

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23, 1998

Story's message of love rings through the ages

Dear Readers,
Some things simply cannot be improved upon, as with the original telling of this beautiful story. Our wish for you this holiday season is that we may all carry its message of love, peace and good will toward our fellow man in our hearts each day of the coming year. Merry Christmas to you and those you love!

The Chowan Herald Staff

THE CHRISTMAS STORY

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; because he was of the house and lineage of David. To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shown round about them; and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which has come to pass, which the Lord has made known unto us.

And they came with haste, and found Mary, Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds,

But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

— From the Bible, the Book of St. Luke



Puritans tried, failed to quash the celebration of Christmas

Now that Christmas is almost upon us, we hear laments that the holiday has gotten too complicated, too commercial, too hectic. It's true, Christmas used to be simple; in fact, in 1652, Christmas was abolished. "No observation shall be had of the five-and-twentieth day in December, commonly called Christmas Day," ordered Oliver Cromwell and the Parliamentarians, who had overthrown the crown in 1649. The victors were Puritans, very strict in their religious doctrine. They wanted to "purify" the country of its pagan and Catholic traditions - espe-

Edenton HISTORY



Mary Ann Coffey

cially Christmas. The Puritans argued that only the Sabbath should be celebrated, and that since the New Testament did not provide a date, or even a season for the birth of Christ,

there was no religious basis for proclaiming December 25 to be Christmas. They complained that Christmas, that "wanton Bacchanalian feast," merely cobbled together "the old Heathens' Fasting Day in honour to Saturn their Idol-God, Popish superstitions, ranting fashion, fearful provocations, and horrible abominations committed against the Lord..." Soon, the Puritans brought their beliefs to the New World. In 1659, a law in Massachusetts punished those "found observing, by forbearing from labor,

See COFFEY On Page 5-A

How a new basketball taught me a lot about Santa

It was the first Christmas that I had begun to figure out the role of Santa Claus.

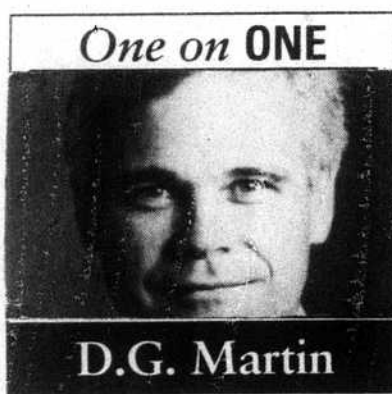
My parents knew that I wanted Santa to bring me two things - a new basketball and a small ventriloquist's dummy.

(The dummy was really just a doll that looked like Charlie McCarthy. But when you pulled the string in the back of his head, his mouth would move. I thought I could learn to talk for the dummy without moving my mouth and become the next Edgar Bergen.)

My parents told me that Santa couldn't be expected to bring me two "big" presents and that I would have to choose which one I wanted the most.

Of course, I wanted both. But I also wanted to please Santa Claus. So I began to try to decide which one of those presents I could do without - if I had to.

I needed the new basketball. I was one of the youngest kids trying to play the game in my neighborhood - and the older kids wouldn't always let me play. The new ball would be my ticket. The



D.G. Martin

big kids would want to use it, and to use it they would have to let me play.

As for the ventriloquist's dummy, I was sure I could use it to amaze and entertain - and get the attention that I craved.

So it was a hard choice - and Christmas was coming in the next few days. I couldn't make up my mind.

Just before my parents' deadline for deciding, I was playing up in our attic. Guess what I found. It was an unwrapped square package that I hadn't seen before.

So I check it out and saw that inside the package was a brand new basketball - just like the one I wanted Santa to bring me.

This was a puzzle. What was the basketball doing here in the attic? I was pretty sure I knew the answer, but I didn't like it.

My friends and I had been talking about the question of whether or not Santa was real. Some asserted with all certainty that they knew their parents were responsible for the mysterious gifts that were supposed to come from Santa. One boy promised "for sure" that he had stayed up and seen his parents putting out Santa's presents.

Another group held firmly to their belief in the existence of Santa Claus. I was a part of this group. We appreciated the difficulties of our position. We were beginning to understand how many children, houses and towns there were in this world - and how far apart they were. We struggled to explain how all of Santa's work could be accomplished in so short a time.

We thought these things through, shaking our heads. Whatever our doubts, we could not conceive of living in a world without Santa.

There was a practical side to all this as well. As one of the boys put it, "What if there isn't a Santa Claus? What if our parents are really the ones who give us those presents? If that should be true, what do you think will happen when we tell our parents we know that they are Santa Claus? They might just stop what they are doing."

He made good sense. I kept trying to put my doubts aside.

But this basketball in the package made it hard for me - hard not to believe that my parents had bought it and put it up there until Christmas when they would put it out as a gift from Santa. Yes, it was all coming together. And I didn't like the conclusion I was reaching.

But I sure did like knowing that I was going to get a new basketball from Santa - or whomever.

So, there I was - crushed under the grim reality of having to deal with a world without a real Santa Claus. Without all this on my shoulders, what do you think I did next?

You are going to find this next part hard to believe.

But here is what I did. I marched down the stairs, found my mom in the kitchen, looked her in the eye, and said, "Mom, I have decided what I want Santa to bring me. I want him to bring me the ventriloquist's dummy."

At the very moment I was painfully giving up my belief in Santa Claus. I was ready to exploit the system - knowing that I already had the basketball.

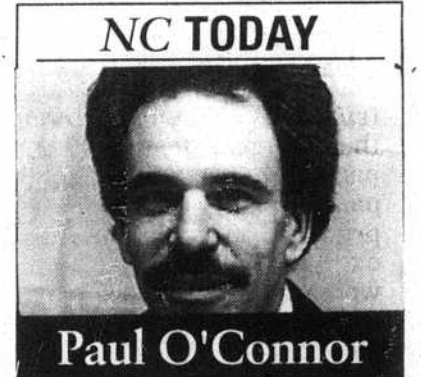
The story is not over. Christmas morning I came down the stairs looking for my dummy and my new basketball. Sure enough, there was the ventriloquist's dummy beside the fireplace. But there was no basketball.

No basketball. "I thought I was getting a basketball," I said to my parents.

"But don't you remember? You said you wanted Santa to bring you the ventriloquist's dummy, and that is just what he did," they said.

"Yes," I thought to myself, "but...but...but...I saw the

See MARTIN On Page 8-A



Paul O'Connor

Rep. Leo Daughtry has always been considered a pretty competent legislator - smart, a good lawyer, pleasant and fair. He's pushed some good legislation, helped improve other bills and he was one of the calming influences in a ruling House Republican majority that was nicknamed the "Raucous Caucus."

Which leads to a question several press corps members raised upon hearing the news that Daughtry had been elected, earlier this month, as minority leader of the House: "Has Leo gone crazy? Why would anyone want that job?"

Daughtry, of Johnston County, will try to hold together 54 Republicans furious with the world, the Democrats and each other for their loss of control of the House. They're all pointing fingers and blaming others for the loss of seven seats that ended their four-year reign as House majority. (Obviously, I'm overstating. Not all 54 are doing this, probably just about 49.)

After defeating Rep. Richard Morgan of Pinehurst, the House rules chairman and chief *** for House Speaker Harold Brubaker, Daughtry said all the right things about uniting the party, putting forth a coherent Republican platform and being the loyal opposition.

Although he tried to sound positive, loss of the House in November seriously hurt Daughtry's gubernatorial ambitions for 2000. House MAJORITY leader, the job he's held the last four years, was just the right job from which to run.

As majority leader, Daughtry would have received plenty of publicity fighting for the issues of concern to Republican

See O'CONNOR On Page 5-A

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Sean Jackson - Staff Writer
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Susan Bunch - Office Manager

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HERALD MAILBAG

We'll Be Back

Dear Editor:
You folks sure do know how to celebrate the holidays!

Edenton's annual Candlelight Tour was almost magical in its design and layout, making the walk through your delightful town, including a stop on the Courthouse Green to listen to carolers, so enjoyable.

The eight of us who came over from the Outer Banks will probably make the trip a yearly must-do. We appreciate

Notice To Our Readers
If you have something you would like to get off your chest, take the time to write The Chowan Herald. All letters must include your current address, telephone number and signature of the writer. Deadline for the letters is 4 pm on Monday prior to each week's publication.

ate all the homeowners who so generously allowed us into their homes. Their hospitality was flawless. Thanks also to the warmly welcoming and thoroughly informative hosts and hostesses in the historic buildings.

We enjoyed a wonderful dinner at a local restaurant, a beautiful evening stroll through town to the Mill Village and examples of that famous "Southern Hospitality" at every turn. We'll be back.

Mr. & Mrs. William S. Fruit
Kitty Hawk, NC

Drive Great Success

Dear Sir:
'Tis the season to be giving and the local community has indeed been giving, responding exceedingly well to College of the Albemarle's 1998 Annual Fund Campaign. Up and down Broad Street

and throughout Edenton and Chowan County, a record \$15,645 in gifts and pledges has been contributed to the COA Chowan County Center.

I want to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation for your contribution to the annual fund drive. Community involvement is what made the dream of the COA Chowan County Center become a reality. Community support ensures the continued success of this center. Every dollar raised in Chowan County has been earmarked for the needs of the Chowan County Center and its students.

The greatest testimony I have heard came from a student who once told me, "You can't put a price tag on achieving a dream, but the scholarship awarded me gave me a second chance and is

See MAILBAG On Page 8-A