll be spending much of the rest of the day in Schomberg.

And these are just the events about which I know. He may be on the agenda at private functions that I've not been told of.

There will be a lot of very excited little kids lining Main Street in Schomberg taking in the annual parade to welcome Jolly Old St. Nick, and there will be at least aspiring geriatric (no prizes for guess who) running around with a camera (actually a

couple of cameras) photographing the whole event.

The big guy does get around, doesn't he?

I was killing a bit of time at Upper Canada Mall in Newmarket one evening last week, and saw the traditional big kiosk, housing Santa and an assortment of his elves, with several kids eagerly waiting their turn.

Do you remember lining up like that in some big mall or department store, waiting to see Santa Claus? It's been more than 40 years for me, but the memories are still vivid. That's why I can have a certain amount of appreciation for the way I see the kids react to this day.

For some, it's a pretty terrifying experience. I know of a couple of parents who can't take their little ones to see Santa (at least yet) for fear that the kids will freak. It does make a bit of sense. Youngsters don't often encounter big aging guys with white beards wearing red suits. How often do you see me in

a red suit?

In all probability, they'll outgrow it (the kids I mean), the way little boys outgrow their aversion to girls.

I was never scared of Santa Claus; maybe a little apprehensive, but not frightened out of my wits. The closest comparison I can think of is I viewed being sent to see Santa as I would being sent to see a school principal with really good PR skills.

But for some reason, I was always too nervous to say anything coherent to the man. It must have been stage fright, something I suffered from as a little kid, a condition which has not yet completely gone away.

For the first couple of years, my older brother accompanied me on this annual trip. Actually, he was young enough to be as big a Santa fan as I. And Michael has never had any trouble talking to anyone.

Thus he was able to announce exactly what he wanted. I remember there was one year when he drew a bit of a bawling out from our father when he learned that Santa had been solicited for models of various monsters, like Frankenstein, Dracula, Wolfman and others of that crowd.

I've never quite understood what Dad got so mad about, but Michael never did get the models. Good

thing too — they would have scared his little brother, which may have been what he really had in mind.

I'm sure a lot of those great memories will flood back for me Saturday at the parade.

The big parade was held in Toronto last Sunday. Over the last couple of years, if I have happened to be home at the right time, I've turned on the TV, simply out of curiosity if nothing else, unless it's a little bit more of that nostalgia. I wasn't home last Sunday, so I relied on the media coverage.

Having lived my first 30 years in the big smoke, I got to a couple of these parades as a little kid.

Things were a lot different in those days. The parade was first thing Saturday morning, not Sunday afternoon as it is now. And gridlock wasn't the issue it is now. We just drove downtown, parked some place and walked to the parade route. Then we went to my grandparents (my mother's parents) for breakfast and to watch the parade again on TV. There was one year when the highlight of the parade, at least for me, was a great big statue of Popeye, mounted on a float. I remember both my dad and brothers calling me into the room where the TV was to make sure I didn't miss that

(I was more of a Popeye fan than a Santa fan in those days).

That, alas, was one of those nice little family traditions that didn't last very long, at least for me, since my grandmother died when I was five, so we made other breakfast arrangements for after the parade (I think we just went home).

It's good to have memories of times like that, and even better when you stop and think just how much time has passed in between. That's why this time of year always holds a certain nostalgic value.

Oh yeah, there are pictures to prove a lot of what I stated here, including pictures of me with Santa.

They took pictures of such events in those days too, only it took a lot longer to get the pictures developed and mailed to the recipients. Knowing my mother as well as I did, I'm sure they were filed away somewhere. I could have asked her to burn them, but that would have likely prompted her to dig them out and mail them to some newspaper. I think he has those files now, and I want him to know there's a free, lifetime subscription to the King Township Sentinel if he'll just throw the pictures away.

He can keep the pictures he's in, if he wants (the ones with just him).

Editorial

Not even Harper's motion on Quebec will stop the national bickering

If Prime Minister Stephen Harper, or anyone else, was entertaining hopes that his motion to declare that Quebecers constitute a nation within a united Canada was going to somehow end the national unity debates in this country, we fear there's going to be some disappointment.

Indeed, things have heated up, rather than simmered down.

Already, the move has cost Harper a cabinet minister, although York — Simcoe MP Peter Van Loan could be excused for thinking that was good news, since in drew a promotion for himself.

The national unity squabbling, which has sort of been quiet for the last several years, was sparked up again. And the same old questions have been tossed

back and forth, again.

Does Quebec have the right to separate?

How much territory would it be entitled to take with it?

What percentage of the national debt would an independent Quebec be responsible for?

Why do Quebecers merit such consideration, when other potential nations, like Aboriginals, do not?

How much longer must we continue to hassle over Quebec's place in Confederation?

And there are many more questions that have been raised yet again.

And then there are some new ones. There's been a lot of confusion over what Harper's motion was really trying to say, with various people trying to determine the definition of the word

“nation.” And there have been some who have wondered if there's much difference or any difference between the terms “Quebecer” and “Quebecois”

Add to that the surprise that this all came up again as it did. It happened so suddenly, and many people were upset that they didn't even have the chance to react, comment, or tell their MPs how they felt. There's been little in the way of explanation coming down to earth from high atop Mount Parliament Hill.

Recently ousted Tory MP Garth Turner tried to address that issue by conducting a poll on his famous blog. He reported that 70 per cent of the more than 1,800 people who logged on were opposed to the motion, so Turner voted accordingly

when it came his turn in the House of Commons. The problem with that, of course, is people had even less information to go on than the MPs who actually got to vote. They had no time to digest the issue, and could only base their opinions on emotions, without the time for thought or useful explanations.

Reluctantly, we have to conclude that apart from the fact it gave people a chance to vent, Turner's poll was probably pointless in the long-run. But to give the man his due, he at least tried to involve the people who deserve to be involved, namely the taxpayers who pay the freight. That's better than what Harper and company tried to do to involve their masters, which was nothing.

But we would also spec-

ulate that nothing is what is going to come from this resolution. Indeed, we expect most Canadians will have forgotten about it in a couple of months, if not sooner.

The separatist passions in Quebec are not likely to ever go away, and we also believe that the political powers in that province, whatever party they may represent, will never have the guts to put a clear separation referendum question before their voters. We're likely to see questions that more closely resemble literary mushballs than anything else, as has already been the case.

The bickering continues. Perhaps we should just accept this never-ending bickering as part of the price we pay for being Canadians. People have it worse in a lot of other countries.