

# Christmas at Meredith Is . . .

By Brooks McGirt

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Christmas at Meredith is many things, as these pictures from the present and from past years reveal, bringing life to this word-and-picture essay on what the Christmas spirit means at Meredith.*

Christmas at Meredith is one of the most exciting times of the whole year.

It's coming back from Thanksgiving holidays with only three weeks — or two weekends — until Christmas vacation starts. It's starting to play Christmas records the first

night back at school after Thanksgiving and feeling yourself getting the "Christmas spirit."

It's decorating for Christmas—in the room, the doors, the hall, the dorm, the campus. It's a Christmas tree in the Bee Hive and scratchy Johnny Mathis Christmas songs. It's a Christmas tree on the hall, maybe decorated with home-made ornaments. It's a tree in the dining hall, the lights blinking and winking during the meals. It's a tree in the lobby of Johnson Hall, a tree decorated with white paper ornaments made by art classes and white lights.

Christmas at Meredith is lighting an advent wreath. It's the chorus concert and "Stille Nacht." It's Christmas parties in every club meeting.

Christmas at Meredith is that last-minute rush by professors to finish up. It's tests and papers and bibliographies you can hardly concentrate on for thinking, "Just six more days — just five more days — just four more days — just three more days." It's the wonderful feeling you get when that last quiz is over.

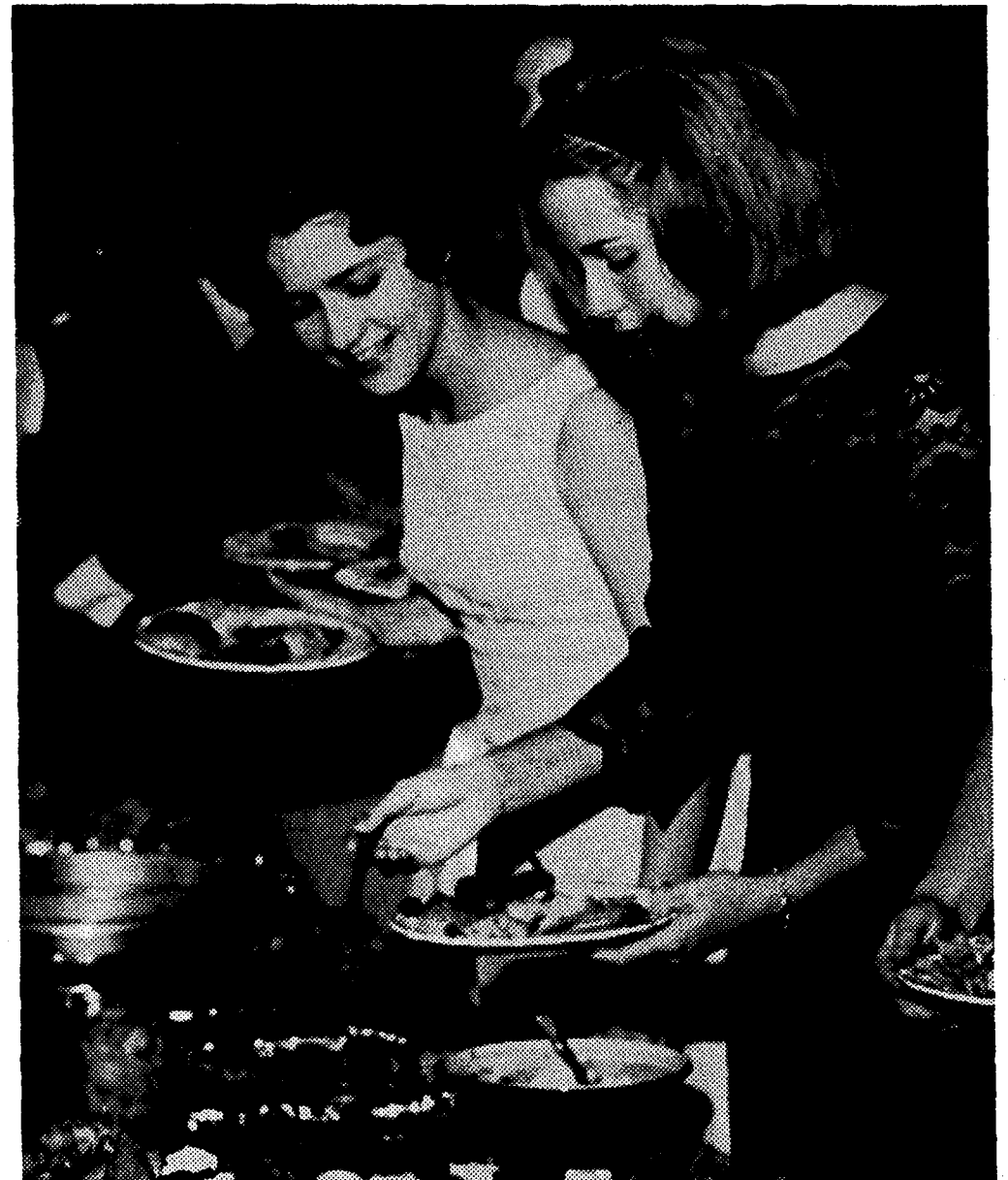
Christmas at Meredith is going down-town to do shopping. It's North Hills and Cameron Village, all overflowing with people. It's lots of ivy and glitter decorating the stores. It's Ridgewood all lighted up for the holidays. It's seeing the Christmas lights at Ridgewood while you're walking across the breezeway to supper.

Christmas at Meredith is lots of parties. It's a gag gift party on your hall the night before the holidays begin. It's a party for your little sisters. It's a party in your suite. It's exchanging names.

Christmas at Meredith is a banquet. It's seeing all your friends "really" dressed up. It's the dining hall, suddenly turned into a paradise of beauty. It's tons of turkey and roast duck and sardines and special casseroles and hot buttered rolls. It's eating by candlelight. It's stuffing yourself and wondering how you'll ever be able to eat again.

It's the dining hall staff coming out of the kitchen to sing Christmas carols. It's feeling a catch in your throat as you listen.

Christmas here is also the tradition of Christmas caroling. It's bundling up to keep warm — wearing slacks, gloves, coat, hat, scarf,



... the Christmas banquet, getting dressed up, loading your plate with good food and more good food, eating by candlelight.



... lighting the advent wreath.



... decorating your room with stockings, trees, maybe even gaily wrapped presents.



... Christmas trees, like this one in the Bee Hive.

two pairs of socks. It's riding a bus, driven by a patient man, all over Raleigh. It's probably getting lost, and it's also probably coming in late. If you're very lucky, it's breaking down somewhere.

It's singing "Edeo," "Silent Night," "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing." It's finally seeing your professors at home. It's hot chocolate at Dru's, egg nog at Mr. Fracker's, chocolate bars at Dr. Knight's.

It's returning to school after caroling, feeling sick after all the things you've eaten that night, feeling punchy because of the lateness of the hour and the thought that the

night is still young.

But most of all it's feeling good — feeling good because tomorrow you can go home for two whole weeks, because you will be away from quizzes and teachers for two weeks — but mainly because, in Christmas caroling, you felt something of the true meaning of Christmas — you gave for the happiness of others.

It's the same feeling you get at the Astro Christmas party for the blind school or at the Phi Christmas party for children with cerebral palsy. But no matter where you get it, you soon realize that this is the true Christmas spirit, at Meredith or anywhere else — giving of yourself.

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