

Memories of when Massey was King

by Heather Ibbotson and Vincent Ball, The Brantford Expositor, March 1, 2013



BRANTFORD, ON. - Annual Christmas parties for Massey Ferguson families were a highly anticipated event in the early 1960s, yet those parties always came with a tinge of disappointment for Frieda Hannam and her sisters.

"Every year we'd go with our mother because my dad - Robert Stirling - would say his boss - Mr. Smeaton - said he had to work," Hannam said. "We were driven to the party in style by Mr. Boudreau in his fancy Cadillac.

We'd walk into the huge double gym at Pauline Johnson and stacked from floor to ceiling everywhere were what seemed like thousands of presents." She and her sisters always sat on the top of the bleachers at the end so they had a great view of the highly anticipated arrival of Santa. He had the shiniest black boots and the greatest ho, ho, ho for everyone to hear, Hannam said. It was the same routine every year and then, one Christmas, everything changed.

"I sat on Santa's lap once again telling him I'd been a good girl and what I'd hope Santa could bring me that year," Hannam said. "I noticed Santa had a cut on his finger just where my dad had one. "Oh what delight, my heart was joyful."

Her dad, of course, was Santa. Years of disappointment gone, I was left to this day with a proud heart that my dad was and is my special Santa and was for all the Massey children. Many years have passed since Hannam or anyone else attended a Massey Christmas party. Massey Combine Corp., the last of the farm implement companies that at one time dominated Brantford's industrial landscape, went into receivership 25 years ago on March 4, 1988.

To remember the occasion The Expositor has put together a three-part series examining the history of Massey, the bankruptcy of the corporation, and how the city has transformed itself into a university and college town in its wake. The series will include the personal reflections and memories of people who either worked or were the children of people who worked at Massey - people like Todd Outerson, whose father Doug worked there for 25 years. "He worked his way

up through the marketing department and was at both the Verity Works location on Greenwich Street and at the Park Road North (now Wayne Gretzky Parkway) location," Outerson said in an e-mail sent to The Expositor.

"Massey's had a big impact on our household: trips, my post-secondary education, Christmas and birthday gifts." He also remembers his dad heading to Des Moines, Iowa, where Massey had an office. "I know how proud my dad is of his time spent at Massey Ferguson and I sure am proud of him, too."