

Cut that wrapping

By RICHARD CHARLES

Scene I: There it sits on the breakfast table or under the tree or in the hands of the presenter at the retirement party.

It's beautiful — that acre of brightly colored paper and those tricky bows of ribbon; and inside there's usually a box, and inside the box there's probably scads of tissue paper, and inside that perhaps a plastic bag — and there at last, like the mysterious idol in the inner sanctum of the temple, sits the gift itself. "Oh," she (he) cries, "you shouldn't have!"

Scene II (a little later): There it sits, probably screwed up into a handy ball now — the bright wrapper, the ribbon, the tissue, the plastic bag, with the flattened box inside it — already forgotten in the garbage can. But who's saying "Oh, you shouldn't have!" now?

It's a shame to spoil the party by talking about waste. But does it really spoil the party? Or have we been oversold on the need to impress each other with all the tinsel, when what counts is the gift inside and the affection that it represents?

Maybe we don't want to go so far as trying to hold unwrapped gifts behind our backs until the last second, or telling auntie to look under the chesterfield for a surprise. But surely we could do a bit less wrapping without making life unbearably dull; and then make sure that the wrapping, after its brief but merry life, doesn't go into the municipal incinerator.

Of course, we're up against some pretty strong forces. This is the age of super-packaging. It's not easy to buy anything, even small items like make-up or razor blades, without bringing home (and paying for) some eye-catching display card or mount or container that we usually have no earthly use for. Prepared foods and household products are particularly striking examples of packaging gone wild, because they're competing with one another on supermarket shelves. And we all know where the fancy package ends up.

Does it really matter? Unfortunately it does, because this is how we throw away money, resources and energy — none of which we can afford to lose — on essentially trivial purposes. The money and resources are obvious, but the energy waste is something we don't see: it's the energy used in producing and transporting the paper and plastic and wood and metal and glass that are quickly discarded and disappear with a crunch into the jaws of the garbage truck. And speaking of garbage trucks, they run on energy too, and so do the landfill and incinerator operations that the trucks feed.

This isn't peanuts. More than one-third of the garbage coming from Canadian homes is packaging material, and it's getting worse.

One thing we can do to

The Energy Savers

slow the pace of destruction is to buy things that come without a lot of built-in garbage. We can shop at places where they pack goods in simple bags or reusable containers. We can set aside the materials, like paper and glass, that can be recycled.

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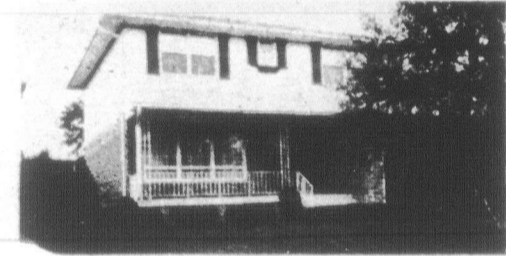
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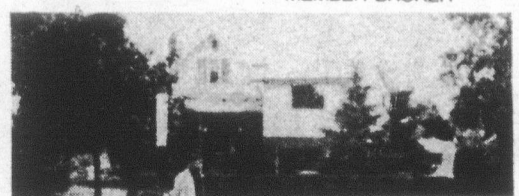


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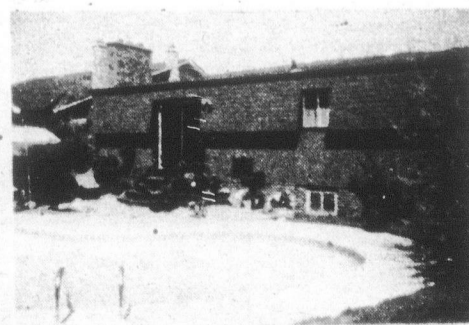
2 bedroom brick home in a desirable area. Finished basement includes 4 appliances with fairly new roof and plumbing. Walking distance to school, TTC and shops. Call Rene Galvez, 259-1147.



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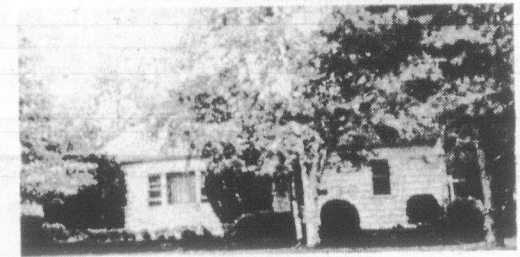


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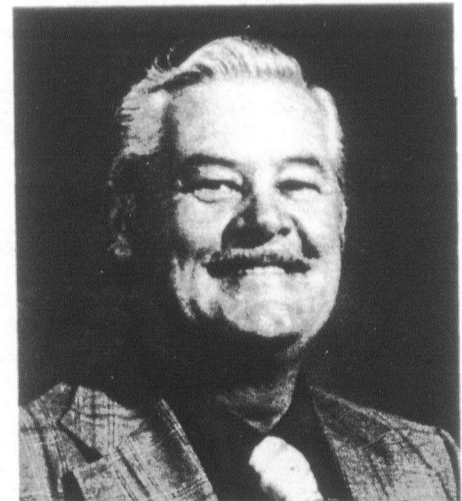
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