

Oprah interviews a Y2K scammed Acadia student

BY MARLA LANDERS

WOLFVILLE, NS (CUP) — An encounter with holiday scam artists turned out to be a surprisingly positive experience for Acadia University student Jennifer Hansen.

The third-year French major appeared on the Oprah Winfrey Show last month to relate how she was bilked out of hundreds of dollars by promoters of a New Year's Eve extravaganza.

Two years ago, Hansen put a \$300 (US) down-payment on five tickets to Party 2000, a New Year's bash which was to take place in Los Angeles. Promotions stated that the party would feature over 80 of the world's top bands.

Ticket purchasers received occasional newsletters and updates in the months preceding the gala. The last of these, issued in March of last year, informed purchasers that the party had been cancelled because of zoning problems and that all payments would be reimbursed in full.

Hansen still hasn't seen her money.

By December, she had resigned herself to losing her deposit. But while surfing the Internet Hansen checked out www.oprah.com and noticed that

the talk-show diva was looking for guests for a show on holiday and millennium-related scams.

Hansen, who appeared on Canada's Street Cents in October, e-mailed her scam story to the Oprah folks. Later than same day, she received a call from Oprah's studio inviting her to appear on the show. Two days later she was flown to Chicago for the taping.

"I always thought it would be cool to be on the Oprah Winfrey show, but I never expected it to happen," said Hansen. "We [the guests] were treated like royalty."

The student was shuttled around in a stretch limousine and stayed in an extravagant private suite that included a library and a living room.

Once at the Oprah studios, Hansen was prepped by hair and makeup artists and briefed by the show's producers. Finally, she was allowed to take her seat in the audience.

Hansen says she was fairly nervous when the show began, but was much more comfortable by the time she appeared on camera. When her turn arrived, Hansen, from the audience, chatted with Oprah about her Party 2000 misfortune. After the show Oprah took a moment to thank her guests and wish them a Merry

Christmas.

"I was impressed with her," said Hansen. "She seemed really down-to-earth. But it was her last taping of the season so she was excited to get out of there."

Hansen added that guests weren't permitted to take photos or request autographs. She did, however, receive an Oprah mug and a copy of Oprah's book club selection of the month.

The Better Business Bureau and Los Angeles Police Department haven't succeeded in locating the organizers of Party 2000.

Hansen urges consumers to be cautious when parting with large amounts of cash.

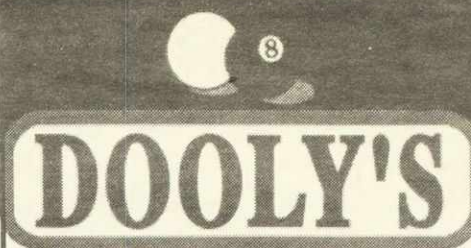
"If you ever run into this sort of thing don't let people take advantage of you," she advised.

So what did Hansen end up doing New Year's Eve?

"I hung out with a few friends," she said. Though not quite Party 2000, Hansen laughs, the evening wasn't entirely a bust — her boyfriend proposed and she accepted.



Cool to be on: talk show host Oprah Winfrey as seen on her web site.



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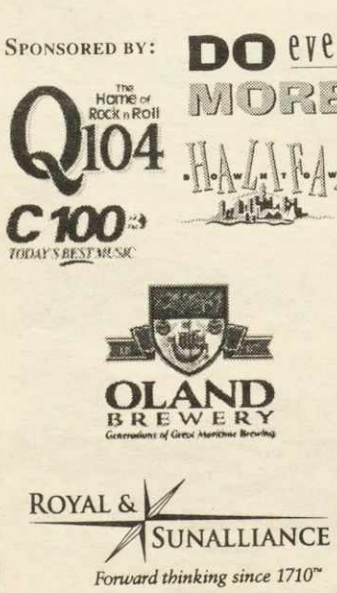
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