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When Santa Came To Uncle Noah

By CHARLES MERCER

WHENEVER ANYONE asks "What does Christmas mean to your?" I'm reminded of what Christmas meant to my great Uncle Noah, Since he is dead and unable to defend himself, it is now safe to tell what Christmas meant to him.

He was, to begin with, an irascible man. By that I mean he refused to drift with the tide of human events. He called it being independent. But the way my grandmother put it: "If you tell Noah to go north, he'll go south. If you want him to go south, just remotely suggest that he go

On St. Patrick's Day he'd wear an orange tie and on Orangeman's Day he'd wear a green. In his youth he was forcibly restrained from raising a Union Jack on the Fourth of July. In middle age he often wore a straw hat in winter.

You can readily see that Christmas would be a thorn in the side of such a man. He suffered nobly under its good spirit for about 50 years. Although he came from a devoutly religious family, he refused to enter a church. So the religious significance of Christmas was quite wasted on him. Grimly working out his years as an office manager for a railroad, he was filled with anguish by the annual throngs of holiday travelers. A bachelor, he knew no joy in buying gifts for wife or chil-

Each Christmas for many Jears, however, he summoned the moral strength to go to my Grandmother's house for the annual family celebration. He would sit there, glumly chewing on a cigar, only aroused from his mournful meditation on the merriment when he could draw an unwary nephew or niece into argument

Then, one Christmas about 20 years ago, he failed to appear at Grandma's. Eventually the story came out. This is what happened:

ON CHRISTMAS EVE, Noah suddenly decided he was tired of going to Grandma's. He was disgusted witth the whole ceremony of Christmas, its joy which he called "forced," its gifts which he called "commercialism". So he locked the door to his small apartment in the rooming house where he lived. He went to bed early and slept late into Christmas morning

He cooked his own breakfast and sat down to read Voltaire, his favorite author, trying to shut out the sounds from downstairs where other roomers were exchanging gifts around the landlady's tree. Once someone knocked on his door, but he did not answer.

The day crept on and gradually Noah grew more and more restive and irritable. Again someone knocked, and this time Noah shouted, "Go away!" But in a few minutes the knock was repeated

and this time Noah angrily flung open the door. He faced a small, brown-haired, pleasant woman

about 40 years old, who smiled at him and said: "Good afternoon, I'm Agnes, the fandlady's niece. I understand you're ill and I wondered if there was anything I could do."

"I'm not sick," said Noah. She just smiled at him and said, "You don't look well to me."

"I'm fine!" rosred Noah

"Prove it," she said.

He gaped at her. "If you're not sick, come downstairs and join the rest of us," Agnes said.

Agnes looked at him steadily for a long time. Then she said gently, "Of course you will. Come along now or must I lead you by the hand."

THEN OCCURRED the thing that no one, least of all Noah, ever could explain.

He quietly followed her downstairs. He had dinner with her and her aunt. In the course of the afternoon he learned that Agnes was a widow.

Everyone could easily understand what he saw in Agnes. But no one could fathom what she saw in him. Still, she must have seen something, for a couple of months later they were married.

They took a small apartment and several months later they adopted a small baby boy.

CHRISTMAS rolled around again. Agnes and the baby were invited to Grandma's with Noah, of course. Everyone watched him expectantly after they arrived. Yes, he'd changed. He was pleasant and smiling - but still rather quiet.

The gifts were opened amid a great babble. Finally, when everyone had opened his gifts. Agnes said she had one more for Noah, We watched breathlessly as he opened the package. The silence became oppresive as he slowly took out a summer straw hat.

Suddenly he threw back his head and roared with laughter. It was the most tremendous laugh we'd ever heard. It seemed to fill and shake the

Then he put on the straw hat and started to talk. He was the most talkative man I ever heard. He wore the straw hat to the table and kept it on and everyone agreed it was the merriest Christ-

LATE THAT NIGHT as we all left for our homes, several of us paused for Noah and Agnes. They came out the door into the snowy night. Gravely Noah handed the baby to Agnes. Taking off the straw hat ,he kicked a hole in it and scaled it away in the snowy darkness. Then, shaking with laughter, he took the baby from Agnes and they walked off into the night.

Blue Book' Turns Out For White House Dinner

THE HAPPIEST FAMILY IN HAYWOOD COUNTY

By JANE EADS

Louis XVIII for losing the battle the Harry Dexter White hearings, controversy over the White case of the postmaster general, piped of Waterloo. Many believe Ney es- then rushed home to don evening sat down together - Brownell, up at a ladies' luncheon recently caped the sentence and fled to clothes to accompany him to the FBI Chief J. Edgar Hoover and when someone mentioned Swedish America to become Peter Stuart White House dinner for the Su- Justice Tom Clark. However, every- Ambassador Boheman. "He must Ney, a Rowan County schoolmaster. preme Court.

wenir hunters chinned away much of the stone. Now the Ney Memorial Association has erected the modest grave.

day for Mrs. Herbert Brownell, afternoon on the "Hill" listening official hostess.

a brick and glass mausoleum over Warren is still in California get- The guests didn't adjourn to the very handsome in it at the White

elegant affair, the second state dinner to be given by the Eisenhow- ter how late it is or how trying ers. Justice William O. Douglas the day has been. She finds her also came alone, but Justice Hugo greatest relaxation in dancing.

Black, whose beautiful wife died First thing she does is turn on recently, was accompanied by his radio or phonograph and whirl WASHINGTON—It was a busy wife of the attorney general! The sleek and slender brunet spent the sleek and sleek and slender brunet spent the sleek and sl

was ordered executed by Emperor intently to her husband testify in Three major characters in the Mrs. Arthur Summerfield, wife one is said to have avoided talking hold the lightweight record," she Ranking guest at the dinner was Chief Justice Earl Warren. Mrs.

Warren is call in Collifornia. ting packed to move to the Capital, East Room for the entertainment House reception the other night."

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-a two-piano recital by Miss Virlast guests departed at 11:45.

The full court was present for the of the United States, is on her

Appeals to U.N.



PROFESSOR Walter Hallstein (left), Undersecretary of State for West Germany, is interviewed by a reporter prior to his appearance before the United Nations, in New York, to appeal for help in securing the release of thousands of German POWs still held in Russia. The Communists released some of the World War II prisoners, but German authorities insist that many are still held. (International)

PITTSBURGH (AP) - Because of a scorekeeping error, rookie Parker MacDonald of the Pittsburgh Hornets in the American Hockey League was deprived of a well-earned "hat trick" (scoring of three goals). The three goals he tallied against the Syracuse Warriors were erraneously given to teammate Johnny McClellan, The error, however, was rectified the next day and MacDonald had his first professional "hat trick" rec- The Top Dress

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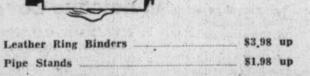
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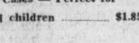
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