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As We See It..... By Kay Piotrkowski

Three men sat in their late model gas guzzler at the corner of Central Avenue and Main Street. They seemed to be confused. One tugged at his chin whiskers, another adjusted the folds in his flowing robes and the third twitched around in order to check three chests on the rear seat—almost as though they contained valuables. The trio studied a road map under the blazing bright dome light and periodically scanned the heavens.

In this season of peace on earth and good will toward men, I decided to be my brother's keeper and stepped forward. The bewhiskered gent behind the wheel, who apparently was caravan boss, pressed a button and the window disappeared into the door.

"You appear to be lost," I said.

"Oh verily," he replied. "We have made this trip many times before. But for some reason, this season our path appears dimly lit and we have strayed from our course."

"Perhaps I can help you," I offered. "If you will tell me where you are headed, I'll do my best to give you directions."

The window zipped up and the three engaged in a lengthy discussion with much pointing of fingers and flailing of arms. Finally the glass again did a Houdini into metal door.

"We are seeking a babe. He is not very well dressed and in times past, his surroundings were pretty sad. Although in recent years, we have found him in brightly lighted store windows rocking to the rhythm of recorded bleatings, mooings and hee hawings of papier-mache animals surrounding his electronic manger. But there has always been a bright light in the sky which led us to him. This year we can not find the beacon," Twitchy moaned.

"Oh," I said. "You are not alone. It has been a pretty overcast month with poor visibility. A number of people shelled out a good deal of cash to take an ocean voyage just to observe your star and they all returned empty eyed because Kohoutek never managed to cut through the cloud cover. But cheer up," I continued. "Meteorologists and astronomers predict conditions will improve."

"No! No!" the trio of voices protested. "It is not Kohoutek we are looking for. It is the bright red, blue, green and yellow lights that used to sway in the heavens above Main Street, bobbing and wiggling in the breeze like Salome's beads—they are what we can not find. Without them we are lost. How will children ever be able to enjoy the true spirit of Christmas without these traditional beacons to show them the way? The little ones will be as lost as we are."

"Well now," I said, "apparently you have been so isolated inside your Detroit monster, you haven't kept in touch with the outside world. (obviously they hadn't been joy riding around Hoke County the last week in November) We have an energy crisis, you know. And lights have been going out or are dimmed all over the world. We are trying to conserve energy in every possible way and doing without holiday lights is one of them."

"Yea, though we drive through the valley of pollution from now until December 25th, I fear we will never find the babe in time to deliver our precious gifts," said Twitchy as he once again checked the rear seat cargo.

"Please forgive me for being nosey," I requested. "But what do you have in those chests, gold, frankincense and myrrh?"

"Mercy, no!" they replied. "Nothing so base and common. These gifts are far more valuable."

"This one," beamed Whiskers, pointing at the brilliant shimmering chest. "contains kilowatts to brighten the little one's dark nights."

"And this one," purred Long Robes, indicating a richly carved slick black chest. "holds a million gallons of gasoline to power his manger when the kilowatts are all used up."

"And the last one," fired off Twitchy, singling out the third chest which gave off a warm red glow, "is filled with enough fule to heat the cold, drafty stable at 80 degrees in the severest weather."

"But without the traditional lights," the trio chimed, in perfectly synchronized eight-track stereo acoustics, "we fear we are lost and will not be able to find him."

With this parting quip, Whiskers stomped on the gas, scratched wheels and careened up Main Street. The camel-colored car humped up, sputtered, coughed and died, right in front of the Methodist Church's nativity scene.

I walked off, hoping that a few minutes at the manger might enable them to truly see the Light and help them remember that December 25th really is not the anniversary of the birth of electricity.

Merry Christmas

"Oh, no, it's just a little car I bought for the family"



The Christian Science Monitor

The Midnight Oil

by Jama Chesser

The Christmas vacation is probably the most brilliant of inventions. It allows families which live far apart to be together for the most meaningful and loving days of the year.

Cousins turn out to be real friends at Christmas. Nieces and nephews even put away their pea shooters and polish their shoes when they know you may drop a note to Santa at a moment's notice. Cap and I even look forward to seeing our mothers-in-law over the holidays.

Up to now, the thought of making the trip at Christmas was exciting. We didn't have to worry about getting stranded somewhere along the way by the fuel shortage or caught somewhere on a road blocked for miles by striking truck drivers. The worst problem in previous years was the packing.

Cap came in the house the other day and went straight to the closet in the hall. He was in there a long time. I thought he must be hiding some Christmas presents for me and decided not to ask any questions. I planned to take a look in the closet when he went to pick up the cleaning after dinner.

After dinner, he went for the cleaning and I went for the closet. Nothing there. He must have stashed all the gifts

elsewhere and used the closet as a camouflage maneuver. No matter, at least I knew he bought me something. At that point I praised myself for waiting until we got to Oklahoma to do any shopping for Cap so he wouldn't be tempted to peek.

That evening we began packing the suitcases in the car for our two week trip. "Guess we better put all the suitcases in the trunk," said Cap, "to leave room for ALL the packages in the back seat."

That sounded good. It sounded like Cap had an armload of gifts for me hidden somewhere around the place after all.

We started with the largest suitcase, the one which absolutely would not fit into the trunk of our SS model car. We set it aside and started over with the two smaller suitcases. They went in leaving a gap wide enough for the dog food and a bag of shoes.

Cap started taking the hanging clothes out to the car while I unpacked and repacked the contents of the large suitcase into a flight bag that could be stuffed in the trunk beside the spare tire. Those tasks completed, we stood back to survey the damage.

"Hey, those hanging clothes take up almost half the back seat," I observed. "Don't you think we'll need that room for ALL those packages you were talking about?"

Cap looked at me and grinned. "Okay, he said, 'I'll get a plastic bag and we can cover the clothes and lay them over the suitcases in the trunk. That will give us the whole back seat.'"

I mused to myself, "bet he thinks I found all the packages he has hidden around since I knew there were so many of them."

The rearranging took only five minutes. "Let's get all the packages and be off," he said.

We went inside, went straight to the Christmas tree and each picked up one of the two small gifts that had been under the tree for days. Then, we just stood there looking at each other.

"Aren't you going to get ALL those packages you were talking about?" I asked.

"What packages," he looked surprised. "I thought you had packages for me hidden all around the house and I've been looking in the closets for them."

We went to the car and put the two small packages in the middle of the back seat. Suddenly the back seat looked very big and empty.

"Boy," said Cap, "that's the best job of packing we have ever done. Hope we can get it all back into the trunk when we have all those packages from home to bring back after Christmas."

And with that, over the highways and through the truckers to grandmother's house we went.

WASHINGTON - The Senate Government Operations Committee has demonstrated that Congress can move swiftly and responsibly in the handling of legislation dealing with the energy crisis.

A few days ago the President asked Congress to pass legislation to create a new Federal Energy Administration. The Government Operations Committee, of which I am Chairman, responded quickly. In a matter of eight days we reviewed the proposal, conducted hearings, and reported the FEA bill to the Senate. The Committee evidenced its willingness to work with the President in response to this needed legislation and at the same time maintained its proper legislative role.

CLIFF BLUE... People & Issues



LEGISLATIVE PAY - A citizens committee headed by former Lt. Governor H. Pat Taylor, Jr., studying legislative pay has recommended that "under no circumstances should the legislators pay exceed \$10,000 during the two year term."

Taylor said that he did not think the money for living expenses should be increased. He said as a lawmaker he "made money on expense money."

The General Assembly, like too many departments of government, is far from an economical run affair.

When the General Assembly goes to annual sessions you will likely find that the legislative branch of government will soon be double what it was when biennial sessions were the custom. With all the committee meetings being held while the General Assembly is not in session we suspect that the cost for the two years beginning January 1, 1973 and ending December 31, 1974 will be double what it was two years before.

PAT TAYLOR - Speaking of Pat Taylor, Jr., he still has the wit and humor which has characterized him down through the years. Visiting in a senior friend's home recently, he was asked: "Which had you rather be, governor or U.S. Senator?" Pat replied: "I'm thinking about going into the ministry."

ECU MED SCHOOL - Rep. J.P. Huskins of Iredell County who is co-chairman of the legislative Manpower Study Commission authorized by the 1973 General Assembly, has drafted the Commission's report, which looks with favor on an expanded medical school for East Carolina University.

It now appears to many people who are familiar with the medical manpower needs and with the political winds that the time is approaching when a mighty tide will carry the ECU Med school advocates to victory.

The fight is comparable to the battle over the State College "name change" which broke out during the 1963 session of the General Assembly. The "establishment" wanted to change the name of N.C. State College to "North Carolina State, the University of North Carolina." State College supporters

didn't like the idea at all, so they came back two years later and had their way, naming the Raleigh institution, "North Carolina State University."

It now appears that ECU Med School boosters may be able to do the same thing in 1974. If not in 1974, then in 1975, or in 1977 after the next gubernatorial election when chances are that whoever runs and wins for governor will be backing an enlarged medical school for East Carolina University.

Taking the lead for ECU is J.P. Huskins, Iredell County newspaper publisher from Statesville.

I. BEVERLY LAKE, JR. - We are beginning to see frequent mention of I. Beverly Lake, Jr., a member of the Attorney General's staff regarding prices of natural gas in the energy crisis. It was as a member of the Attorney General's staff that his father, now Associate Justice of the State Supreme Court attracted public attention many years ago that led him to make a couple of runs for governor - ending up on the State Supreme Court.

MIDDLE INCOME GROUP - We can't believe that the U.S. Congress will dare to tax gasoline as some have suggested. If such taxes as have been suggested are imposed it will be the low and middle income groups who will be hit hardest. Now it's the middle income group who are hit hardest by the Social Security taxes.

SENATOR ERVIN - The hint from the white house that some of the U.S. Senators might not look too well if their tax reports were made public, has initially back - fired with the publication of Senators Ervin and Weicker's income tax reports. Ervin reported his 1972 income as \$63,440, and having paid \$15,483.55 in federal taxes. Weicker reported an income of \$67,939 and having paid \$14,350 in federal taxes.

EFFECTIVE CONTROLS? - In a democracy like the USA we question whether effective price controls can be maintained in time of peace. In time of war - yes, but in time of peace the people are not as acceptable to regulations as people living in dictator ruled countries might be.

Just One Thing After Another

By Carl Goerch

When we lived in Washington, N.C., folks used to go in quite extensively for Christmas decorations. Prizes used to be offered for the best decorated homes.

One Christmas I had what I thought was a wonderful idea. Getting hold of some loose cotton, I put it in small chunks all over the shrubbery in front of the house. It looked exactly like snow, and the general effect was most impressive.

It was impressive for about three hours. Then a high wind came along and proceeded to blow that cotton all over creation. Some of it went across the Pamlico River and landed in Chocowinity, three miles distant.

We didn't get the prize that year.

The late Edmund Harding usually had the most beautiful decorations. One Christmas Mr. and Mrs. Jim Ellison were driving by Edmund's house, a few days before Christmas. They stopped to admire the decorations.

"It's wonderful, simply wonderful!" sighed Lillian. "And look. There are Miss Katie and Peep and Kack, dragging in the yule log! Isn't that just too realistic!"

Jim took a closer look and then said somewhat morosely: "Yule log - hell! That's Edmund they're dragging in!"

Lots of Northerners are puzzled about the shooting of fireworks down South during the Christmas season. Up North fireworks are used on the Fourth of July but never on Christmas. Here's how it started:

Back in the good old days, when the population was scattered and communications were difficult, people wanted to wish one another Merry Christmas. The way they did it was for some farmer to get out in his yard and shoot off an old muzzle - loader two or three times. This would be heard and understood by his neighbor, who might be living half a mile away. The neighbor

also would start shooting, and the chap who lived on the other side of him would take it up. And that's how this business of using fireworks during the Christmas season got started in the South.

Despite this explanation a number of years ago we had a reader in Connecticut who knew a different reason for fireworks at Christmas. He wrote us the following:

"My understanding is that the custom of shooting off fireworks in the South was started by Yankee merchants up North who were unable to sell all their fireworks on the Fourth of July. So they went South and told the folks down there that it would be a fine idea to use fireworks during the Christmas season. In this manner they managed to dispose of all their left - over stock!"

For the next week or two the spirit of brotherly love, friendship, kindness, good will and charity will prevail throughout the country. Shoved into the background will be selfishness, greed, hatred, avarice, and other undesirable traits. People will try to help those who are less fortunate than they are. Everybody will try to do something nice for somebody else.

What a fine thing it would be if some of this same spirit could be bottled up and spread out over the balance of the year!

But no. Soon as Christmas is over with, people will settle back into the old routine again.

The guy who said that human nature is a funny thing, certainly knew what he was talking about. We've made improvements along many lines, but so far as individual characteristics are concerned, there hasn't been much improvement during the ages.

When we're good, we're very good, but when we're bad, we're awful!

Senator Sam Ervin Says

The Committee added certain amendments to the Administration's request to insure that all people, industries, and sections of the nation are fairly treated in the operation of the energy policies and programs.

As the country feels the effects of the worst fuel crisis in its history, there are a multitude of concerns about the problem and its solution. At the moment, many are seeking to find scapegoats, and dependent upon one's view there are ample targets - the Administration, the Congress, the oil industry, the Arabs, the Israelis, our Allies, the environmentalists, the big car owners, and countless others. As shortages intensify, and jobs and whole industries are affected, the people want

to be assured that energy policies function as well as they can.

I have asked Senator Jackson, one of the foremost authorities on the energy crisis, as Chairman of the Senate Permanent Investigations Subcommittee of the Government Operations Committee to monitor this situation and conduct any appropriate investigations related to energy. On November 29 the Subcommittee commenced hearings on the home heating oil and gasoline shortages. Prior to these hearings, the staff produced a "Staff Study of the Oversight and Efficiency of Executive Agencies with Respect to the Petroleum Industry."

See SEN SAM, Page 11