

1959 - And A Christmas Walk Down Walton Street

1959 - it's been quite a year!

In February, John Deifenbaker scrapped the Avro Arrow.

In April, the St Lawrence Seaway was opened.

Fidel Castro took over in Cuba.

The Queen and Prince Philip visited Port Hope.

And some guy called Allen Gant invented and introduced a sort of combined ladies nylon stocking and underpant combined, which he called pantyhose. If it ever catches on, we can finally bid a fond farewell to fleecy combed cotton Snuggies, those quintessentially Canadian toasty-warm overpanties that bridge the frigid gap between the tops of ladies stockings and the lower edge of their unmentionables during our long Canadian winter. Or so I've been told.

But enough of that. Let's get on with our Christmas walk.

Up the hill west of Pine Street, Walton is mostly private houses. Some of them are in good repair; some of them look a little the worse for wear. But right now, many of them are putting up their strings of lights and reindeer and Santa Clauses, hoping to win the \$25 prize the town is offering for the best-decorated home this Christmas. It would be nice to win that twentyfive bucks, wouldn't it? For \$25, Freda and I and the Parkers next door could go out for a steak dinner topped off with a bottle of Bright's Manor St David's claret, dessert and coffee, and still have enough left over to tip the waitress!

Right at the corner of Pine Street South is St Mary's Roman Catholic Church - and behind it is the brand-new elementary school built a couple of years ago. I guess it should be good for at least another fifty years. In the spirit of Christmas, and reflecting the changing face of the area, St Mary's have just announced that Father Kwiatkowski will be here on Monday, December 21st to hear confessions in Polish, Ukrainian and German, and Father VanIpem will be here on the 23rd to hear Dutch and Belgian confessions. The rest of the week is for those of us who can only manage to sin in English.

Directly opposite, there's a convent at the north-west corner of Walton and Pine, a daughter house of the Congregation of Sisters of Saint Joseph in Peterborough. The sisters teach at the school -and there's one of the sisters, in traditional habit, no less, hanging a Christmas wreath on the front door.

So we're going to begin our Christmas Walk down Walton at Pine Street.. You notice, by the way, that I'm going from top to bottom rather than starting at number 1, chiefly because it's so

much easier going downhill. The odd numbers are on my right, on the south side of the street, the even numbers on my left. It's a nice, bright day - temperature's forecast to be about 28 degrees - brisk, but a good day for a stroll. Got your walking shoes on? OK, let's go.

Take a look at Number 135, the Ross Funeral Home. Is that a furniture store beside it?. Well, actually it's not - they had discontinued their furniture business many years before, so what we're looking at is the display area of the funeral business; Mr Ross and his wife Mary, and their three children all live in the eastern section of the building, which doesn't sound very Christmassy, does it - all those coffins, I mean - so it's comforting to know that they *are* next door to St Paul's Church at Number 133. The Reverend Mr Waldie is the minister, and they're having a special Christmas Candlelight Carol service there on the Sunday evening before Christmas, with the choir being assisted by all the young girls of the Explorers.

Just across the alleyway from St Paul's is the Kelly's house at Number 127. And a little way down, across the street at Number 126, there's Dr Benson's house and surgery. But you don't have to go to his surgery, 'cos if you're really sick, then of course the doctor will come and visit you. They do say the doc's a very wealthy man - probably because he's never married.

In a funny little one story building, Number 120, next to the good doctor, is Ganaraska Valley Products. They've got an advertisement in the newspaper today, telling us about The Armchair Shoppers Club for Christmas. Here's how it works: all you have to do is go in, look through the special Christmas catalogues and place your order. It's full of beautiful things - like a real Dresden china figurine for just \$6.50, and they guarantee you'll have it in time for Christmas.

They didn't have far to go to place the ad, because the offices of The Evening Guide are right next door at Number 118. They call themselves "The United Counties Only Daily Newspaper". Just like the UC in our local radio station CHUC, which also stands for United Counties. "The United Counties of Northumberland and Durham" - and Port Hope is actually in the Durham part.

There are usually only four pages to the Guide, so most of the work is done by the Wilson family. Mr Ralph Wilson is the Proprietor and Publisher. To mark the season, he's had a humungous Christmas tree, all decorated with lights, erected in the parking lot next to the Guide office.

Not to be outdone, on our right, at Number 115, is the Bell Telephone building and switchboard exchange. And they've got their very own giant tree, too, all lit up. I expect it was decorated by all those pretty girls working at the Bell. I bet a lot of them may have been attracted there by the Bell's full page advertisement in this year's Port Hope High School Year Book - The Blue 'n White - which asks "What's ahead for *you*, young lady?". If they live here, they already know that our local Port Hope exchange is TU - Turner - 5.

Just beside the Bell building, at Number 113, is The Canada Permanent Mortgage Company, formerly the Midland Savings and Loan Company. Ah, it must be 12 noon, because there goes Mr Lawson, the manager. Every day Merv Lawson walks home for his lunch to his house at Bedford and Pine, and then walks back. You can set your watch by him. Yep - there goes the

first chime from the Town Hall clock now!

Right opposite, at Number 108, is the Bank of Commerce, at the corner of Cavan Street. Their head office building in Toronto is the tallest building in the British Commonwealth, you know. 34 stories high - 34 stories! Last year, I actually once saw the film star Gina Lollobrigida in the head office branch, at the counter next to me. She was very well built, too!

There's a vacant store over at Number 107, but there is a notice in the window. Mr Al Rodda announces that a new self-serve laundromat, with the latest in electric washers and gas dryers, will be opening here in the New Year. Well, that's good news - especially for our friends who live out in the township, and anybody who's still on a well. You can run out of water pretty quickly doing a big wash on a Saturday night!

Oh yes - if you're minded to pay your water or hydro bill before Christmas, the Port Hope Utilities office is right there at Number 94. We'll give it a miss today - they can wait till the end of the month. Or maybe even the New Year.

We're more interested in seeing what the home furnishings store at Number 86 - Kennedy-Vosburgh - has to offer. They've got a Christmas special on fabrics, for re-upholstering in the New Year. It sounds as if they're expecting more than a few drinks to be spilled over the holidays.

Over there, on the south side, that's the old St Lawrence Hotel building. It hasn't been a hotel since the First World War, though. It was an iodine factory for a while, and now there's some rather tacky stores, that they've tried to tart up with glass blocks and faux stone. Look, there's Hancock's the Jewelers, and there's Mr Hancock - Jack to his friends - see him through the window, looking like a diamond merchant with his jewelers's loup in his eye. He's advertising that a Bulova watch would be an ideal gift this year "Father, Mother, Sister, Brother - they all want that Bulova difference!"

Who's that just gone in the store? Oh, it's Mr J.V.Eagan, strolling in for a chat with his next door neighbour. Mr Eagan's the manager of the Royal Bank of Canada at Number 85, on the corner of John Street. He's on the lookout for 'a bright young man, with a desire to get ahead'. At least, that's what it says in the Royal's ad in the Port Hope High year book. And for Christmas, the Royal Bank suggests - what else - "Say Merry Christmas with Royal Bank Money Orders". The bank building looks really good, doesn't it - wouldn't it be nice if someone would come along and spruce up the old St Lawrence hotel beside it. It's a fine building, but it really needs some Tender Loving Care.

Now the Queen's Hotel, across John Street from the bank, that's a different story. It's a family-owned, family-run establishment - owned by the Wladyka family - Mike Senior's the landlord - and he's just been acclaimed as the mayor of Port Hope. The hotel's as clean as a new pin, you can get a turkey dinner with all the trimmings in the dining room, and you can take the wife and kids there with no hesitation - yes, even your mother-in-law. And who knows - you might even have his worship the Mayor to bring you your after dinner coffee.

Over the street at Number 74 is Charles R. Nixon Men's Wear and right slap-bang next door at Number 72 is George A. O'Neill. O'Neill's tells us they are Headquarters for Men and Boys Wear; Nixon's, on the other hand, claim to specialize in Clothes of Distinction. At O'Neill's, a deposit will hold any garment until December 19th on their Christmas Layaway Plan.

Up above O' Neill's, at the offices of Household Finance, they're offering you extra cash for shopping this Christmas - drop in or phone for a loan of up to \$2500. Comes the New Year, though - that's when you have to start paying it back!

Now, here's a thing. There's a railroad line, running right across Walton Street and up Ontario Street. There's even one of those x-shaped Railroad Crossing signs. The rails look a bit rusty, though. It's been eight years since the last scheduled train came from Peterborough, and although the track has been kept up as an access line to the factories up the river, months can go by without it being used. But the track still runs besides Lent's Travel Service at Number 67, past where the old waiting room used to be, and right down to the harbour. And how about this - Lent's isn't just a travel agent, they're also an agent for Famous Reading Anthracite. Now that the cold weather's here, they think you ought to try a ton or two of this famous coal. It's treated for dust, you know.

Next to Lent's is Plummer's IDA drug store. Lorne Plummer's the pharmacist, but his son Don is expected to take over when he passes all his qualifications - and who knows, maybe some day young Scott will be the third generation! There's plenty of competition for them. Directly across the street is B-L-B Pharmacy, right on the north-east corner of Ontario Street. B-L-B stands for Brandon, Lamb and Birch, but it's always known as B-L-B. And just a couple of doors away is Watson's Drug Store, at Number 62.

Watson's are offering Old Spice aftershave as a stocking stuffer for 75 cents, but B-L-B have "My Love" perfume in a crystal bottle for \$4, or "On Dit" Perfume, also in a crystal bottle for \$6. I guess you have to pay more 'cos it's French. Ooo la-la!

Now it's getting close to Christmas, the stores are playing Christmas music. I don't know if you agree, but it seems like they're playing Johnny Cash and The Little Drummer Boy every second song! It may be the big Christmas hit this year - but I'd like to tell him exactly what he can do with his *Pa-ruppa-pom-pom*.

The stores won't be closing their usual Wednesday afternoons during December, but staying open until 6 in the evening, so they say, and from the 18th to the 23rd, they're open evenings until 9, except for Sunday, of course, when they're all closed. And all the parking on Walton will be free, so that should bring the shoppers in.

Hullo, there's Brigadier-General Carr - he's the Carr of Lyall N.Carr's Men's Wear, at Number 66. How upright he looks, as if he's still commanding a brigade. At the moment, though, he's rolling back the awning in front of his store. Every store has an awning out front - you can walk all the way from Ontario Street to the river in a torrential downpour, and never get wet. But

they're all being rolled back now, before the snow flies. I don't know, seems to me we don't get as much snow now as we used to a decade ago. Remember the Big One in 1947?

Hold on. The Brigadier-General's marching purposefully across the street - and right into the Billiard Shop at Number 59! It's called The Billiard Shop, because that sounds a lot classier than 'pool hall', although that's what it is. Oh, we got trouble, trouble, right here in River City! Mr Perrin runs a respectable establishment though. Well, what else would you expect from a man who nurtures a secret passion for grand Opera. He's a great Fan of Teresa Stratas, the young Toronto soprano with the Royal Conservatory Opera Company, but just last month she was selected to join the Met in New York.

There may be four-count 'em - four menswear shops on Walton, but Margles Ladies Wear at Number 57 are offering free gift wrap for men who want to shop for their ladies at the I.S. Margles Co. Just ask for Mrs Helen Philp, and she'll look after you.

We're passing the Royal Grill now, at Number 53, but we won't stop, not even for one of their famous double-decker 75 cent sundaes. However, we should just duck into Stedmans, next door, and see if we can pick up a few stocking-stuffers for the kids to open before breakfast on Christmas morning. Helps to keep 'em quiet. They have all sorts of bargains at discount prices, and they say you can find a Stedman's store in over 1000 small towns like ours, right across Canada. I guess you'd have to say they're one organisation that's here to stay, eh?

If we look across the street, there's McCreery's Optometrists, at Number 60. You might say that Dr J.T. McCreery (known to everybody as just plain John) is also keeping an eye on the future generation - he's one of the five Port Hope members of the Durham County High School Board. And just a couple of doors down is Randall's Book Store at Number 52; most of the high schoolers go there for their school supplies. Right now, they're all looking forward to the Christmas break!

Ferguson Electric are at Number 42, right next door to Coleman and Philp Electric Company - and just across the street from Bisset's Appliances at Number 43, so there's plenty of competition for your household dollar. Ferguson Electric have bathroom scales on sale, so you can see how many pounds you've put on over Christmas!

Coleman and Philp are really smart, though - they started Toytown every Christmas up on their second floor, with Santa Claus in attendance, back a few years ago, and now we have our very own Port Hope Santa Claus parade down Walton Street every year.

The parade's run by the volunteer firemen, and this year it has four bands - the Legion Pipes and Drums, the HMCS Skeena band, Cobourg's 33rd Medium Regiment Band, and the Port Hope Citizen's Band. As soon as the parade comes into the downtown area, the siren at the firehall is turned on, and all the fire trucks sound off, so there's plenty of noise. Then, when the parade gets to the bandshell, the firemen have about half a ton of candies and other goodies for all the children. Everyone has a good time. Maybe somebody'll write a story about them one day.

Fulford Bros Dry Goods store, at Number 37, are reserving Tuesday, December 22nd exclusively for men to shop for their ladies.. Starting at 7 o'clock, they're offering hot coffee and get this - cigarettes for all - probably Export A or Buckinghams, the kind that guys smoke. And they're bringing in extra sales help, and they'll wrap your gifts free of charge. Sounds like the place to be for last-minute shopping - which is when most husbands do it!

Oh - I forgot to mention Ying's Chinese Restaurant. We always go there if we're looking for something foreign and exotic. I mean they have chop suey and sweet and sour spareribs, and those po-po balls with that red sauce. I wonder if they have turkey chow mein at Christmas?

The A & P are moving from across the street, down to the old Colonial Coach station on Mill Street - the building's almost finished now - and Dominion used to be opposite them. You could get leg of lamb this week, fresh, for 49 cents a pound. Not that my Canadian brother in law would be interested. "If it doesn't come off the back of a cow, I don't eat it" he says. As for turkeys, they're on for 41 cents a pound, so you can pick up a nice 20-pounder for around eight dollars

Gould's Shoe Store is there at Number 26 - they've got Christmas slippers for everyone, starting at \$2.98, and McAllister's Flower Shop at Number 20 - with poinsettias and cyclamens by the dozens. And here's the Haggis Bowling Academy, both five-pin and ten-pin lanes, and after-school jobs for anyone who wants to work as a pin-setter. I'm told that the Academy's owned by a Greek gentleman, but I'm also told that his name's Keith Haggis. Maybe he's from the Greek section of Edinburgh - they do call it The Athens of The North. He's got three turkeys and a dozen chickens in for their Christmas Turkey Roll - it's just a quarter to enter, which is good for three games. Incidentally, you behold before you the turkey roll winner in the Simpson's Toronto men's bowling league for 1956. Since then, I've been resting on my laurels.

Across Queen Street, and here's another five and dime store, Chainway, whose slogan is "Where Spending is Saving". There's the old firehall, which isn't used now, and the old police station, before it moved to beneath the town hall. Even though the building isn't used, it looks solid as a rock. You can't imagine it ever coming down.

OK, we're at the Ganaraska river now. It does a sharp turn, almost a dog leg to the east here, and boy, does the water ever race through there in the spring when the snow starts melting. There's a building there on the south side at Mill Street, apartments, I think, with a couple of stores below - Duncan's is one of them. On the other side of the street, right on the North west corner of Walton and Mill is Hill's British American Service Station. Gas just went up again, up to 37.9 cents a gallon. I don't know how anyone can afford to run a car - look, there's one of those brand-new 1959 Chevies filling up there, the one with the extra-wide curved tail fins that look like airplane wings. They say if you drive fast enough, the car might just get airborne! You know, you have to shell out over \$2700 for one of those babies! Passes everything on the road except gas stations! Hill's, of course, is open on Christmas Day, from 8 in the morning till ten at night. Wouldn't want to run out of gas on the way to family Christmas dinner at your folks place up on the Ninth Line.

And that's it. We're at the very bottom of Walton Street now. Hope you enjoyed our Christmas walk. And may I wish you what the Town of Port Hope is wishing all its citizens in their advertisement in the special Christmas 1959 edition of the Evening Guide:

*How wonderful is Christmas, and the message that it brings, of Peace and Good Will to All!
How it warms every heart, brightens every eye and lightens every care!
As we joyously celebrate this Holy Day, we wish that the glow of happiness that it brings may lastingly abide with you!*

And so do I.

Merry Christmas!

-Pat Bryan-

