

Bill Rea ? Christmas is coming

The signs are all around us, and they've been getting more and more prominent.

Just last Monday, I was in one of the local grocery stores, and guess what I heard playing on the music system ? Christmas music. I mentioned that to my wife when I got home, and she told me she had had a similar experience. And then she topped it by telling me she had switched her clock radio to that station she sets it to this time of year because it plays nothing but Christmas music. Guess what I'm going to be hearing around the house when there's nothing good on TV. I was able to out top her, however, by mentioning I had seen at least one house within walking distance of my Bolton office that is already lit up for the Holidays. There are more to come.

There have been other signs.

I had to spend part of last Sunday afternoon in the office. When I got home, I found Beth had been busy digging out Christmas decorations and setting them up throughout the house. She didn't get them all out. There's no point in rushing into things. Actually, we had spend part of the previous days trolling around various shopping areas, not exactly Christmas shopping, but looking for ideas. It was tiring, but rather fruitful, at least in terms of what the mission was supposed to accomplish. We made a few purchases, came up with a couple of useful ideas and Beth dropped a few hints (notice I didn't call them subtle hints). And there are even a couple of local businesses that have their Holiday decorations up. So the signs are there, and they're becoming more common. Christmas time is upon us. And we've seen next to no snow in these parts. And despite the warm weather we've been enjoying lately, I think we can all count on seeing a decent supply of the white stuff before too long. I personally hate it, but I know there are a lot of skiing and snowshoe enthusiasts out there. They have to have their fun too.

The coming Holiday season means much to many of us.

To some, it's obviously a time for celebrating, and many of us have different things to celebrate this time of years, depending on factors like our individual faith, upbringing, etc.

It also marks the passage of time, as we realize that another year is coming to an end. That usually means some reflection is in order. As one gets older, I think one ponders a bit as one year draws to a close and another commences, probably with a realization that each of us has only a finite number of years in this life. So we might wonder what has been accomplished over the last several months, and what is left to be done.

I seem to wonder every year at around this time about where the year has gone, and how it could have gone by so fast. It just doesn't seem that long ago that Beth and I were putting the finishing touches on the family Christmas gatherings we were hosting. Yet almost a year has gone by now, with both of us getting through the demands at home and work, getting some time in for a bit of travel, dealing with family issues including birthdays and the like. We've also had to deal with deaths on both sides of the family. And through it all, we've made it through the good times and dealt with the difficult situations like winter storms and income tax. And through it all, Americans were able to elect themselves a new president.

But for many of us, myself included, it's mainly a very busy time of year. Christmas shopping is a major matter that has to be addressed, and this year is going to be a lot harder than last year. I had almost all of my 2015 Christmas shopping done by the end of July. Just about everyone on my list (including Beth) received PanAm Games memorabilia, purchased at the venue in Palgrave. I got a few puzzled looks from people who seemed to be wondering why I was buying so many Patchi dolls.

?Christmas shopping,? I said to one of them, and many of the puzzled looks turned to expressions of consternation, as if the words ?Why didn't I think of that? were going through their heads.

And all the PanAm stuff went over very well.

No matter, I have some of my shopping done, and in that regard, I suspect I'm quite a bit further along than many of you.

There are a lot of other matters that will have to be addressed in the next month or so, such as family gatherings, etc. They will all play out, although I haven't yet been told how.

There are the other traditional trappings of this time of year.

As I stated above, I have already seen one house decorated for the season. There are going to be a lot more. When Beth and I lived in the city, we used to take walks at night in our neighbourhood, admiring the effort that went into a lot of these displays. We can still find some neighbourhoods to stroll through.

A lot of things are going to be happening around work.

We're already into the annual crafts shows and bazaars. I've been to several already, and there are a lot more coming. I also never underestimate the Christmas shopping possibilities at them. The Santa Claus Parades in town are a little more than a week away. I

plan to run after them, even at my advanced age. As well, trees are going to be lit in various communities in town, accompanied by appropriate celebrations.

There are other events planned.

And there are a whole bunch of TV specials that will be coming on the tube. I'm sure I'll be seeing *Miracle on 34th Street* in the weeks to come, almost certainly both versions (1947 and 1994). I know, because we have the CDs for both, if we happen to miss the traditional broadcasts, which I'm pretty sure we won't. We'll also get to see *Charlie Brown* try to get through the season and the Grinch essentially make a fool of himself.

And on a more serious note, we'll probably get to see Ralphie get the Red Ryder Carbine Action 200-shot Range Model air rifle with a compass in the stock that he wants so much, while Chevy Chase frets over his Christmas bonus.

Of course, there will be the many versions of the story of Ebenezer Scrooge. They seem to come up with new ones every couple of years, so we're probably due for something. No matter, I will still hold that the 1951 version with Alastair Sim nailed it, and will never be bested.

So the season is upon us, with all the involved pressures and preparations. It's coming whether we're ready or not, and we'll somehow get through it all. At least I know I will

