

'Yes, Virginia, There Is a Santa Claus' Was Written 50 Years Ago; Remains Popular

The most celebrated editorial that has ever been published in an American newspaper was not about the atom bomb or some other startling headline event. Oddly enough, it had to do with an eight year old girl

named Virginia O'Hanlon. One fall day in 1897, there came to the office of the New York Sun a letter in a childish hand. Editor Edward P. Mitchell must have smiled as he read:
"Dear Editor—I am 8 years old. Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus. Papa says 'if you see it in The Sun it's so.' Please tell me the truth, is there a Santa Claus?"
Virginia O'Hanlon.

The letter was turned over to Assistant Editor Francis P. Church, who editorialized thusly:

"Yes, Virginia there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas, how dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus! It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

"Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies! You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world.

"You tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain beauty and glory beyond. It is all and view and picture the supernal real. Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

"No Santa Claus! Thank God! he lives, and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood."

Virginia O'Hanlon is now Mrs. Edward Douglas, a widow of 58, and the popular assistant principal of a New York public school. When questioned as to whether she still believes in Santa Claus, Mrs. Douglas always exclaims, "Oh, more than ever."

Fifty Christmases have come and gone since the answer to Virginia's childish question was penned and appeared in the Sun. The editorial will be published and re-published, in years to come, because it somehow catches and defines the real meaning of Santa Claus and what he stands for.

IN MEMORIAM

In memory of my wife and our mother, the late Ellen Pittard Welton, who departed this life one year ago, Dec. 16, 1946.

You suffered much, you murmured not,
You gently bore your pain,
And though we watched you day by day
Our hopes were all in vain.

The dearest one in all the world,
Has gone away to stay;
A broken home is all we have
Since you have gone away.

Sadly missed by husband, G. T. Welton, and children—George, Woodrow, Lois Welton, and Mrs. James Joyner, Newport News, Va.

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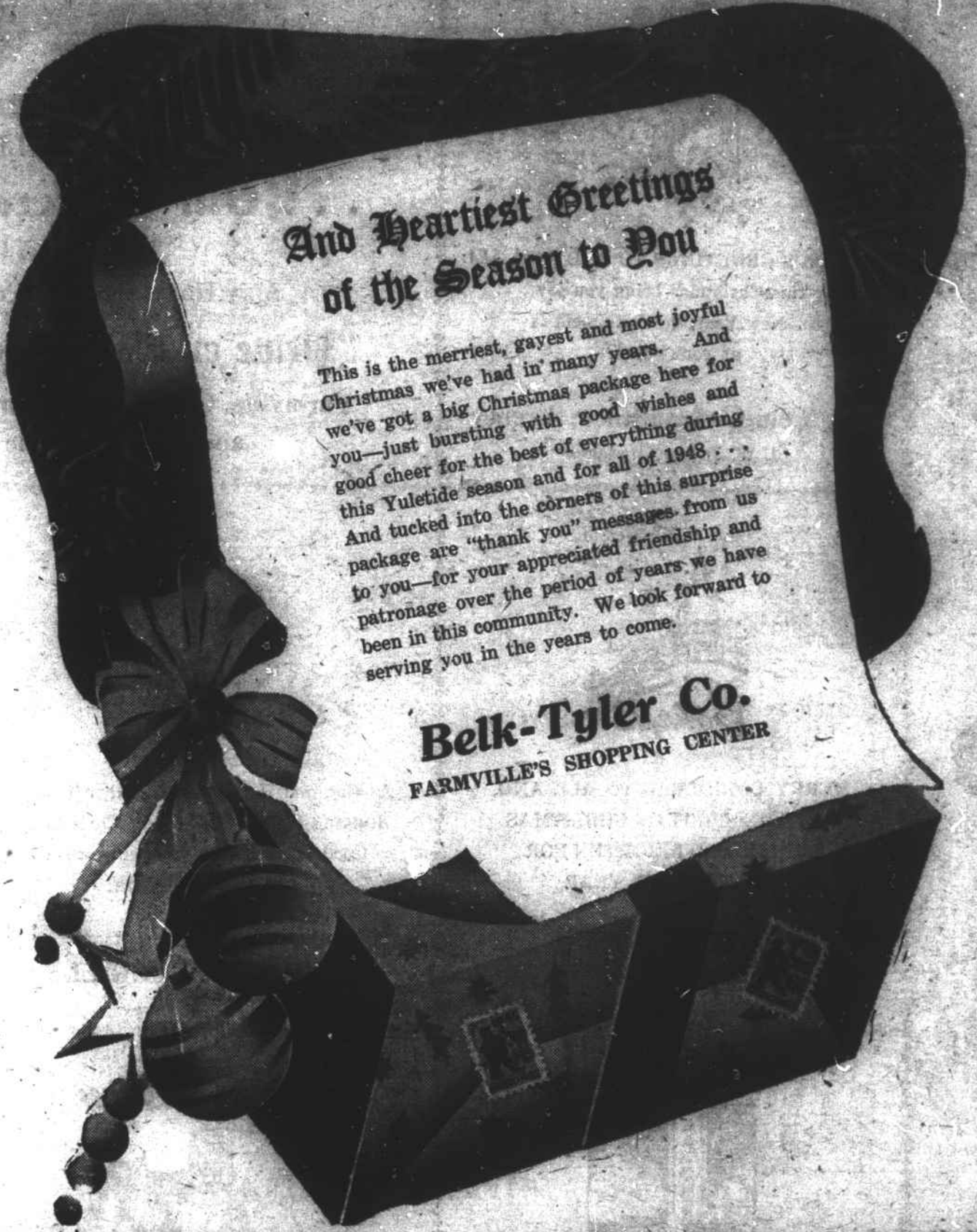
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might reach all men's hearts and bring peace and good fellowship to everyone.

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