

## Christmas Shopping 1969

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In the weeks leading up to the holidays, Christmas spirit sometimes struck me right out of the blue. I could be sitting in my grade twelve class at Fisher Park in the middle of writing my Christmas math exam, suddenly look up at the decorated room, and my mind would be filled with an excited glow of anticipation. Two weeks' vacation, decorating the tree, Christmas Eve visiting relatives for dinner and the evening, and Christmas morning laziness with gifts and a special occasion breakfast were coming up soon.

On Boxing Day an aunt, and three cousins from Montreal would arrive to stay for a week. This meant trips to the movies, late night card games, sleeping in, mid-morning breakfasts, TV bingo and never-ending Monopoly. My uncle would stay at home in Montreal, glad for the rest.

Before all this excitement happened, my dad and I would set off early in the morning on a shopping expedition, to buy my Mom's gift and presents for various cousins. Ogilvie's Department Store on Richmond Road was always an important Christmas shopping destination.

We wandered through the crowded and brightly decorated store, looking for the perfect gift for my Mom. We'd check out purses, perfume, slippers and scarves. Invariably though, my attention would be caught by soft, wooly robes in muted blues and greens. I loved them, but my dad objected.

"You'd think your Mom spends all day hanging around the kitchen table in her robe. That's what we bought her last year." Eventually we found a gorgeous mohair scarf, and a rich, buttery leather purse.

Next stop was Beamish's, a little farther down Richmond Rd. We expected sixteen cousins from six months to eighteen years old, and six parents to descend on our house on Christmas afternoon. Beamish's was the perfect store where we could buy a gift for each cousin. We loaded up books, puzzles, Silly Putty, colouring books and crayons, fancy socks and little toys for the babies.

Christmas candy was a necessity as well; candy canes, to be attached to each gift, marshmallow snowmen, ribbon candies, and hard candies with pictures of flowers and fruit through the middle. We staggered out of the store with armloads of bags and parcels.

Next stop was the corner of Churchill and Richmond. At Carver and Ward drugstore we could find tiny bottles of Oh! de London Cologne, by Yardley, for the aunts. For the uncles, the choice was Jade East soap on a rope or Hai Karate cologne. Another timely classic was Old Spice which even offered a shaving brush and a hockey puck shaped soap in a mug made of opaque white glass to match

the aftershave bottle. Lastly Dad scooped up a box of Pot of Gold chocolates to be passed around over the kids' heads.

“Can we have lunch now? I'm starving!” said my best whiny voice.

“Sure, where should we go” Dad replied, even though he knew what the answer would be.

“How about the Royal Burger? It's just down the street.” I suggested.

The Royal Burger on Richmond Rd served the best hamburgers with their own signature sauce. It was also a place to see and be seen, although not so much at lunchtime, and preferably not with a parent.

After our delicious lunch we headed home with our bounty, feeling jolly and full of Christmas spirit, and thankful that Mom had volunteered to wrap all the cousins' gifts!