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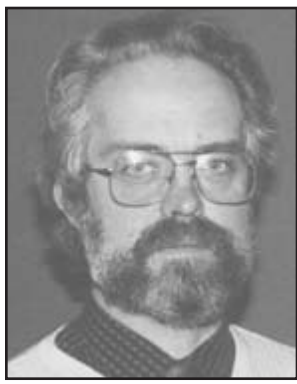
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**Bill's
Bulletin
Board**

By Bill Rea

You have to admit that Santa Claus is one busy guy this time of year.

I spent most of Saturday bumping into him. I did the bumping; Santa was sitting most of the time.

Our first encounter was at a breakfast session at Nobleton United Church, and the old guy looked quite content to have local youngsters sit on his lap. He even obligingly posed with a couple of local pathfinders for me (give Santa credit, he's got good PR), as well as with some cute little dogs.

I casually mentioned that I would see him later, and received a slightly puzzled look in return. I fairness, I knew a couple of details about his schedule for the day, and I don't think he had been briefed on my plans, although I grant that might be a bit presumptuous. After all, he knows when I am sleeping (never), he knows when I'm awake (seldom), he knows when I am bad or good (y'know,

let's not go there).

I had a few more work-related calls to make, with my wife with me, and then a bit of down time presented itself. We checked out a couple of the big malls in the vicinity, and while we didn't see St. Nick, we did see his chair, unoccupied at that particular moment. Even Santa Claus has to have his lunch, as well as use the facilities from time to time.

Then we traveled back into King to watch children work on decorating their cookies and working on other crafts at the King Township Museum, under the watchful eyes of Guess Who?

Alas, we couldn't hang around there too long. There were a couple of Christmas shopping chores to attend to (with my work schedule, Beth has learned to grab anything even looking like free time for me to do chores as if it were made of gold), before heading for Schomberg for Main Street

Christmas.

It was nice to actually see snow on the ground for that annual event. It just doesn't seem like Christmas if I can still see green grass on lawns.

Main Street Christmas, of course, kicks off with the annual Santa Claus Parade, so I saw the big guy in red again. He even waved at me from his float. Then he did some time sitting with the kids before taking his part in the Festival of Lights, and I was there to take pictures of it all.

Now to the best of my knowledge, Santa's work day ended at that point. Mine didn't, and I still had to travel to King City to watch the King Wild lose a thriller to the Richmond Hill Rams.

There have been times over the years when I have encountered Santa at hockey games. Once, the head and assistant coach of a house league team where I was working both donned Santa suits before going behind the bench. They were evidently hoping the gesture might spark their young charges. I can't remember if they won the match, but their picture did appear on the front page of the local paper, above the caption "Jolly good coaching."

But Santa was not at the Wild game Saturday night (at least I didn't see him).

Good thing too. If I keep showing up at the same events at which he appears, he might accuse me of stalking.

I got through the whole day Sunday without seeing Santa in person, but I'm sure he and I are going to cross each other's paths in the days to come. At this time of the year, that's pretty hard to avoid. This is the busy time for both of us.

And as if Santa's not busy enough, I heard he and NORAD got together Friday for a quick trip from the North Pole, complete with sleigh and reindeer. Apparently (I heard this on the news), Santa and the crew did a flight from the pole as far south as some point in Colorado, then they turned around and flew home. It was sort of a dress rehearsal.

Since when does Santa Claus need to rehearse? He's been in his business a long time. One would think he'd have his routine down. True, he has to address changes in population patterns, but that's nothing new. For example, once the Slokker development goes up, he's going to have to budget a little more time in Nobleton. I'm sure he's up to the task.

But what really bothers me is the military's involvement in his annual journey, which has increased noticeably over the years.

What happened to the good old days, when I was a kid, when the radio started reporting some unidentified flying object coming from the north and heading to the North American mainland. These announcements, from NORAD, usually coming mid to late afternoon Christmas Eve, were always a source of interests to the little kid who was myself. There was one Christmas Eve when I was sick in bed, but I had my big brother to keep me informed of developments. I well remember his running upstairs to my room to tell me some UFO had been spotted over Baffin Island. He had the advantage in those days of having a kid brother who didn't know where Baffin Island was (I now think it's somewhere north of Schomberg, isn't it?)

Things got dressed up even more as the years progressed. We heard more of the attempts to identify this unidentified thing, and then we started hearing accounts of fighter pilots actually making visual contact, and event exchanging communications. Now Santa Claus even files a flight plan, and there's a Web site, where you can keep track of his progress. I'm not sure if I regard this as an improvement. I have too many fond memories of the UFO mysteries.

Editorial

Region is moving to address Highway 9 issues

True, it would be nice if things could be moving a bit faster, but we are talking about government, which has never been known for setting speed records.

York Region staff have been working on the traffic woes on Highway 9. Indeed, Mayor Margaret Black has indicated she's impressed with the amount of attention that has been placed on what is basically a King Township issue. But it should, of course, be quickly understood that this is not just a King issue. True, the road is in King, but the traffic comes from numerous other places, like Newmarket, Orangeville and points beyond. A public road, especially a highway like this one, is supposed to be accessible to all, regardless of where they reside. That makes this issue a lot more broad.

But it's also true that Regional staff, no matter how competent they are, can't simply wave a wand and make all the problems go away. It takes time and thought.

This issue is complicated

by the fact that safety issues on Highway 9, between Bathurst Street and Highway 400 are largely perceived, as opposed to real. Indeed, the Regional staff report, which was considered last week by the Transportation and Works Committee of Regional council, stated there was a reduction in the number of accidents along the road in the first five years after it was widened, as opposed to the previous five-year period.

The concerns are for people trying to break into that traffic off one of the connecting roads, or from one of the properties there. With no traffic lights or signals between Bathurst and the 400, there's nothing to create these breaks, and they are not likely to form naturally. That means people either have to wait, and feel mounting frustration grow, or take a chance. And taking chances is never a good policy when one is driving a car, especially around traffic travelling upwards of 100 km-h, if not faster.

Traffic signals at one of

the intersections has been suggested as a remedy, but staff has to have time to consider the implications of that. You can't just erect these lights, turn them on and then forget about them.

There have been other ideas put forth, such as changing the name from Highway 9 to Davis Drive West, the idea being that it will create a psychological

Letter to the Editor

King City resident angry about ditches

I first raised the matter of maintaining the ditches we have been left with following the sanitary sewer installation in King City at a public meeting of Township council June 26, 2006.

I followed that up with a more detailed letter to the editor, carried in our local papers Aug. 16, 2006. A petition was raised in our area earlier that year and circulated through the "older" streets (without storm sewers), namely Hollingsworth, Kingslynn,

perception that faster driving is less appropriate on a "Drive." It's hard to say if that would do much good, although we're hard pressed to imagine what harm it could do. To paraphrase The Bard, "a road by any other name will still get you where you're going."

More speed enforcement could help as well, but there is a good lesson there to

Elizabeth, Clearview, Patricia and McBride. "proposing" that as the sewer contractors were down 10 to 12 inches in their trenching, it might be an opportune and logical time to consider the installation of storm drains, thus eliminating the need for open ditches.

It is my understanding that approximately 160 residents signed said document and it was presented to council. They apparently dismissed it out of hand as too expensive, and that was

bear in mind; namely if you're going to widen a road and lay down a good hard surface, people are going to use it, and they will drive as fast as they deem appropriate, posted speed limits notwithstanding.

Such is our reality that addressing these issues is going to take time. But it's also true the Region is on it. We just have to be patient.

the last we heard of it..

So the resulting ditches (which I have heard described as trenches, gullies, gulches or small ravines — all of them ugly) were left for us to deal with as best we could. In my case, I am obliged to walk in the bottom, cutting horizontally, working up the incline until the mower is up to shoulder height. This is not only difficult, but downright dangerous. It

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