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What's On My Mind...

True heroes of the holidays

Susan MacDonald, Editor

Traditionally, every December before sitting down to write my editorial, I glance back over my previous holiday submissions and spend a few moments reflecting on the past and present holiday seasons. Looking back, it seems each year we have struggled with some sort of challenge or emergency situation during the holidays and, what comes to mind after these readings, is the resilience and determination we, as a community, have shown to survive and surpass each one.



There have been major snowstorms causing widespread power outages, discarded turkeys and cancelled holiday get-togethers. There were years of Covid, with lock downs, unimaginable mandatory isolation and loss of life. One year, there were last-minute postal strikes preventing the sending of gifts to loved ones living far from home. And yet, the holiday spirit survived and continued, albeit in a modified state, relative to the circumstance of the time.

Eventually, of course, roads were cleared, power was restored, curfews were lifted and Canada Post resolved their issues. Community venues re-opened, businesses picked up and we all surpassed the hardships, and chose to move forward with a positive energy and attitude.

If we're to find a silver lining in hardship, we need only to look back on how we survived the ones previously presented to us. We have our communities, our families, friends, neighbours, loved ones and, each other, to thank for getting us through the hard times. We have our community organizations, businesses and entrepreneurs to support us and see to our needs. In fact, we survive because of our trust, commitment and unity in knowing we are all in this together and that we are all doing our part.

As we head into what promises to be an open and wonderful holiday season, I pray we remember the past hardships so that we may better appreciate this year's celebrations. For those who have suffered losses, may the love you shared shine brightly, to those facing medical challenges I wish you good health in the New Year and for those with new additions to the family, may you cherish the miracle of this first Christmas.

Happy Holidays to all... may you find peace, joy and happiness throughout the holiday season and may the year ahead bring the blessings you deserve.

Enjoy the read....

holidays



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LA PRESSE



Laurentian Personality

Riccardo Frattolin - man with a green thumb

Lori Leonard – Main Street

Riccardo Frattolin was born in Pordenone, a small Italian city near Venice. His family had a large country home surrounded by vineyards, cornfields, a massive vegetable garden, fruit orchards and several animals. Riccardo grew up in this environment until his teen years when he moved with his mother to the city. There, he was exposed to the European lifestyle. At 25, he moved to Montreal where he met his future wife, Jennifer Turcotte.

Riccardo and Jennifer moved to Morin-Heights 10 years ago, as they wanted to raise their children in a rural community setting. Riccardo immediately felt at home in Morin Heights with its warm, welcoming community.

One large difference Riccardo noticed immediately was the relationship between people and food. In Italy, food is almost considered to be sacred. “It brings people together and is such an important part of life. They treat food with respect and pride, steering away from fast food.”

In Italy, Riccardo enjoyed the “easy life”, a good career due to his studies/experience in colorimetry and working in a family business. Moving to Canada meant he had to leave everything behind and start from scratch. It was difficult, but as time passed, things improved greatly. He worked at a furniture company where he learned to scrape off old, encrusted paint right up to dealing with lawyers and municipalities, whilst managing one of his employer’s commercial buildings.

Riccardo still works part-time for the same company. He dedicates 50-60 hours a week working, with one third to half his time with the furniture company and the balance “growing” Chez Giardino, Jennifer and Riccardo’s dream catering business.

Riccardo enjoys gardening, has a “very green thumb” and focuses on edible plants. It started as a simple hobby years ago with a small garden bed in Montreal; his gardens now occupy most of his property. Riccardo cherishes growing unusual edibles such as quince and cardoons. He sometimes pushes his luck with plants suited for warmer climates like figs and saffron. Gardening these specialties has become part of his work as the produce, herbs and fruits are used for meals produced by Chez Giardino.

Riccardo also grows sweet potatoes or wild fennel that cannot be found from local farmers. He was able to have a perennial patch of healthy fennel beside their home using heritage seeds from Italy. Riccardo has a sweet spot for melons, from regular cantaloupe to giant watermelons. Each year he tries growing different varieties using various growing methods due to our tricky climate.

Although Riccardo has many interests, food and gardening are truly his passions. He enjoyed boxing before covid and currently enjoys high intensity training with friends. While he cooks occasionally, he is responsible for supplies, accounting, permits and licences and of course, the gardens! Riccardo enjoys discovering new products, whether it’s an imported delicacy from a Montreal market or a new variety of pepper, he will bring it home to enjoy with Jennifer. Then they find a way to introduce it into their menu for clients to enjoy.

Riccardo and Jennifer are parents to 3 beautiful children of whom they are very proud. Riccardo enjoys helping others as he grew up surrounded mostly by women, being close to his two sisters and mother. He and Jennifer were involved in the “Purse Project”, a volunteer project close to their heart. Jennifer and Riccardo collected purses each year and filled them with goodies destined for women in need. Riccardo also enjoys doing volunteer gardening around town. He claims to be a “cat person” and has three, two who were strays.

Riccardo plans to continue with his passion for gardening. He recalls people saying to him “this is not Italy, you can’t grow those things here.” I think he is out to prove them wrong by trying to grow even heat loving crops such as sweet potatoes and melons. He says “many experiments fail, but when one succeeds, the rewards are worth all the trouble.”



In the Anglosphere

When caregiving overwhelms, help is at hand

Kathleen Hugessen | Penny Rose

Imagine being in a sharing, caring partnership when, one day, one partner can no longer share and care due to cognitive or physical decline. At that point, all the sharing and caring falls on one set of shoulders, and the burden can be terrible. Statistics show that a third of adults in Quebec are caregivers. Of those, almost half do not recognize they are caregivers. L’Antr’Aidant is a not-for-profit organization committed to the welfare of caregivers of adults and seniors. Their experience reflects those statistics.

Founded in 2009, L’Antr’Aidant offers individual counseling, conferences, workshops and training to care givers in seven Laurentian MRCs. Originally only available to the French-speaking community, L’Antr’Aidant began to include English programs in 2016.

L’Antr’Aidant hopes to expand its English-language membership, says Pascale Geerligs, a counselor/facilitator with the organization. Beginning on January 18, then on subsequent second-to-last Thursdays of each month, there will be an English support group on Zoom, meeting from 9:30 am to 11:30 am. The first session will examine compassion fatigue. The organization’s website describes this as “A form of exhaustion, specifically affecting people who regularly encounter human suffering in their personal and/or professional lives.”

“We have a tool called the exhaustion meter that helps carers confront and address their fatigue,” Geerligs explains. “We try to help them establish boundaries and better assert their needs.” It is one of an array of tools L’Antr’Aidant offers to help caregivers navigate a variety of challenges.

She allows that, “Sometimes things get in the way of asking for help, things like pride and guilt.” L’Antr’Aidant counselors work to help caregivers overcome such reluctance.

The February 22 workshop will be on income tax preparation for caregivers, which can be complex. March 21 will see an exploration of emergency vs. priority. “Caregivers can often find themselves in a state of panic, exhausted and distressed,” Geerligs says. “We try to de-escalate the emotions so they can understand the difference.”

Other topics that have been covered in L’Antr’Aidant workshops include: intimidation from family members and awareness of telephone fraud. “We are also open to topic suggestions,” Geerligs adds.

One issue for attendance at these workshops is the availability of respite care. How can a caregiver leave their charge for a couple of hours to attend a workshop? There are several organizations that may be able to provide a volunteer carer who comes to the home and takes over for the duration of the meeting. However, the situation needs to be evaluated by L’Antr’Aidant and a referral made to the necessary partners.

Geerligs says she arrived at L’Antr’Aidant by a roundabout route. A BFA from Concordia, several years as a calèche driver in Montreal, then a certificate in special-care counseling from Champlain College. “It took me 47 years to figure out community work is my home,” she says. “I couldn’t be happier. As much as I’m giving, I’m receiving.”

For more information about L’Antr’Aidant and its programs and the many tools they offer, visit its informative website at www.lantraidant.com

And with this, we bid farewell to In the Anglosphere. It has been a pleasure to spend the past couple of years exploring the zone with our readers. We are moving on to new and different projects. We wish you all the best.

Penny & Kathleen



Arundel News

Janet Thomas

ARUNDEL SPEAKERS SERIES PRESENTS: JAPAN!
BY TERENCE FLANAGAN
Arundel United Church
Fri, Dec 8: 7 pm

Long time Arundel resident, Terence Flanagan, will walk us through his latest adventure, a visit to Japan. Terence and his wife (and the rest of the family too) love to travel. When a family member recently moved to Japan, the path was clear. A different and vibrant culture, they captured the essence of the culture in photographs.

Stay tuned! The January 12 speaker will feature the Cordon Bleu Chef Jenny Pearson Millar: “A Culinary Trip from Ireland to Québec”. Yum!

ARUNDEL CHRISTMAS MARKET
Bettina and Pascal’s Farm,
115 Crystal Falls Road, Rte. 327,
Sat, Dec 9 & Dec 16: 11 am – 4 pm

Need a Christmas gift or something tasty for the holidays? You will find it at the Arundel Christmas Market. Beautiful hand-made treasures along with delicious homemade goodies are yours for the taking. Sixteen vendors will convene each day inside the greenhouse at Bettina and Pascal’s farm on the road to Mont Tremblant. Enjoy the live music while you select something special.

ARUNDEL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS SING CHRISTMAS SONGS

Arundel United Church (17 rue du Village)
Tues, Dec 12: 11 am - 11:45 pm

Join us for a delightful Christmas Concert presented by the students of the Arundel Elementary School under the direction of teacher Susan Cunningham. The children will sing popular and traditional Christmas music. After the concert, please join us for a light lunch of hearty soup and dessert. Both the concert and the lunch are offered for your enjoyment free of charge.

MONTCALM COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS DINNER
Montcalm Community Centre
Fri, Dec 16: 11:30 am

A tasty Christmas dinner will be served to seniors over age 55 and Santa will drop in to distribute gifts. This is a popular event, so you need to reserve a place by calling 819-681-3383 ext. 5811. \$10 per person. If you would like to bring a dessert to share, that will be most welcome but it is not required in order to attend.

MESSAGE FOR THE NEW YEAR

“Love is better than anger. Hope is better than fear. Optimism is better than despair. So let us be loving, hopeful, and optimistic. And we can change the world.”

- Jack Layton

Scenes of Nature From our home to yours... Happy Holidays



Photo credit: Susan MacDonald



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News from Saint-André The decorum of Elves

Karen Feiertag

I’m new and don’t know my editor well so this may get me into trouble since I have no proof yet, but the circumstantial evidence is overwhelming so I’m saying it: Saint-André surely has the largest per capita population of Elves south of the North Pole. It’s truly remarkable. Here, Elves have proliferated to the extent that they’re being seen throughout the entire year. Seen by the truly observant eye, that is, they seldom make it easy by carrying large-format candy canes or purposefully balancing their hats above those darling ears.



Most are categorically against any such fashion tells. It’s not aerodynamic to be corraling rebellious rubber duckies into a kayak dressed in a droopy felt bonnet on a hot June day at the annual Fête du bon voisinage - and you try rescuing children from housefires and cats from trees in those soft jingling...well they’re slippers, let’s just say it. But it’s not for practical reasons that Elves resist “The Look”. The real reason, a man who sells beer tickets for the Elves at the annual Pumpkin Fest divulged to me last October, is that they just don’t have time for Paparazzi. They’re helping families that have fallen on hard times, welcoming newcomers from overseas, finding the best specialist for a child in need, managing baseball leagues, partnering with the library to buy books and start activity programs, and inevitably, ensuring every child in Saint-André has a gift this time of year. “The distractions and dangers of stardom are too high risk for a lifestyle of such bustle.”

Doubtful this was the answer, I watched him shuffle beer tickets, then excitedly posited that unbeknownst to us, they have double-lives, as teachers, farmers, airplane mechanics, construction or factory workers. That they are real people who can feel a natural good in the fiber of their bones, people without need of brownie-points, just as magical as full-time Elves but with no scratchy tinsel on their socks.

He stopped, turned down his sunglasses, smiled, eyes suddenly a-bling with sparkle, then turned up his pantleg, just a notch. Did I not then hear, with mine own ears, a mysterious jingling like the settling of happy sheep in their brass-belled coats? “Our socks aren’t scratchy at all”, he confided. I realized then the joys that a life incognito could bring to the truly mischievous soul.

Yee who seeks to meet The Saint-André Elves in their full, unabashed regalia, accompanied by Circus Children, Strange Animals, Fancy Carriages and Santa himself are cordially invited to the annual Saint André Parade of the Elves of Father Christmas on Saturday, December 9. Park at the church, scoff a free hot chocolate along the route and afterwards, return for the fireworks and a drink. Come with or without bells on. Above all, have a wonderful holiday season.



Cancer Support Group Holiday Gathering Dec 16

The next monthly meeting of the Laurentian Region Cancer Support Group will be an informal holiday gathering set for Saturday, December 16 at 1 pm at Chalet Bellevue, Morin Heights. Here is a great chance to mix and mingle in-person while sharing some refreshments. Option also to “drop in” via Zoom. Meetings are free and open to people living with cancer and their loved ones or caregivers. To reserve a place for our December gathering or to receive the Zoom link, or to receive more information about this non-profit peer support group, call 450-226-3641 or email cancer.laurentia@yahoo.ca.



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Wishing you a warm and happy holiday season



New data about the English speakers in the Laurentians

Jude Hussain

The primary mission of 4Korners has always been to strengthen Laurentian community vitality by using collective impact and direct programming. The organization focuses on access to health and social services, education, and arts and culture. 4Korners works closely alongside provincial and regional health and social service organizations, such as the CISSS des Laurentides, the Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN), the Regional Development Network (RDN) and the provincial and federal governments.

These partners’ latest reports reveal that there are over 47,010 English speakers living in the Laurentians. This 2021 census also reveals that over 8,990 English-speaking seniors aged 65+, and over 7,940 English-speaking children aged 0-14, currently reside in the Laurentians. The Laurentian region has a noticeable socio-economic inequality in terms of yearly income for English-speakers compared to other regions in Quebec. As this report reveals there are 8,990 Laurentian English-speaking people who live off an income of \$20,000 or less per year.

The CHSSN published their ‘Crop Survey’ in September, which surveyed 173 Laurentian anglophones regarding their thoughts on access to health and social services in the region. Responses from these participants revealed that the Laurentians rank low in community satisfaction rates for access to English health and social services. 42% of Crop Survey respondents rated the time it takes to see a specialist as ‘poor’. A further 25% of respondents expressed that they were ‘dissatisfied’ with the time it took to receive medical aid in English while at the hospital.

Chloée Alary, 4Korners’ lead Program Manager for the Networking and Partnership Initiative, says, “The number one thing the community would like to see improved is operations. There are not enough doctors or surgeons in the Laurentians who are available to speak to patients in English. I have heard of many cases where English-speaking patients are scheduled to go into a serious or even life-changing surgery, only for them to not understand any of the materials given to them, or instructions for self-care, because the information was all in French. In the end, there should be more bilingual health professionals in the CISSS, and that is what we are working towards every day through NPI and the Laurentian English Services Advisory Network (LESAN).”

LESAN is another 4Korners lead initiative. It involves committees made up of citizens associated with community organizations, public institutions and service providers who work amongst the English-speaking community. Volunteer members across the Laurentians participate in various roundtables representing their respective municipalities. LESAN members work together to identify needs and find sustainable ways to deliver services to Laurentian English-speaking communities. The CISSS Laurentides has employees who are a part of LESAN, which shows their readiness and willingness to collaborate with English-speaking partners and, improve English health and social services in the Laurentians.

The latest CROP data, as well as overall community feedback, reveals that there is still much work to do every day to improve health and social services for not only the Laurentians’ linguistic minority, but also for Quebec’s English-speaking people. In Quebec, 1,253,587 people speak English as their first official language, with 445,575 being able to only speak English and not French.

Through its mission, 4Korners is working to improve the skills of community partners to serve the community while also creating new programs to bridge the gap. “We are starting to see how Laurentian health and social services are spawning a new type of caregiver. One example that has been discussed before was when an 8-year-old had to miss school to go to the hospital with the mother because she didn’t speak French, unlike the child. The child, therefore, had to translate for the guardian, becoming a ‘young caregiver’ in the process. We can see that the barriers linguistic minorities face go far when they don’t have services available to them in English,” says Chloée Alary.

To learn more about 4Korners, or see how you can get involved, please visit 4Korners website at 4korners.org. For more information, please contact info@4korners.org or call 450-974-3940.

Christmas Bells

I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will
to men!

– Henry Wadsworth Longfellow



COMMUNITY UPCOMING events

SUPERFOLK PRESENTS

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CHRISTMAS MARKET (Chalet Bellevue, 27 Bellevue, Morin-Heights)

Sat, Dec 9: 10 am – 4 pm



ARUNDEL CHRISTMAS MARKET ON THE FARM

Bettina and Pascal's Farm (115 ch. Crystal Falls Road, Rte. 327)
Sat, Dec 9 & 16: 11 am – 4 pm



SAINT ANDRÉ CHRISTMAS PARADE OF THE ELVES

Departure from Atkora...park at the church
Sat, Dec 9: 7 pm
Free hot chocolate, lots of happy elves, fireworks and outdoor party from the Fondation Héritage St-André



SPAGHETTI DINNER & LIVE BAND

Morin-Heights Legion Branch 171
Sat, Dec 16: 6 pm



JOYFUL NOISE CHOIR CONCERT

United Church (831, rue Village, Morin-Heights)
Thurs, Dec 21: 7 pm



CONCERT - BRITTEN FOR BABIES: ANNIE JACOBS-PERKINS (CELLO)

Trinity Anglican Church (12 rue Préfontaine O., Ste-Agathe-des-Monts)
Sat, Dec 23: 3 pm– Free admission, with a suggested donation of \$20-\$30

UPCOMING CHURCH SERVICES

ST. SIMEON'S ANGLICAN CHURCH (445, rue Principale, Lachute)
Sunday morning services at 10 am



GRACE ANGLICAN CHURCH (7 Chemin Church, Arundel)
Sun services at 11 am – children's programming on 2nd & 4th Sundays

Sun, Dec 24: 4:30 pm – Traditional Christmas Eve Service with Carols
Sunday services: 11 am

TRINITY ANGLICAN CHURCH

12 rue Préfontaine O., Ste-Agathe-des-Monts
Sun services at 10 am – children's programming on the 1st & 3rd Sundays
Sun, Dec 24: 10am – Family Service
Sun, Dec 24: 8 pm – Traditional Christmas Eve Service with carols
Mon, Dec 25: 10 am – Christmas morning service



On With the Show Arundel connections

Florian Gaudreau

I was watching "The Devil's Own" with Harrison Ford and Brad Pitt (released March 1997) about an Irish freedom fighter coming to America, which reminded me of a local Irish performer from Arundel. I've followed Patrick Hutchinson for the past few years since I first met him at the Farmer's Market in Arundel. He was playing Irish Celtic Music, which intrigued me. French Canadian traditional music is closely related to Irish music, the energy is lively and exciting.

I love writing about local musicians and their stories, maybe because it's close to home. Patrick Hutchinson moved with his parents in 1978 to Arundel where his father was the minister for Grace Anglican Church. I had always assumed Patrick was from Montreal as he was deeply involved in the music scene there. Most musicians stay within their style of music, but not in Patrick's case. He was only 16 when he moved to Canada, so his musical influence ran along the lines of Billy Bragg, Elvis Costello, sort of New Wave, Punk music. His first ever recording was "Half Live," under the name Steve Biko. In the 80's Patrick was involved in the Ska/Reggae music scene. Ska is a Caribbean, Calypso Jazz fusion style of music, which originated in Jamaica during the 50's.

As Patrick was about to leave the UK in 1978, he stopped by a unique record store in London called Bonapart, then owned by Guy Melhuish, who is now one of the main pillars of the music scene in Arundel. Bonapart record stores eventually started importing and exporting records to Montreal, New York, and California.

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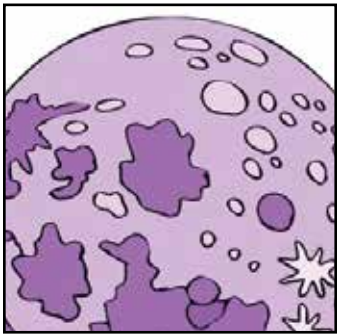
A family, friendly Laurentian ski tour of 48 km, 38 km, 22 km, 10 km and 1 km. Featuring a traveling exhibit from the Laurentian Ski Museum on Herman "Jackrabbit Smith-Johannsen's life and impact on skiing today.

Information and Registration: www.inscriptionenligne.ca/classique-jack-rabbit-classic/ email: skiclassiquejackrabbit@gmail.com

Due to the reputation surrounding Punk music, it was considered too radical for mainstream record companies to carry. Guy's record company rose to new heights to the point Guy was flying to North America three times a week. Discus records in Montreal started distributing his imported albums. Many years later he met his true love and became part of the music scene in Arundel.

As a musician Guy Melhuish is 'pretty darn good', but his stage presence is way over the top! It's what music is about, having fun! Guy was always involved in music one way or the other, but never played in front of anyone until Arundel. He started playing on the front deck of "Les P'tites Folies," which has since turned into the musical event of the summer.

More musicians coming up...



Zach Factor

The Green Man

Lys Chisholm & Marcus Nerenberg

Browsing through EcoDepo, a recycle center in Ville St. Pierre, one is surrounded by estate liquidation goods - dishes, shelving, desk chairs, trinkets and lamps all in great condition and destined for a new home rather than the dump. Spotted on a higher shelf sits a dusty green Santa decoration, wearing the classic long robe of Father Christmas, an open pack on his back, a book within and, a long hiking stick as if he had walked a distance.

Santa did not always wear a red coat nor give out toys. This was a change slipped in with the publication of *The Night Before Christmas* in 1837. It seemed Clement C. Moore tried to divorce the association of the Victorian Father Christmas from Moore's contrived image of the fat roly-poly little man. The original gaunt Father Christmas wore a green robe, yet similarly visited homes throughout England in honor of Bishop St. Nicholas- a Saint who liked to lift the depressed spirits of poor householders and especially deprived children at the dark time of solstice.

Our green robed Father Christmas was appropriated in "A Christmas Carol," by author Charles Dickens and was represented as the Ghost of Christmas Present. It was no accident that Dickens chose to model his jovial Spirit after the ancient Father Christmas. Hidden under the hooded robe were two children named Ignorance and Want to represent the Wealthy and the Poor. Dickens believed the greater evil of the two was Ignorance; he believed enlightenment of the affluent could affect the greatest change of minds and hearts. To this day, giving generously, volunteering and donating anonymously to charities or those less fortunate has been the outcome.

Father Christmas is always portrayed as an older man, like our modern Santa. Around his head lies a wreath of sacred mistletoe and he often carries evergreens. Mistletoe grows on ancient oak trees in the UK and was once used by Druid priests for healing. Its sacred use was lost with the extinction of the Celtic culture, but its presence still invokes connection and love.

The historic Celtic origins of Father Christmas come from the ancient honoring of The Green Man popular from the 12th and 13th centuries. His mysterious legends have come the world over - through Celtic regions of UK, France, Germany but earlier roots of his presence are found in more ancient lands like Iraq, Lebanon and Rome. The Green Man is a being who emerges from the burgeoning forests - he appears to be part man, part plant and is easier to see when the vines, branches and mistletoe from his nostrils outline his form in the Spring. He embodies The Wheel of the Year, conceived by Mother Earth each Winter Solstice with the rising Sun, gestated and birthed at the March Equinox, mated to the Divine Feminine each May Day as a Virile young and restless man, and then begins aging with the Autumn equinox. By December, he needs a walking stick and has a long white beard. On the last day of The Wheel, near December 20, he dies. Not long ago, we all gathered at this time to celebrate his rebirth for this meant that the Season of Winter could be managed and hopes for the thaw and return of Spring warmth assured as the daylight began to get longer.

Our deep connection to the land, our farms, and the cycle of the seasons are ever visible in today's extreme weather and the toll nature takes on human lives. The Church, out of respect for the force of Nature faced by the people, and not to compete, included sculptures of the Green Man in the corbels of its greatest cathedrals and even tiny churches. They can be found all over Europe, UK and even migrated to the halls of our very own Parliament buildings in Ottawa.

CC Moore's altering of Santa's coat colour seems a symbol for the gradual commercialism of a holiday as it hid its toxic environmental impact. Today, from Australia to Iceland, there is a call out to invite The Green Man to be our ambassador for the Global Environmental movement. The rebirth of understanding about our Planet, the cry to reduce, repair, reuse and recycle, is deserving of a symbol as compelling as The Green Man. He represents that powerful united voice to protect our farmers, our indigenous peoples, the displaced, our children and particularly, his Mother, our Earth.

The Green Man is coming home; let's welcome him! Hang some greens and give someone you love a big hug. Happy Holidays Zachians!



A corbel of The Green Man from the Senate chamber of Parliament Building, Ottawa, Canada. Photo Credit: <https://sencanada.ca/en/sencaplus/how-why/untangling-the-mystery-of-parliament-hill-s-green-man/>

John Leed classic illustration of The Ghost of Christmas Present; from the short story, A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens 1843. Photo credit: Wikipedia Commons



The Story Behind

Throwing Stones

Joseph Graham joseph@ballyhoo.ca

They'll stone you when you walk all alone - Bob Dylan

When my uncle Donald was training to become a Jesuit, he received a visit from his father, my grandfather. Alphonse Paré was born in Lachine but moved to Manitoba as a very young child. His father was a doctor, and his mother was sick with tuberculosis. The idea was to move to the countryside where his mother could take the rest cure in the cool, country air. My great-grandfather, Dr. Louis Paré, had been west twice before, once right out of med school when he was sent there to see to his younger brother Théophile, studying for the priesthood, who had fallen sick. The young doctor concluded that his brother needed a nurse to look after him. He found and hired Angélique Nolin, then left immediately to be in Matawa for his own wedding. Théophile recovered, changed his life, and married Angélique Nolin.

The doctor's second visit was the year my grandfather, their fifth child, was born, when Louis was called up with the 65th Militia in that extraordinary year 1885. He was asked to go because his militia superior had been begged to head the fight against smallpox. Doctor Paré and the militia took the train to Calgary where they met General Thomas Bland Strange and his other forces. They marched up to Edmonton, then followed the North Saskatchewan River to stand up to Big Bear, Mistahimaskwa, a Plains Cree chief. Both forces, General Strange's and the Cree, were careful about the safety of their men when they engaged at Frenchman's Butte in late May 1885. The battle ended in a draw.

When Dr. Paré returned to Lachine, he discovered that his wife, Josephine, was sick with tuberculosis. Dr. Paré was a modern man, an agnostic, who could have been comfortable in conversations today. He had likely heard of Hermann Brehmner's rest cure and determined to move Josephine to the clean air of the country. He applied to become a doctor with the NWMP and by 1888 moved to the Prairies with his wife and children. It was too late, though, and she soon died.

Dr. Paré sent two of his daughters back to aunts in Lachine. His eldest daughter and his two young sons became a part of his brother Theophile and Angélique Nolin's family. She was from a large, influential, and very Catholic Métis family. My grandfather grew up with her, learning Cree and Ojibwa. His friends were Indigenous and his deeply Catholic life there involved schooling, canoeing and horseback riding. He would have had little in common with his own modern father. It was the horseback riding that helped gain him acceptance at Royal Military College.

Most of the foregoing was not common knowledge in the family when my uncle received his father's visit at the Jesuit college. He was about to find out. An elderly Jesuit arrived and he and my grandfather began an exchange, moving from English to French to Ojibwa to Cree. Alphonse and the old Jesuit talked together for three hours. This incident was not shared immediately with the rest of the family, who did not know Alphonse spoke two Indigenous languages. Was he hiding his Indigenous connections? If so, he was just following social norms. After all, this was America, where people could reinvent themselves.

That story of the meeting was shared in my grandmother's memoir, published in 1984. We were all impressed, but times had changed. People had been fighting for respect for Indigenous peoples, languages, and cultures and they were getting through: Robbie Robertson, Buffy Sainte-Marie, Alanis Obomsawin, Thomson Highway – the list is long. The hiding of Indigeneity in one's family began to fade. In those early days, it took a certain amount of anger and self-possession to present yourself publicly as Indigenous. You were courting your own erasure. You were not putting yourself first; you were putting your beliefs and sense of justice first.

Buffy Sainte-Marie was one of those early protest singers and she was deadly serious. It cost her a lot and she delivered a lot. She was a musical prodigy and a brilliant songwriter, but she was also someone who was concerned for all of us, for our wellbeing. It came across. In 1968, invited to perform in the TV western *The Virginian*, she made a condition: that all Indian parts be played by Indians. A year later, she created the Cradleboard Teaching Project, using Indigenous methods to teach Indigenous children core subjects like science. She did this through the Nihewan Foundation for Native American Education, a foundation that she established. In her earlier days, 1963, she had written *The Universal Soldier*, which was withheld from the airwaves for two years, during the war in Vietnam. Later, she discovered that her albums were not always being delivered for sale at her concerts. She also protested that her music was being blacklisted because of her environmental and Indigenous rights messages.

After nine albums, she had a baby son and stopped producing for a while, but she appeared on *Sesame Street*. The children loved her. There, she was the first person to breastfeed on TV. In '78, she marched with Muhammad Ali to support Indigenous rights. In '82 she won an Oscar, and in '95 she was inducted into the Canadian Music Hall of Fame.

Over time, people became much more positive about Indigenous people generally, and we owe a lot of that to Buffy Sainte-Marie and those other fighters who strove to challenge unconsciously held values and prejudices and to raise positive perceptions of the Indigenous place in society. Now that they have succeeded in achieving these culture-changing goals, some people have the gall to feel used by her, to say that they have been misled, complaining that she pretended to be an Indian to advance her career. Buffy Sainte-Marie was stoned for walking all alone, and now she is being stoned for being Buffy Sainte-Marie.





Garden Talk

Gift ideas for avid gardeners

June Angus - Main Street

As the holidays approach, finding the perfect gift for friends or loved ones who are dedicated gardeners can be a challenge. But there are lots of options. Many cost very little or almost nothing at all, which is important in this time of tight family budgets.

For example, create a “gift certificate” offering free labor to help around the garden in spring or throughout the season. This is especially appreciated if your gardener friend is aging and needs more help. Or a parent is simply overwhelmed by caring for young children, working full-time and trying to maintain a garden. The recipient of this gift can negotiate with you regarding the best time to help and what will need to be done.

If you have plant cuttings or have collected seeds from your own garden, you can turn these into gifts too. Cuttings can be planted up in a recycled pot from your collection. Clay pots are great for this purpose as they can be custom decorated and then reused by the recipient when the young plant outgrows the pot. I have received several gifts like this where the decorated pot features paintings and even handprints from grandchildren.

Home made wreaths using a few evergreen branches from your garden along with some pinecones, ribbon and a few other spare Christmas ornaments, is another option for a low cost, thoughtful gift.

If you have a bigger budget, consider a gift related to future landscaping. Gift certificates from local garden centres for trees, shrubs and perennials to plant next spring along with the offer to help with the planting will be appreciated. Many large garden centres are open most of the year and usually have other great gift ideas and unique items including tools and accessories such as gloves... something a gardener always needs, as they do tend to wear out.

Seed ordering websites also offer gift certificates that can be used for stocking up on seeds come the New Year. This is ideal for anyone who wants to jump start their growing season indoors by starting seeds this winter or early next spring.

Some people just don’t want “things” as a gift. They are much happier with an experience and the companionship of a friend to share that with. An excursion to the Montreal Botanical gardens can take place year round. While you can still stroll the grounds in winter, a walk through the display greenhouses are a great way to get that tropical feel without the expense of flying south.

Offering an outdoor garden visit during next year’s growing season is another great way to plan a future outing. Consider a day trip to Ottawa in May to view the massive displays of tulips. Closer to home prepare to book a garden tour at Le Jardins du François in Saint-Sauveur. This private garden is open to the public two days a week throughout June, July and August. The price of admission becomes a 100% donation to “La Société Alzheimer Laurentides.” Having done this visit several times in recent years, I can assure you it makes a great family outing while contributing to a very worthwhile cause.

Consider a donation to other organizations that have mandates to preserve nature and the environment. These can be made in the name of your friend or family member too. The bonus for you is an income tax receipt.

Of course gardening books and specialized gardening apps are another option, but these need to be tailored to the needs and interests of the gardener in question and can be the subject of a whole other column.

Wishing you all the best this holiday season and a healthy happy New Year!



Word Play

A toast to the holiday season

Louise Bloom - louisebloom@me.com

As I ponder the universal nature of the approaching festive season, I recall a phrase from childhood that signified for me the wonders of December: “Peace on earth, goodwill towards men.” As a child, I believed the fundamental opposition to war that lay at the heart of Christianity, was indeed a universal principle.

I thought it could be beneficial to offer a toast to the various holiday traditions that occur worldwide in December. While revealing the abundance of celebration, we would also inform the understanding that all humanity suffers and celebrates equally.

Have you ever wondered where the word ‘toast’ originated, the etymology? I am not speaking about the hot and crispy bread that welcomes butter unconditionally. I refer to the other ‘toast’.

The Collins dictionary tells us that when: you drink a toast to someone or something, with some wine or another alcoholic drink, as a symbolic gesture, showing your appreciation of them or to wish them success.

The practice of ‘drinking’ a toast goes back to the late 17th century and originated in naming a lady to whose health the company was requested to drink. The idea was that the lady’s name flavored the drink (like the pieces of spiced toast that historically were placed in drinks such as wine), thus referring to the ritual as a toast. In the late 17th century, it became popular to add a stale crouton or small piece of scorched toast to your wine. Not only was it known to improve the quality of poor wine, it could also improve the quality of bad bread. It became a kind of party snack and popular practice at celebrations.

Whether with wine or toast, I thought to offer a tribute to some of the traditions that have emerged over the centuries, showing that December has been forever a holy time.

In the second century BC, during a warlike incident, the Jewish temple was destroyed. During the restoration, the quantity of oil used to light the lamp was enough for but one day. Miraculously, it lasted 8 days, providing enough light to finish the work. Chanukah most usually falls in the weeks before, close to x-mas and, represents a period of bringing light into the darkness, a prayer, asking that the light of wisdom and understanding illuminate the essence of peaceful existence.

The x-mas tree tradition began in 17th century Germany, where families set up a paradise tree in their homes on December 24, the religious feast day of Adam and Eve, the very first humans. This tradition emerged from the “sacred trees” of Northern European mythology such as Yggdrasil, the giant ash tree at the center of the Norse cosmos that holds all the worlds in its roots and branches. In Christianity, the Christmas tree is symbolic of the birth and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The tree’s branches and shrubs are viewed as an emblem of immortality.

A Christmas tradition in Iraq, and also in Syria, involves a bonfire of dried thorny branches. The fire is lit after children complete a recitation of the nativity story, which is read by candlelight from the Book of Psalms. The candles are then used to light the thorns. The thorns represent those aspects of life that are difficult, or thorny, destroyed by the announcement of the birth of the holy child, the Prince of Peace.

Ancient Chinese, Hebrews, and Egyptians viewed evergreens as symbols of eternal life. European pagans "decked the halls" with evergreen branches to bring in life during the dark days of winter.

As we acknowledge these themes of peace, life and immortality, I would suggest that ‘Peace on earth, and goodwill towards men’, might express among our holiday wishes, an appropriate toast at a time in our lives when peace and goodwill could use a boost!

Wishing happy holidays to all, “and to all a peaceful night”.

Louise Bloom is a Visual Artist interested in the power of narrative through image or written word, to transform consciousness and awaken us to the source of well-being.



Marie-Hélène

Gaudreau

MP for Laurentides–Labelle

MH.Gaudreau@parl.gc.ca mh.gaudreau.quebec

As the year 2023 comes to its end, let's take the time to reunite with the people we care about, and spend wonderful times with those around us.

I wish you all a year 2024 that lives up to your hopes.

Warmly,

Marie-Hélène

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Sainte-Agathe-des-Monts (Québec) J8C 2J4
819 326-4724

Mont-Laurier's office

789, rue de la Madone
Mont-Laurier (Québec) J9L 1T3
819 440-3091



Obituaries

RUTH “RUTHIE” CLAIRE ALLEN 1935-2023

Peacefully in Ottawa, on Wednesday, November 22, 2023 in her 89th year. Predeceased by her husband, John, son Greg (the late Nancy), her parents, and brother. Sister of Beverly McDonald, dear mother and mother-in-law of Scott (Lynn) and Kirk (Natalie). Cherished grandmother of Jessica (Adam), Meagan (Luc), Brett (Mel), Jeremy (Jenna), Peter, and Lucas (Megan) and step granddaughters, Kayla (Thierry) and Alana (Ashley). Dear great grandmother of Cohen, Avery, Emma, Nico, Charlotte Ruth, Kingston, Carter, Chase, and Hannah.

A remarkable woman, Mom was our family’s chief cook and bottle-washer. A friend and cousin to so many, she was a craft-loving grandmother, tasteful decorator, wonderful home chef, gracious hostess, good neighbour, amateur gardener, superb cottage keeper of the McDonald family homestead at Lake Barron, Quebec, classy dresser, quick moving, energetic and a tad particular.

A private family service to be held later. Donations may be made to the charity of your choice.



The other side of getting old Expectations

Florian Gaudreau

As it turns out, we may not be as grumpy as we’re made out to be. In fact, we baby boomers would probably be considered more agreeable. Scientists theorize that the reason behind this is because we are more in control of our emotions. That could be very true, but I believe after a lifetime of struggles, stress, and hardships, there's not much left to get your shorts in a knot about.

The other part of getting older is that according to studies, women over the age of seventy have sex much less often, but when they do, it counts! Scientists found that sexual satisfaction ranked higher among this age group. Some studies I wouldn't mind being a part of.

There may still be hope for those of us Septuagenarians who have suffered from migraines throughout our lifetime. According to a study published by the National Library of Medicine “The 50+ age group showed trends suggesting a "lesser acute migraine attack." These findings support the concept of lessening features of migraine over time resulting in a lower prevalence of migraine in older patients. You can read the entire study at <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16866720/>.

With age comes the experience of dealing with life's ups & downs. We seem to be happier than our 40-year-old counter parts that deal with the same hardships as we did. Perhaps that means our expectations are different. It's hard to say who gets what out of life; it all comes from your own perspective. Aside from the physical part of aging, I don't think I'd rather be in any different place than where I am right now. I appreciate the time that I have and value those who are in my life. I've gotten my money's worth out of my life and I still do.

I have no idea what's going to happen tomorrow. George Elliot wrote, "It's never too late to be what you might have become."

"Remembrance, like a candle, burns brightest at Christmastime." — Charles Dickens

Peace on Earth

MONA WOOD (NEE HYDE) 1930- 2023

It is with heavy hearts that we announce the peaceful passing of our mother on November 11, 2023 (Remembrance Day) at the age of 93 years young.

Beloved wife of the late Carman Wood to whom she was married for 65 years. Dear mother of Gary, Ronald (Helene), Darlene (Steven) and Debbie (David). Cherished grandmother of Christopher, Chloe, Dylan, and Faith. She is survived by her brother Orval Hyde, her Goddaughter Diane and many nieces, nephews, and dear friends

Our mother spent many years volunteering to help different causes in Morin Heights...including the Children's Breakfast Program, Canada Day celebrations, the Strawberry Social and also being a Morin Heights Municipal Councillor for many years. (2001-2017)

Sincere thanks to her many caregivers and the CLSC, but most

of all to the wonderful staff at La Traversee in Mont Tremblant who made our mother's final days peaceful, in a serene and loving environment.

Donations in our mother's memory would be gratefully accepted by:

- La Traversée in Mont Tremblant (fondationlatraversee.com)
- The Royal Canadian Legion Branch 171 in Morin Heights.



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Saving Tamaracouta Part 2

Rick Moffat

Robert Spencer indulges his guilty pleasure. It doesn't feel criminal. The lake has that powerful a mystique. Trespassing on Boy Scouts land leads to a totally unexpected encounter. Camp Tamaracouta will then slowly reveal vital clues for its own salvation.

One of 9 kids raised by a single mother “below the tracks” in NDG, Spencer longed to retire on what some call “The Jewel of the Nile” in a global real estate empire built in the name of Lord Baden-Powell. His “Wow moment” came at age 5, when he first laid eyes on the sparkling lake. He joined Scouts solely to win access as a camper. By 14 he was on staff, earning admittance through a secretive ceremony into the Knights of Tamara (now numbering in the thousands). Their initials are carved into cairns adorning the Mille-Isles property. He proudly showed his bride on their honeymoon.



Spencer happens upon someone uprooting phragmites. The invasive species has a foothold in the camp, now closed for 5 years despite having turned a profit. The ecological Pied Piper of Tamaracouta is hard at work restoring nature's balance.

Rob is gobsmacked. He recognizes Charlie MacLeod, also a former camper turned staffer from the 1960's & '70's. He is digging in the dirt at the request of Scouts Inc., the holding company, which technically owns the idyllic property.

MacLeod is president of Quebec's Coalition Verte/Green Coalition. He recruits Spencer instantly into “Les Partenaires du lac Tamaracouta et ses environs”, a network of concerned Laurentian residents advising local politicians and trying to kickstart cooperation with Scouts Canada.

“There's political and community support here for the taking by Scouts,” says MacLeod, whose decades of environmental studies and proposals (worth as much as \$100,000) have been shelved, ignored or tossed by Scouts Canada.

While Spencer and MacLeod find inspiration along the pristine hiking trails, other Partenaires have discovered a priceless paper trail. It may lead back to the greenest possible future for the once vibrant camp, and around any sale threatening youth access or the environment.

A plaque has been found on the grounds documenting a 2012 Scouts pledge (celebrating the previous hundred years) to “providing campers with unforgettable outdoor experiences at Tamaracouta Scout Reserve for the next 100 years.”

That lends moral weight to restoring the camp or creating a conservation area with access for the Laurentian community. Longtime Scouters from Montreal to Morin Heights wonder if that could have any legal weight.

Environmental lawyer Karine Peloffy and her fellow Partenaire Daphne Phillips are taking no chances. They have uncovered a treasure trove of deeds, documents and archival material to craft a legal opinion Scouts Canada may need to take seriously. It traces land deals and donations made over the past 100 years with a clear mandate: serve the youth of Quebec.

Peloffy is former executive-director of the Quebec Centre for Environmental Law and president of Les Partenaires. Legal friends and foes say, “she's brilliant...a force of nature Scouts will want to cooperate with, not challenge.”

Scouts Canada national office seemed to ignore Les Partenaires' letter of concern accompanying the legal opinion for almost 2 years, but Main Street has learned the new CEO Liam Burns has finally responded.

Les Partenaires and Coalition Verte had also consulted on a bid to protect the immense acreage and Heritage buildings on site, bring septic systems up to improved environmental codes, and shared access. This too has been rejected by the previous administration.

Perhaps Burns is sensing Tamaracouta's mystique and for the first time in years there can be meaningful discussion. And optimism.

Interested in protecting Lake Tamaracouta? Please email: greencoalitionverte@yahoo.ca

Mini Santa Sleigh Ornament

Draw eyes on the face of a small wooden peg doll with a fine-tip black marker. Wrap the body of the doll in red felt; holding it in place with hot glue. Create a small hat from red felt, gluing it to the doll's head with hot glue. Attach a mini pom pom to the hat. Cover a mini wooden cube in green felt, holding it in place with hold glue. Tie a ribbon around the present. Drill small holes on either end of half of a walnut shell. Thread a piece of thin twine through each hole, securing it on the inside of the shell with hot glue. Knot the twine at the top for hanging. Use hot glue to secure Santa and the present in the shell.





Stéphane Lauzon
Federal M.P.
Argenteuil-La Petite-Nation

Best Wishes for the Holidays



Stephane.lauzon@parl.gc.ca



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Real Wine for Real People

Pairing the holiday dinner with wine

April Sirois – Sommelier - ISG

It's that time of the year again, time to gather and celebrate with family and friends and share a special meal and glass of wine to mark the occasion. At my house, the wine is almost as important as the meal so we debate a lot about what the best wines for the different courses will be. Below you will find what we both agreed on as the winners, for this year anyway.

What's the best wine to pair with canapés?

Many people will start their Christmas meal with canapés. Honestly, for me, this is the best part of the meal. My 'go to' wine with canapés is Champagne, but for anyone who doesn't share my love of the bubbles, or who may be saving them for New Year's Eve, top-class, off-dry German Rieslings are versatile and go very well with cheese, salami and most other canapés. Plus, these wines tend to be only 8.5-9% abv, so you won't have to worry about making it through to Christmas dinner without slurring your words. Mosel (Germany) is my go-to Riesling region for the very best examples of a classic German Riesling.

The best wine for dinner

Let's move on to the main event, assuming that you are going to be having a classic roast turkey dinner. This calls for a classic Burgundy. Poultry needs something a bit lighter, less tannic and more delicate than a big bold red. In general, red Burgundy wines go really well with turkey because they are not too structured or tannic. Look for something with a lovely red-fruit flavour profile but delicate and not too structured so it won't overpower the meal. If dinner were a rib roast or Beef Wellington instead of the classic turkey, I would go for a Valpolicella Ripasso. It is the perfect combination of the rich flavours of an Amarone with the drinkability of a Valpolicella. It's big enough to stand up to the hearty meat but still elegant and approachable. It's one of those wines you love to drink when it's dark and cold outside.

If you're having a vegetarian or vegan dish, you're going to have more sweetness from the vegetables, so I would go with a New World Pinot Noir – for example, Pinot Noir from Washington. These tend to have a bit more weight and concentrated fruit flavours that mirror the vegetables nicely.

The best wine for dessert

For dessert, most of us go for pies, fruitcake, or something chocolate. Madeira works really well with all of these sweet, rich desserts; a single harvest Madeira is recommended. It's not crazy expensive and it's sweet and caramelly, but it also has a nice acidity that will work well with most rich decadent type desserts. On that note, I would like to take this opportunity to wish all my wine loving readers the very best for this Holiday season and a New Year filled with Joy and abundant blessings. All the best in 2024.

Cheers!

~ Wine in, truth out - Charles Dickens



I'm Just Saying

Time waits for no one

Ron Golfman - Main Street

Over the last few years I was dealt a couple of bad hands. In a flash, I was diagnosed with a brain tumor the size of a pool ball that required immediate surgery. After the initial shock value, when asked by my doctors how I was digesting this dramatic situation, I could not help but go to my favorite formula, humor. I remarked to my surgeon that a golf ball would have been more apropos than a pool ball and he laughed, suggesting my attitude left him feeling optimistic.



After months of radiation, chemo and regular MRIs, I managed to heal, was permitted to travel, drive my car, play baseball and, I had a sense that I was back in the driver's seat with some direction and control. As we approached Christmas that year, I was asked what I was hoping for the holidays. I answered that all I wanted was to be present with my remarkable son, to play with his daughter, and now my second beautiful granddaughter, and to be able to walk my wonderful daughter down the aisle at her wedding. Over the last 2 years, I have been granted all of these wishes and more.

Last month I was summoned to the hospital only to learn that a new and more dangerous tumor has appeared and is growing at a rapid pace. Another inevitable surgery is drawing near. My oncologist broke the news, which shook me, having thought I had beaten the clock two years ago. When asked by my doctor how I felt, I simply stated that I was quite pleased that we had turned the clocks back recently, fully aware that it's not how it works but I needed to grin. While I may feel less in the driver's seat than before, it occurs to me that no matter the position I can always have a map in my mind. With a positive attitude, motivation and humor - coupled with amazing family and extraordinary friends who relentlessly position themselves as my scaffolding - I often use the word 'next' in anticipation, not in trepidation, repeating to myself 'I've got this!'

As I have had the decades-long privilege of being able to share with you all via this format, I cite this the above not to be maudlin, but to serve as a reminder of how true it is that we cannot control time and that we should never take it for granted. While it never occurred to me to go skydiving or take other risks in the attempt to seize the day, it has pushed me to never sit idly watching life go by. Sharing with you all has been a true gift and I thank you for your readership, along with Sue, Jack Burger and Neil Zach for the opportunity.

If you are blessed enough to sit around the table with those dearest to you, appreciate every moment and do all that you can to bring a smile to one another's face. As Van Morrison sang in my favorite song- and I'm just saying - 'oh, let your laughter fill the room!'

See you soon!

Keep Your Pets Safe Over The Holidays

From plants to decorations, the holidays present some safety challenges for our pets so it is best to be cautious to prevent any misfortunes. Many holiday plants are toxic to pets so choose wisely; fragile tree decorations are a temptation but break easily; tinsel may be swallowed and visitors may leave doors open allowing pets to escape the unfamiliar noise and festivities. Wishing you and your pets a safe and Happy Holiday.





Merry holidays!

In these festive times, let us fill our hearts with warmth with the most essential things like a smile, time spent with someone dear or simply by watching snowflakes dance around us.

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