

The NEW BERN

MIRROR

PUBLISHED WEEKLY
IN THE HEART OF
EASTERN NORTH
CAROLINA

Regional Library
400 Johnson St.
New Bern NC 28560

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VOLUME 13

NEW BERN, N. C., FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18, 1970

NUMBER 40

The other day our three year old granddaughter, who lives in Alexandria, Va., had her very first conversation with Santa Claus. Due to a misunderstanding on her part, it wasn't a completely happy experience.

She made his acquaintance at a large department store, where the patron saint of childhood was going through his usual routine of greeting little boys and girls, and determining their wishes.

There were beautiful dolls and a huge assortment of expensive toys all around the jolly gentleman, to whet the yearnings of his juvenile petitioners. Needless to say, the apple of our eye was not unmindful of the colorful array.

Somehow, it was learned later, she got the notion that Santa Claus was there to distribute the goodies, maybe to eliminate the necessity of visiting each home on Christmas Eve.

St. Nick did have a supply of inexpensive trinkets to pass out, and in Amy Stuart's case, it was, of all things an Indian headband. Trying hard to hide her disappointment, she took a last look at all those toys, waved a respectful goodbye and walked away.

That night she explained to us on the telephone, apparently without any sign of resentment, that "Santa Claus didn't have enough toys." And bless her heart, she seemed excited about that cheap little Indian headband.

And here's another true Christmas story. One of Carlton (Tessie) Smith's two small sons, we're not sure whether it was Matthew or Michael, got to misbehaving several days ago.

Carlton, as parents have done since way back when, gave him a stern lecture, and omniously warned him that Santa Claus sees everything he does, and makes a note of it.

This revelation was somewhat astounding to the erring youngster. "I thought that was sweet Jesus," he replied.

As one of many who won't soon forget genial Don Deichmann, this editor recalls how, on frequent occasions, we expressed the belief to him that he would make an ideal Santa Claus for anybody's street corner.

Can't you just picture him, talking to tots with that marvelously resonant, booming voice the Good Lord endowed him with? Don, and another great guy, Babe Ruth, were both naturals for the part.

We've never visited the Deichmann home, but we've been told that each Christmas Don and his very gracious wife had a birthday cake to observe the anniversary of the Christ Child's arrival in Bethlehem.

This year, we feel sure, there'll be a birthday cake, as always. What a lovely custom for any family, in a world where the material side of Christmas is given emphasis to a more disturbing extent with each passing year.



Christmas Time is Memory Time
When folks are growing old,
They cling to all the treasures
A heaped up heart can hold.
And for me there's no forgetting
How this little girl and boy
Brought our home magic moments
That for us meant untold joy.
But childhood is a fleeting thing,
And youngsters soon are gone,
No tiny reindeer seek your roof,
Where has Kris Kringle gone?
Well, praises be, he's headed back,
This Gramp will know the joy
Of hanging stockings once again
For a little girl and boy.

—JGMCD.

