

Season's Greetings



THE
RECORD
Supplement
December 2010

Wine route in winter adds possibilities

For a unique holiday experience and special gift purchase, visit the Christmas Market on the Eastern Township's Wine Route.

What started off as a seasonal artisans' market at L'Orpailleur vineyard near Dunham in the Eastern Townships has grown to include five other wineries, an orchard, a tree plantation and speciality stores, galleries and restaurants in Dunham, Sutton and Lac Brome and — to add a big bow on top — there's Knowlton's Festival of Lights, Sutton's annual Country Christmas celebrations, Mount Sutton's 50th anniversary celebrations, musical performances, art shows, curling, skiing, skating and weekend hotel specials.

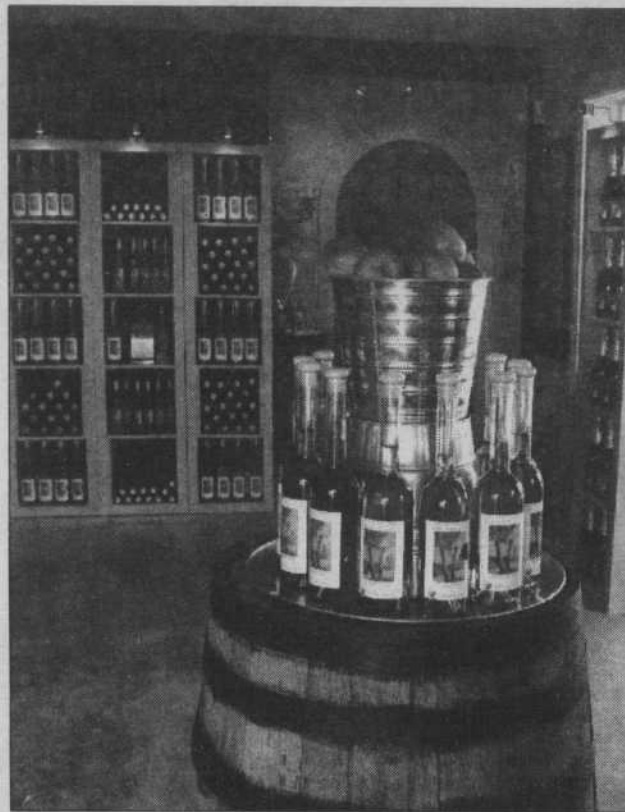
The Wine Route, most heavily traveled from May to October has extended through winter for locals and visitors alike. Each year the Christmas Market grows bigger and does better.

Although the main thrust of the market is to attract visitors from outside the immediate region, offering a peaceful, fun-filled way to prepare for Christmas without parking hassles and big crowds, locals are also sure to enjoy taking advantage of the specials and ambiance.

Of the 12 vineyards on the wine route, six will remain open to visitors during the holidays — Domaine des Côtes d'Ardoise, Les Trois Clochers, L'Orpailleur, and Les Blancs Coteaux, has joined the group, adding even more variety.

In addition to a range of wine selections, shoppers can choose from a variety of handcrafted gifts, including jewelry, toys, textiles, pottery, Christmas decorations, hand made calendars, recycled objects, cards, candles and sculptures, at prices ranging from \$10 to \$200.

The Christmas Market on the Wine Route section at



Award-winning Townships wines are a hit on any Christmas list

www.brome-missisquoi.ca is a comprehensive guide to all that's happening this season in the region. The listing includes all participating establishments and their specialities in Dunham, Sutton and Lac Brome, hotels

and restaurants, outdoor sports activities, musical and theatre performances, church concerts and worship services.

Vignoble Les Pervenches Farnham: On reservation only.

Vignoble Domaine de l'Ardennais: Stanbridge East Every day from 10 am to 5 pm

Domaine du Ridge, Saint-Armand: Monday to Thursday from 10 am to 5 pm.

Vignoble de l'Orpailleur Dunham Every day from 9 am to 5 pm

Vignoble Gagliano: Dunham Every day from 10 am to 6 pm

Domaine des Côtes d'Ardoise: Dunham November - every day from 10 am to 6 pm December - Monday to Friday from 11:30 am to 5:30 pm December - Saturday and Sunday from 10 am to 5 pm

Vignoble les Trois Clochers: Dunham, Saturday and Sunday from 10 am to 5 pm

Val Caudalies, vignoble et cidrerie: Dunham, November - Wednesday to Sunday from 10 am to 6 pm

December - Saturday and Sunday from 10 am to 5 pm

Vignoble Les Diurnes: Cowansville, On reservation only

Vignoble de la Bauge: Brigham, Saturday and Sunday from 10 am to 4 pm

Domaine Vitis: Brigham, Wednesday to Sunday from 10 am to 5 pm

Vignoble La Mission: Brigham, Every day from 10 am to 6 pm

Vignoble Domaine Bresee: Sutton, November - Wednesday to Sunday from 10 am to 6 pm

Domaine Les Brom:e Lac-Brom,e Saturday and Sunday from 11 am to 6 pm Monday to Friday by appointment only.



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17. Don't need to be serviced by a dealer.
16. Don't need spare parts.
15. Easier to wrap than a football.
14. Don't bite, scratch or kick.
13. Don't need watering or fertilizing.
12. Don't go out of style.
11. Don't irritate your allergies.
10. Look good in any décor.
9. Don't get eaten right away.
8. Don't need gas.
7. Don't need polishing.
6. Easier to carry than a coffee maker.
5. Don't fall apart when dropped.
4. No refrigeration necessary.
3. Can never be played too loud.
2. If the power goes out, they still work.
1. And best of all, can be shared by many!

Season's Greetings!

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KNOWLEDGE AND KNOW-HOW.

58086

Annual wreath-making helps maintain heritage school house

By CLAUDIA VILLEMAIRE
RICHMOND -

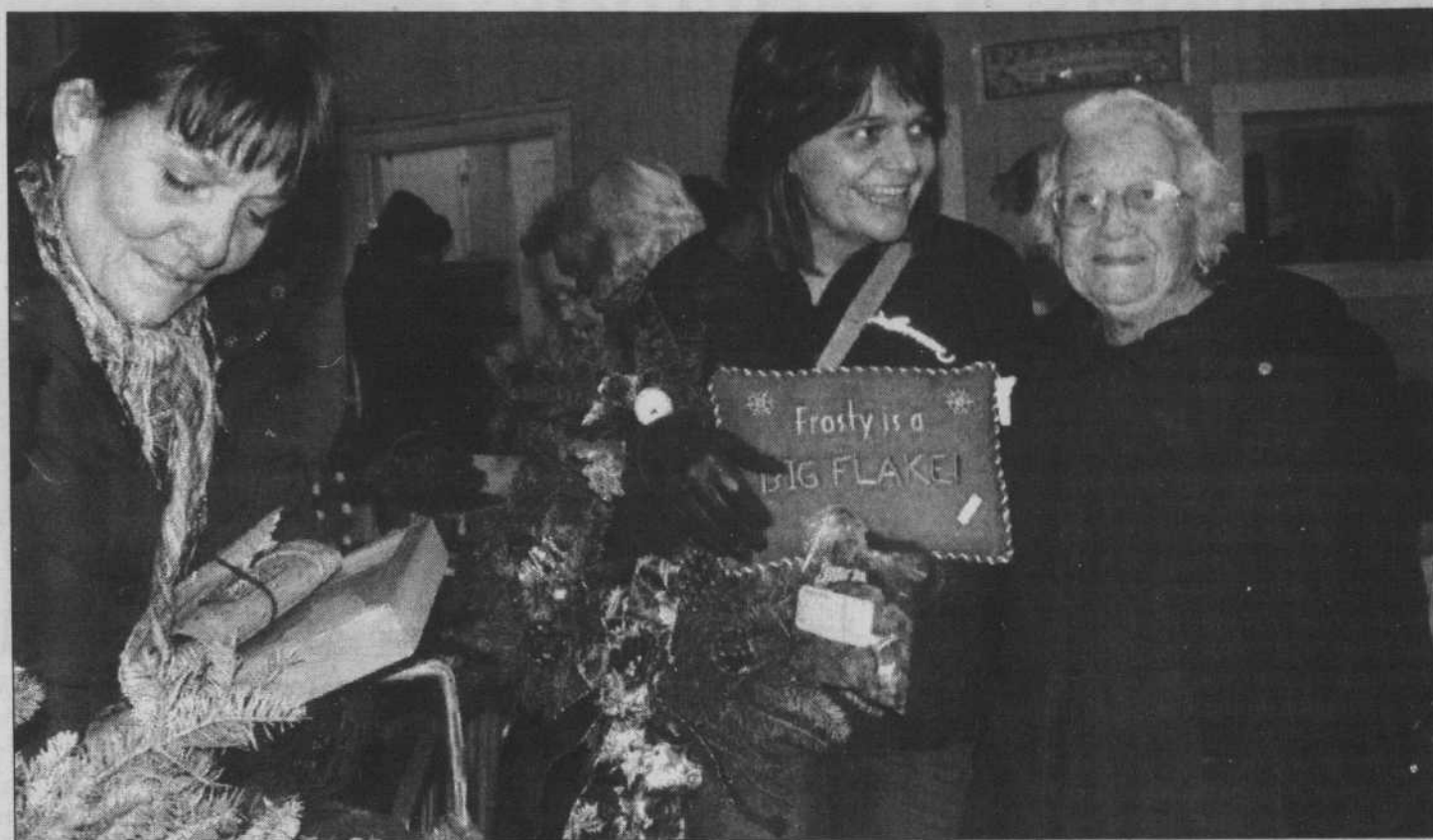
Everyone knows. The first snowflakes, crisp air and frosty mornings are the first sign. Those ladies of the Richmond Hill Women's institute will be hard at work in the historical Healy school house, binding, tying, gluing fresh spruce and balsam sprigs, fashioning Christmas wreaths and smaller decorations. It's a tradition begun six years ago, the final activity that will raise funds for insurance and maintenance of this one-room school house.

The building sits square and solid, unchanged except for fresh paint and minor repairs for over half a century. The interior, with walls finished in tongue and groove narrow boards, the hardwood floors and large windows that open onto shady woods on two sides, Healy School House is a well-known landmark on the corner of Healy and Lockwood roads, just a mile or so from the centre of town here.

Since 1940, the Richmond hill Women's Institute have held sway here, regular meetings, social afternoons and in the early years, dances, receptions, card parties and almost any excuse for a social gathering would draw folks from near and far, many of them former students in this one-room school house. But, time and tide wait for no one and these ladies, now just four strong, whose combined ages would add up to well over a century and a half, are worried. "I just don't know how much longer we can keep this up," Edna Smith, well past the 50-year mark, muses. "There are only four of us, active members that is, and it's getting to be quite a challenge for us girls," Smith says, a rather sad smile apologizing for the inevitable. "This could very well be our last Christmas wreath sale," she adds.

"We have owned the school house since 1940 and tried to keep it in good repair. We're very attached to this historical site. There aren't too many one-room school houses left for folks to visit."

But no one was talking much about the future the first weekend in December as they admired the ladies' handiwork. Christmas had arrived at the Healy School House. Decorated wreaths were hung around the room, tables of smaller



CLAUDIA VILLEMAIRE

Sarah Oakley and her sister Mary Ripley stop in to admire and purchase Christmas wreaths made by the Richmond Hill Women's Institute, where membership has dwindled to four active members.

decorations tempted buyers and visitors were, as usually, warmly greeted like old friends.

"It was a great sale and we did very well," Smith was proud to say later. "No, we didn't get quite enough for our budget, but we'll be okay I think," she added. "Many thanks to the folks who come back year after year and support us."

We stepped through the narrow door, leaving behind a bit of history. But wait, was that the echo of a school bell or the happy sound of children learning their

ABCs. Or maybe the thump of square dancers' feet on the hardwood floor.

Healy School House, standing much the same for over a century stirs the imagination, drawing memories and pictures of its past to all who walk through the entry door or enjoy the shady lawns where school children enjoyed their recess, during summer. The members of the

Richmond Hill Women's institute will continue to be the guardians of this bit of Eastern Townships history as long as they can. Then it will be up to someone else 'like-minded'.

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Annual Christmas concerts at Uplands

The Uplands Musical Society will offer two Christmas concerts at Uplands on Dec. 17 and Dec. 18 at 8 p.m. This year's program includes a wide variety of Christmas music in many different styles and languages as well as readings. The choir will be singing in English, French, German, Spanish, Latin, Russian and Igbo! Along with more unusual music there will also be old favorites, the usual humorous selections and the ever popular Twelve days of Christmas. As always, there will be sing-along Christmas carols and refreshments including Dinah's famous mulled wine. Admission is free but there will be a basket for donations to support Upland's student concerts.

The choir, under the direction of Cheryl Stroud includes Chantal Tourigny, Cécile l'Écuyer, Joy Chandler, Diane Prah, Nathalie Langlois, Daniel Miller, Richard Fournier, Philippe Plamondon, Frazer Adams, David Dutton and Regean Tanguay. Daniella Bernstein will be at the piano.

For reservations, call Uplands at 819 564 0409. Seating is limited so please reserve early! For more information or to make a reservation, please call 819-564-0409

A FAMILY'S GIFT TO SUTTON



Mount Sutton tells the tale of a remarkable family that was, and continues to be, a driving force in the development of an entire region of Quebec.

The Boulanger family moved to Sutton in 1945. During the winter of 1946, the young Boulangers began their love affair with the sport of downhill skiing.

Boulanger decided to operate the mountain at Sutton. Around this time, Réal Boulanger presented his father with an idea he had been cooking up with his brothers and friends: to open a ski centre at Sutton mountain. The four Boulanger brothers, Réal, Robert, Benoît and Hercule, began surveying, studying, marking out and clearing the trails. From that moment on, Réal's visionary skills would prove to be a vital asset: he wanted a unique mountain, that respected the environment so he decided to leave trees on the trails so people could enjoy skiing under a canopy of branches.

After considerable effort Boulangers opened the ski station on Dec. 17, 1960. Four inches of snow had fallen the day before, to the delight of everyone involved, so the opening took place under a blanket of white!

Mont Sutton remains a family operation after half a century and several family members continue to work there.

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Season's Greetings!

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Just a few of the many special church services

CAROLS AND READINGS

If you are looking forward to Christmas! What better way than joining us in our 31st annual Festival of Lessons with Carols in St. George's Anglican Church, Georgeville, on Sunday, December 19 at 4 p.m. with the Georgeville Occasional Choir and the Joyfulle Noyse Quiristers directed by Sarah Hoblyn and accompanied by Maryse Simard.

The Lessons, with a strong Advent theme are read by people representing various aspects of the life in our village. Music is from the 15th to the 21st centuries with a traditional pageant and Advent candle lighting ceremony.

Christmas Eve Family Service of Holy Communion will be on December 24 at 4 p.m.

ECUMENICAL CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

St. Luke's Anglican Church, 120 des Pins (Pine St.) will present their 6th Annual Bilingual Candle Light Service on Saturday, December 18 at 4 p.m. This ecumenical service will consist of Christmas Carols and Readings reflecting on the preparation of our hearts for the birth of Jesus Christ. An invitation is extended to the citizens of Magog and region to attend. Children are welcome.

HATLEY CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

The Wardens of the St. James' Church would like to invite each and everyone of you to come to our little white church on the Commons in Hatley for our Christmas Eve Service.

Rev. Canon Curtis Patterson will conduct this service on December 24, at 9:00 p.m. Mrs. E. Whipple will be our organist.

CANDLELIGHT SERVICE IN DERBY LINE

First Universalist Parish of Derby Line warmly invites one and all to a Candlelight Christmas Service on Sunday, December 19, at 4 p.m.

Celebrate a traditional Unitarian Universalist Christmas service with readings, carols and many guest musicians and singers including Nick Page, Steve Finner and members of the St. Johnsbury Unitarian Universalist choir, the Sacred Harp Singers, and tenor Rene Veillette. The service will be followed by a potluck, provided by members and friends. We look forward to seeing you there!

In the spirit of the season, we are accepting donations of mittens and hats for our traditional "Mitten Tree" through December 19.

Listen up for Christmas

By Eva Friede
POSTMEDIA NEWS

Be a good listener. That's one of the best ways to give a great gift, says Phillip Bloch, celebrity stylist and author of *The Shopping Diet*. He offered a few tips to get you through the holiday shopping madness:

- If you didn't do so this year, start your 2011 gifting list in October or November and divide the list into categories of small tokens, mid-range and major presents.

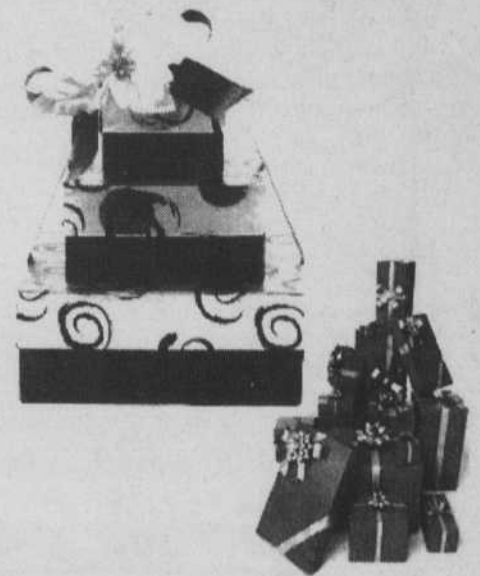
- A small gift could be as simple as a frame with a snapshot of the two of you.

- Be personal. Bake something, give a certificate for house cleaning, spa treatment or manicure-pedicure.

- Larger gifts should be a little extravagant - something the person would not buy for herself.

- Magazine renewals are a great gift. And Bloch says one of his favourite gifts comes from a friend who renews his AAA subscription - a reminder of when his father would do that for him.

- Give the gift of your time, like a shopping/dining date with a friend.
- Teens need to choose their own stuff. Give certificates for iTunes or for their favourite fashion stores.
- If you send a gift bought online, let your friend know it's coming. And set a time limit for browsing on the web, or you might find yourself caught up for hours.



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

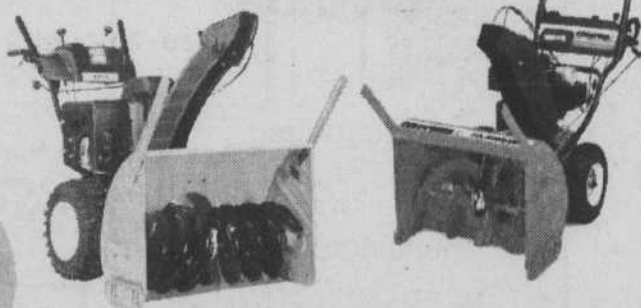


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Experience the sights and sounds of Sherbrooke

Take time to visit the Christmas market of the Marché la gare de Sherbrooke where you'll be greeted by a giant Christmas tree... one of the largest in Canada, illuminated by 30,000 LED lights. This gigantic Christmas tree, located in the "enchanted forest" next to the terrace of the Savoroso restaurant, will undoubtedly make the holiday period an unforgettable occasion to share with your family or friends! This is the perfect location to sample products from the region and see and buy crafts from local artists and artisans, where authenticity and quality are the benchmarks.

Also visit the unique Christmas nativity scene, at the Société d'histoire de Sherbrooke (275, rue Dufferin) where you will trace over time and countries, how the tradition of nativity is grounded in the culture and the history of a place.

The nativity scene will be on display from Nov. 3 to Jan. 30, 2011

Information / Ticketing
819 821-5406products.

And do try to take in the annual Christmas concert at Uplands in Lennoxville.

The Canadian Harmonists (Quatuor à Médée) will present their annual Christmas concert on Friday, Dec. 14 and on Saturday, Dec. 15, at 8 pm at the Uplands Cultural and Heritage Centre on Speid Street.



Season's Greetings



*Wishing you and
your family,
Health,
Prosperity,
and Joy!*

Brecks

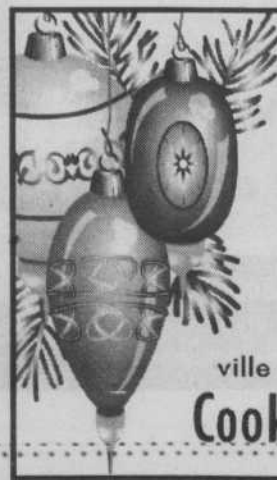
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The City of Sherbrooke has pulled out all the stops to ensure residents and visitors need go no further than downtown to find music, lights, decorations, and a wide array of locally produced Christmas fare.



*We wish you Health,
Happiness and
Prosperity
in this Joyous Season.*

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The 150th Anniversary

January to December 2010

Summary of Events

January - Official opening of the 150th. Brunch was held with special guests and the 150th logo was revealed.

February - Curling tournament held at the Danville curling club.

March - Builder gala was held organized by the Danville Chamber of Commerce.

April - Sugaring off party organized by the Danville Knights of Columbus.

May - Month of the churches. Activities were enjoyed all month.

June - Play Day for Children in collaboration with Maison des jeunes and the Optimist Club.

July - Two-day celebration of The Big Fair held at ADS school organized by the 150th special committee.

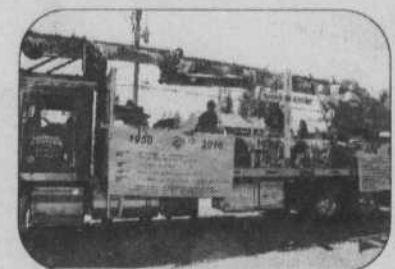
August - Country Western festival, held at the Bike path stop in Danville.

September - The Danville Symposium held a special contest to determine who the Danville rooster would be. This sculpture will be placed at the Town Hall to remember of the 150th Anniversary.

September - T-day came to Danville to help celebrate the anniversary.

November - Remembrance Day parade and celebration also honored the 150th.

December - Closing ceremony with Christmas supper, followed by a dance and of course a run through the great year and the memories.



150 Thank You!

www.danville150.com

IMPORTANT MESSAGE

Are any of these familiar to you ?

YES NO

- My ears ring or hum
- People must speak louder to me
- When several people talk at once, I have difficulty understanding
- I don't go to the theatre or the movies because I can't hear well
- I must turn the volume up on the television and the radio to clearly understand



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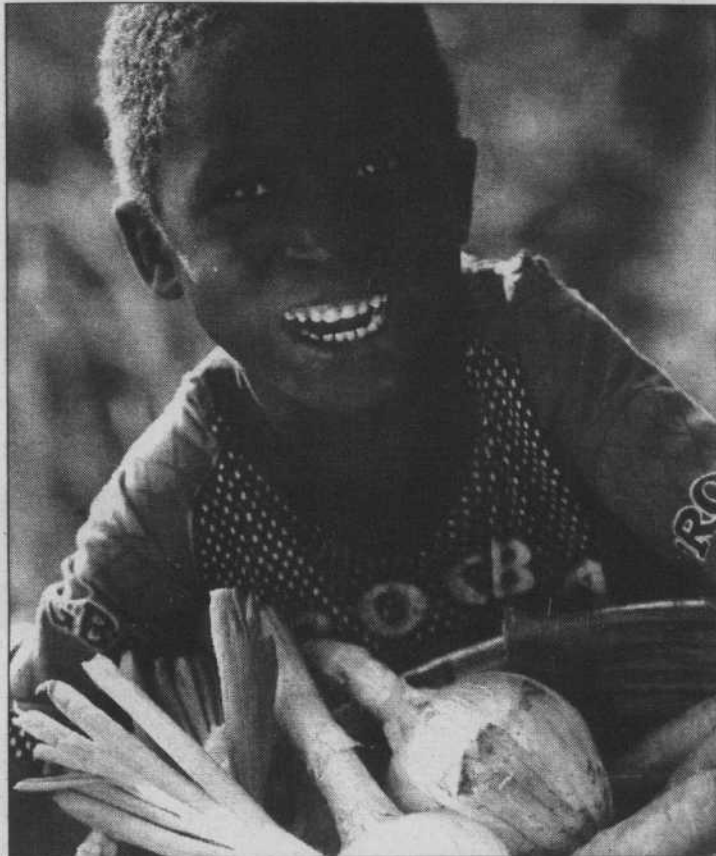
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Keep your perspective: Remain sane this Christmas



World Vision Canada reminds us that a stocking stuffer for us could mean a day's nourishment for children in developing countries. Practise the real spirit of Christmas giving by remembering the less fortunate.

The holiday season has somehow become one of the most taxing times of the year. From party planning, to dinner menus, to gift shopping, what used to be a simple and relaxing time of year has become a source of stress and chaos. This Christmas, why not consider making things simple by following these easy holiday tips:

Don't stress over the dress - You've bought the perfect dress for your Christmas work party, but finding the matching red pumps is putting you over the edge. Breathe. Take a minute to go through your closet and pick a pair you already own. No one will notice you're wearing last year's heels and besides, it's a Christmas party, not a fashion show. Be confident and work with the things you already have.

Yes, there is plenty of food - It's still days before your annual family Christmas dinner and it's your turn to host. You've bought enough food to feed a small village, but will it be enough? What if grandpa doesn't eat trifle? Relax. Put the fruitcake

down and walk out of the grocery store. Reflect on the millions of children around the world struggling to eat even a single meal today.

Keep your boxing gloves at home - It's Christmas Eve and you've left your shopping until the last minute again, even though you vowed, "This year, it will be different!" Stop. Don't fight the crowds for that last parking spot and don't you dare pay for an overpriced sweater that your aunt will never wear. Save yourself the stress and spend your Christmas Eve relaxing at home by shopping online. Consider donating to a meaningful cause in honour of those hard-to-buy-for relatives. Check out the great gifts you can buy through World Vision's Gift Catalogue (WorldVision.ca/gifts) which provide families around the world with the things that we take for granted every day.

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Christmas Thanks
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December 24:	open until 2 p.m.
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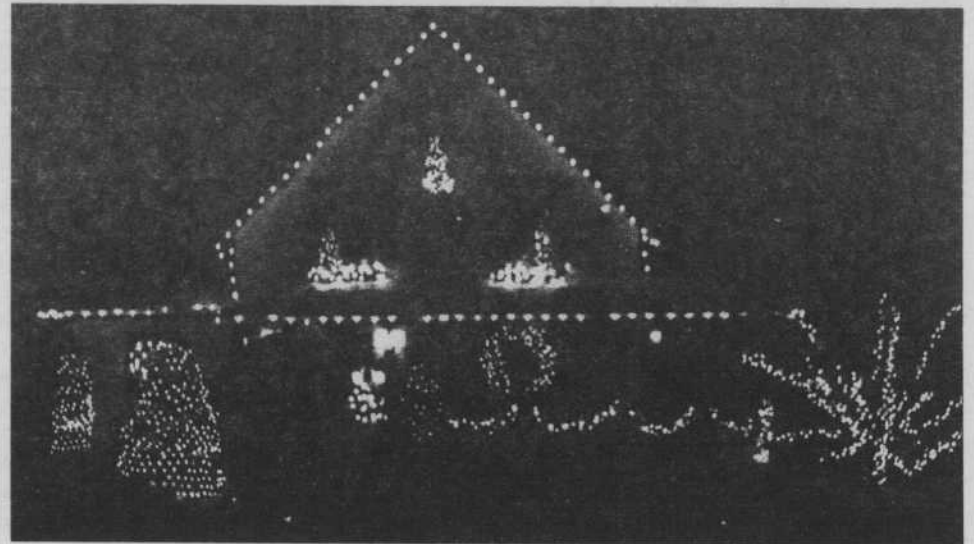
We're here to meet your needs, advise you about your finances and, especially during the holiday season, to thank you for placing your trust in us.

Feel free to meet with your advisor anytime to discuss your financial situation.

Happy Holidays!



Ah, Christmas in the Townships



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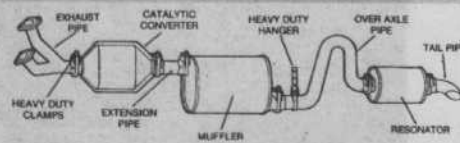


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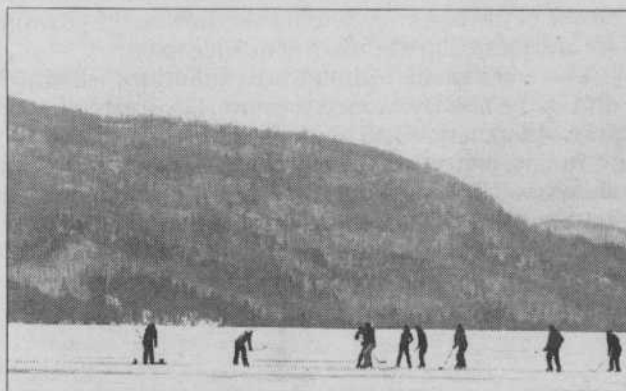
We've got the snow.



The beautiful decorations.



The specialty shops...




The outdoor skating rinks...



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Find it all in the Townships




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and a Happy New Year!

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Happy Holidays!

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The perfect winter drive

By CLAUDIA VILLEMAIRE
RECORD CORRESPONDENT
RICHMOND

Tourist brochures and travel folders say little about the Richmond region. Their focus is on the big stuff — mountain ski slopes, fancy accommodations and country inns, fine wining and dining and such. But whoa! Exchange the salt spray and excessive speedsters and choose instead the gentle curves and hills of roads where once stagecoaches trundled, travellers reached their destinations astride a fiery steed or simply donned snowshoes and silently walked through quiet woodlands and across frozen waterways.

This region has a different kind of magic. History is around every corner. Heritage homes, constructed of locally produced brick and capped with roofs of slate, mined just a few miles from town.

Hills and valleys all seem to lean toward the St. Francis river where early settlers began the arduous task of taming the land, clearing the forests and developing the rolling fields where, even in winter, remnants of a summer's crop still peeks through the first layer of sparkling snow. The Craig Road was the first attempt at connecting Montreal and Boston with Quebec City.

Still well travelled, this historic trail, once the official stagecoach link between larger centres, still tempts the passerby with views of now infamous CJM asbestos mine.

Just before slipping down the long hill that leads to Danville, sister town to Danville, Vermont, a magnificent view of the Mont Smith mountains bursts into sight, the Danville Pinnacle peaking among the smaller mountains — once a copper mining area, now simply part of a panoramic view of the region. Looking down into the valley where a small river twists and

turns across the valley floor — fertile fields, spiffy farmsteads, slopes of hard and softwood trees present a scene guaranteed to calm in some small way the hurry and stress of holidays.



A WINTER WONDERLAND

If one crosses the century-old steel bridge in Richmond, turning left at Chemin Melbourne, the old highway once again follows the river's curves, hinting at a bit of history here and there. The footing for the covered bridge the ice

swept away over a century ago is still visible. Under a mile from that left-hand turn, the traveller, headed for Racine or historical Valcourt, birthplace of the Bombardier snowmobile, will pass St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, once the star on the back of the centennial \$2 bill. Approaching the 150 year mark, this church, also built of brick manufactured at the Richmond brick yard, is basically unchanged. The wide planks, straight-backed pews with small doors on each one, the handcarved decorations, are still in full view. The sinners' bench is still up front and the music director's box or lodge is also intact at the back.

Going back into Melbourne village and keeping a straight line past our original corner, we can once again follow the river's winding ways towards Kirkdale and Ulverton. This road will eventually lead to Route 55 on-ramps all the way to Drummondville for the traveller whose time for sightseeing is limited. But if the schedule allows, one can admire the Holy Trinity church in Kirkdale where the flying buttress style of construction makes this Anglican church a rare and precious example of the pioneers priorities a century ago. Again, bricks have stood the test of time, stained glass windows and hand carved interior decoration give this holy place special distinction — well worth slowing down a bit to admire on the way to Ulverton.

Across a river flat where it's said one man and his team of horses drowned during a spring flood a century ago, the curious traveller finds the road rising just a bit. Around the first curve, a vista of heritage homes unfolds. Here we find the stage coach inn where weary travellers could find a hot meal and perhaps a bath and probably a feather bed for the night. The stable where horses rested is still standing and several homes were built from lumber cut and sawed right in the village. At the bottom of the hill, we cross the Black River, once the byway for boat and canoe travellers that opened into

the St. Francis and could whisk folks down past Drummondville and eventually to Trois Rivières in a matter of days.

There are fine restaurants and accommodations aplenty. Maybe the glitter is missing but it's aptly replaced by the mists of history. rising as day breaks, bathing church spires and tree tops in rainbow-hued white clouds. The sparkle of fresh snow on cross country trails touted to be one of the best cross country ski clubs in the province are also located in the hills just outside town.

There are small, intimate art exhibitions scheduled during the holidays, concerts galore, Christmas teas and sales of handicrafts and home cooking.

Posters, notices and newspaper news of the region are always available and should provide all the information to any traveller willing to slow down and venture a detour letting the imagination picture this area as it appeared to those first hardy folk who began the development we enjoy today.

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Stretch your holiday budget this year by becoming a smart spender

Finances can be a touchy subject for many families, especially during the Christmas season. With the constant pressure to buy, buy, buy, many become strapped for cash quickly, particularly when holiday spending gets out of control. Below are some simple tips to help you save cash and make smart purchases come Christmas time.

Budget, budget, budget - Most of us cringe at the word, but in order to be smart holiday shoppers, we must be accountable for our spending. Set a realistic budget for Christmas—think about all the things you need to purchase, including food, decorations, gift wrap and presents. Track your spending in order to know if you are staying within your budget.

Open a holiday savings account - It's hard to make rational decisions when the pressure is on. The holidays are a difficult time to be thinking about balancing a bank account. Planning ahead can be the answer. Many Canadians begin their Christmas budgeting early by setting aside money every month in a special Christmas savings account. This way, they avoid the



stress of worrying about finances during the busiest shopping season of the year.

Don't impulse shop - Make a list of the things you're going to need during Christmas, and start early. Shop with a purpose and avoid the temptation to buy on impulse. If you don't need the item, don't buy it. This can also help you take advantage of sales, using coupons or getting discounts. Remember, by being prepared you can help reduce your shopping stress come December.



PHOTO JEN YOUNG
Great memories are made during the holiday season and a sleigh ride like this one in Milby is part of the holiday tradition for many locals and visitors.

Christmas art show in Georgeville

Starting Nov. 13, Studio Georgeville invites you to see the wondrous array of art, crafts and food featured in this year's Christmas Show. Co-op members Louise Abbott, Mary Cartmel, Pamela Cartwright, Elin Gustafson, Niels Jensen and Aggie Power, as well as guest artists Stephen Starenkyj, Sara Peck Colby, Kim Vergil, Christine Manning, among

others, will be showing paintings, jewellery, furniture, prints, stained glass, knitted extravaganzas, hand-quilted bags, books, DVDs, and other delights on or off your list. Surprise those you love with a local gift you won't find anywhere else. The show runs until the end of January. Studio Georgeville is located in the heart of the village of Georgeville.

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'Tis the Season for Lifelong Learning!

Practice literacy over the holidays with these fun tips. Winter holidays provide an excellent opportunity for families and friends to spend time together learning and practicing literacy skills. There are many fun learning activities that families can do, such as reading a book, writing out a holiday card or following a recipe for gingerbread cookies.

"The holiday season ushers in extra family time and there are many ways to build literacy skills in all the festive fun," says Margaret Eaton, President, ABC Life Literacy Canada. "Literacy is one of the greatest gifts that adults can share and benefit from with their families. We look forward to celebrating that during next month's Family Literacy Day® on January 27."

Family Literacy Day is a national initiative encouraging Canadians to spend at least 15 minutes enjoying a learning

activity together every day. This year, Canadians will Play for Literacy! Playing games that encourage literacy and numeracy - such as board games, card games and word games - are a great way for parents and children to practice their literacy skills and have fun.

ABC Life Literacy Canada offers the following activities to encourage family literacy over the holidays and throughout the winter months:

1. Make a list, check it twice: As a family, write out lists together - wish lists to Santa, shopping lists or even New Year's resolutions!

2. Watch a book: Many classic holiday stories have been adapted for the big screen. Read these stories with your kids first, then watch the movie equivalent; Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer and The Grinch Who Stole Christmas are classic favourites.

3. Signed, sealed, delivered: Do you have a stack of holiday cards that need to be prepared? Ask your family to help you write out greetings and addresses.

4. How many shopping days left? When shopping for gifts or holiday party supplies, ask your kids to count out the change required to make your purchase. You can practice numeracy skills by keeping track of spending before you reach the cash register.

5. Dear Grandma: The holidays are a great time to write a letter or email to a loved one. Have everyone in your family contribute at least one paragraph on what they have accomplished over the last year.

6. Holiday scavenger hunt: Create a list of holiday and winter-related items around your home. Give the list to your family and have them find all the items on the list.

7. Jack Frost nipping at your nose:

On cold winter days, snuggle by the fire with a good holiday book and a cup of hot chocolate. Don't forget the marshmallows!

8. Make reading a key ingredient: Following a recipe is a great way to practice reading, comprehension and math skills. By baking holiday cookies or cakes, you can get the whole family involved.

9. Sing Christmas carols: Get together with your neighbours and go door-to-door singing carols. Singing encourages learning patterns of words, rhymes and rhythms, and is strongly connected to language skills.

10. Play for Literacy! Put on your pajamas and have a family game night. Each family member chooses a game, such as a board game or card game, then have fun playing all night long!

Some great Christmas reads

By Anne Sutherland

POSTMEDIA NEWS

Ah, the traditional Christmas book, usually something light and frothy with a holiday theme, perfect to put you in the mood and an antidote to frantic planning and shopping.

This year's crop was a little scanty, and Anne Perry, who can be counted on to churn out one of these every year, sank to a new low.

A Christmas Odyssey (Ballantyne Books, 193 pages, \$20) is the worst she has ever produced. Sexual depravity and rampant drug use in the cellars and basements of Victorian London, Ho Ho Ho. Not. But there were some bright spots and here they are:

My cheeks hurt from the silly grin I had pasted on my face reading the delightful Coal Dust Kisses: A Christmas Memoir, by Will Ferguson (Viking Canada, 57 pages, \$16). Ferguson may be known primarily as a humour writer, but this was pure whimsy, and heart-warming happy reading.

The Coal Dust Kisses of the title refer to a tradition started by Ferguson's hard-scrabble Scottish grandfather, who came from a family of coal miners. The premise is that because Santa has to travel down sooty chimneys, he would, of course, be covered in coal dust when he visits each and every house. And if Santa stopped to kiss the sleeping children, well, what would you have? Actual proof that he'd been there in the grey smudges.

From Cape Breton, to the North, to Japan and Ecuador, Ferguson keeps the tradition alive, passing the practice on to other cultures. And how about this description of what Canadian Christmas is to foreigners: "Well," I said, "You need to spend lots of money you don't really

have on presents you don't really want. And to truly get into the spirit of the holidays, you need to find the largest turkey known to man and spend the next three days cooking it." Priceless. To be read over and over, every year.

Here's the premise of The Snow Globe, by Sheila Roberts (St. Martin's Press, 166 pages, \$16.99): An antique glass globe with a scene inside shows the owner a happier future when you shake up the snow. Corny, yes, but charming. The globe has a history, and is currently for sale in a Washington state antique store. The first owner is Kiley, out of work and having just lost her fiancé to her glamorous sister. A shake of the globe and she sees a toy store in Seattle and a handsome man outside it. Off she goes to find both.

Next, Kiley passes the globe to her very uptight friend Suzanne, a real estate agent striving for perfection in her home and personal life. Things happen. And finally the globe is passed to Allison, struggling with an exceptionally dysfunctional family and grieving for her grandmother. The globe doesn't bring people back from the dead, but again, it works magic. The book is light and bright and cheery.

A man, a woman and an orphaned child - these are the central characters in Christmas Eve at Friday Harbor (St. Martin's Press, 211 pages, \$19.50), the latest from author Lisa Kleypas. The Friday Harbour of the title is a small town on San Juan Island, off the Washington coast (what is it about that state this year?).

Living on the island are Maggie Conroy, widowed owner of a toy store; Mark Nolan, single coffee businessman; and Holly Nolan, Mark's 6-year-old niece, whose mother has died in a car crash. Mark was named Holly's guardian in the will. The child hasn't spoken a word since the death. One day, Mark takes Holly into Maggie's store and a connection is made.

Can you guess where this is

going? Despite the schmaltz, there's some humour in here, too. And this one is just sucky enough to satisfy those with a romantic bent. No wonder it's on the New York Times bestseller list.

The Christmas Chronicles: As Told to Jeff Guinn, (Tarcher/Penguin, 735 pages, \$18.50) is a new compilation of three previously published

Christmas stories as told to Jeff Guinn by the man in the red velvet suit. The Autobiography of Santa takes us all the way back to his birth in 280 AD and through such periods as the Dark Ages. How Mrs. Claus Saved Christmas is the tale of the missus, whose name, in case you were wondering, is Layla Nicholas. Along the way she meets Oliver Cromwell.

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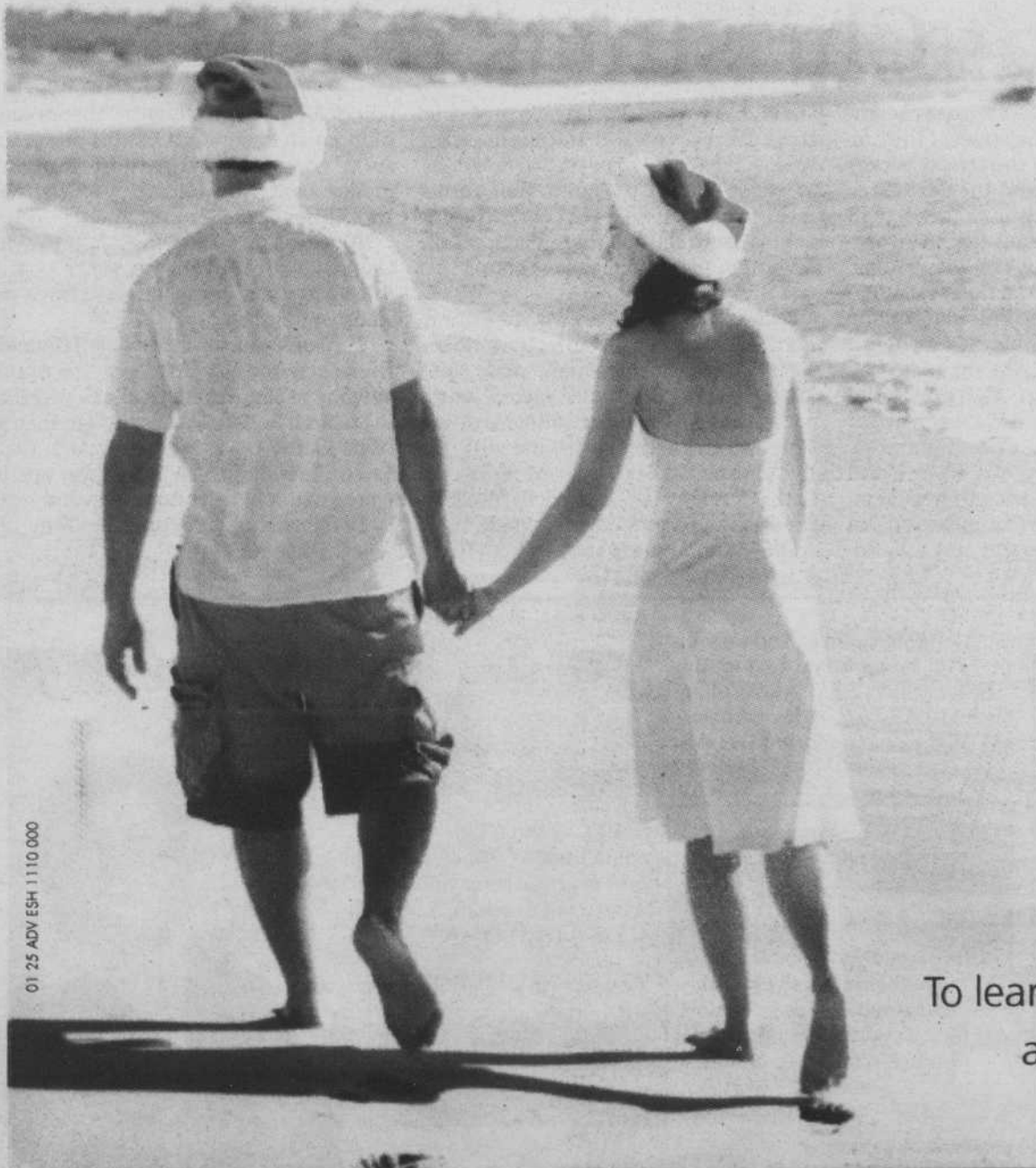
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