

30 Dec '96

Dear Francis,

Your Christmas surprises were quite wonderful! How could you have known that Maurice would be so utterly delighted & wreathed in smiles over the tan o'shante? He used to wear one just like it when golfing, & this one is firmly affixed on his mirror as a mascot. I don't even have to go back as far as Elmwood to remember the wringer — we had one at Piggotts in the back kitchen. I can't think where you find items like that — could it be in Saanichton?

You really provided the novelty for us on Christmas Day.

We have heard that Europe has been gripped in cold weather, but I don't imagine you have heard what has been going on in Victoria. We have had the worst snowfall in 50 years. I remember Gramie used to tell us about the winter in Seattle in 1916 when the snow came right up to the roof. Well, this is all being retold now as the Pacific North West has got it again. The problem in Victoria is that there is ~~no~~ no snow clearing equipment and everything since Christmas Day has just ~~seized~~ seized up — no buses, no ferries, no planes, no taxis.

② One radio station has taken on itself the job of acting as a clearinghouse for emergency information for people to get medical help, etc.

We keep thanking our stars that we are so snug here, & that we have had no power cuts, no leaky house, no roof in danger of collapsing! Many people here are not nearly so lucky. The snow has now stopped falling & is turning to rain & slush, melting — a few services are returning, but our little corner, James Bay, is still cut off. I think in 2 or 3 days things will be more or less normal, and throughout this period we have been well supplied with food.

I have to admit I'm beginning to feel like a caged bear as I'm staying indoors till all the possibilities of breezing are over.

I've never bothered much with crime-mystery novels, but got one out of the library for Christmas reading by Dick Francis (ex-jockey for the Royal Family). You may have been reading his books for years, but in case you haven't, I strongly recommend them. You might find some in your library or yours.

③ We invited the new tenant along the passage after Boxing Day for coffee & drinks. I think she was pleased to be asked, & enjoyed seeing how we manage in our apartment (which is just the opposite of hers). She comes from Lancashire, & really stayed for too long. Another evening she invited us, but only I went. Her place is very trad., she thought our kitchen arrangements with extra freezer & convection oven were superior!

I may have mentioned that our building has been repainted in the passageways from top to bottom & it makes such a difference.

I sat on Christmas Day & watched a 1993 BBC/Nederland production of "Messiah". The King College Cambridge choir were the singers, but all the production & technical assistance were Dutch, & I was in my glory. I think Maurice went to sleep! I haven't even heard about the Queen's Speech this year.

Maurice & Ed have been even worse marooned in Colwood where they got even more snow, & she said the roof

has been creaking ominously!

Now we will have sewers backing up
and all the aftermath.

We are so glad to think that you
are well-housed & hope that yours
too was a happy Christmas. You
certainly provided some fun for ours!

Lots of love & good wishes to
us, Jane & Maurice.

I've no idea when this will get
mailed.