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Count your blessings during the Christmas holidays, most especially if you happen to have six small children and take them along with you when you go shopping at the supermarket.

That's the lesson learned by a couple living down Croatan way, nine miles east of New Bern. Whatever else transpires during the Yuletide season; one event above all others will linger in their memory.

Rounding up enough food to satisfy the appetites of a half dozen hungry juveniles is no trivial undertaking, but the parents of the assorted sextet finally accomplished their mission at the A & P store on East Front street.

Unfortunately, one item was overlooked as the family wheeled baskets to the check out counter, paid off, watched an attendant load a multitude of bags into their car, and finally headed home.

Arriving at their destination, the parents and kids discovered that the six moppets had dwindled to five. Panic really set in when a hurried inventory revealed that the missing party was the youngest of the lot, an unpredictable three year old boy.

Terrified, the parents called the supermarket, and John Blanchard's crew located the child, contentedly amusing himself in the midst of rows and rows of merchandise.

Like we said, be sure to count your kids, while counting your blessings during the helter skelter holiday season.

On this day, in 1773, American patriots staged the Boston Tea Party, and tomorrow marks the anniversary of Wilbur and Orville Wright's airplane flight at Kitty Hawk, in 1903.

It is proclaimed as the first heavier-than-air ascension in history, completely ignoring the fact that a bearded gentleman, dressed in red, had been doing the same thing with a sled and tiny reindeer long before the Wright brothers got into the act.

In New Bern, and elsewhere in the United States, the chief function of mistletoe is the use of it for kissing purposes during the Christmas holidays. Supposedly, anybody caught under a suspended sprig of it is a fair target for affection.

So far as The Mirror can ascertain, this kissing business was dreamed up by somebody centuries after the parasite was first regarded as something special. It figured prominently in German and Norse mythology, and legend has it that the beautiful god Balder was slain with an arrow made from its wood.

The Celts held the plant in veneration, it is said, and doubly so when it was found attached to an oak. From very early times, people have believed that it brings happiness, safety and good fortune, so long as it doesn't touch the ground.

We hate to disillusion romantic New Bernians, but what we call mistletoe from New Jersey southward isn't the real McCoy. It is actually something known as *Phoradendron flavescens*. Only in Europe will you find true mistletoe (*Viscum album*) growing.

Where else but in The Mirror would you learn such valuable

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JUST LIKE DAD—Anyone who knows Patrolman William F. Dowdy, III, of the New Bern police department will agree that his son, Bryan Ashley, is a chip off the old block. Billy and his wife, Jackie, will have to keep close tab on this young man during the holidays, if they want to keep Christmas decorations intact. New Bern's happiest homes during the Yuletide are those that are blessed with children.

Actually, the Dowdy youngster isn't quite old enough to fully appreciate Santa Claus, but he is smart enough to realize that something exciting is going on, and rest assured he'll be right smack in the middle of it. This world is in a heck of a mess, but as long as we have lights on a tinsel tree, the laughter of little children, and the gift of the Christ Child, there is still hope.—Photo by Wray Studio.