

Come To Christmas

by Maxine McLean

The Christmas season had descended with its usual hustle and bustle. Leaving too little money and too much month, too little time for too many tasks. There was too much commotion and not enough consideration. Too much anxiety and not enough anticipation. Now it was time for the Annual Christmas Pageant at Viewpoint Church in our home town.

The Lewis family was no different from the dozens of families who lived in the small community of Free's Mill Road. A close knit community of low-to-middle income families that shared freely their love and material possessions with each other.

It had been an ordinary year for most of these families, but for the Lewis' it had been one of tremendous emotional as well as financial stress.

But these factors were not new to the Lewis'.

Three years before on a cold February night, the family had welcomed with love and open arms a tiny new baby girl. Perfect in every way except for a terribly misshapened mouth and upper lip.

Since that time baby Dee had undergone four major surgical procedures to try to correct the double cleft lip and palate. With four other children to support, doctor and hospital bills had become monumental. Each surgical procedure performed had brought Dee's malformation closer to normalcy. Yet the family had been amply warned that it would take years and much plastic surgery to restore her mouth.

In time she would need extensive, expensive dental work.

Just five months before the petite three-year-old had undergone procedures that had included stitching the upper section of her tongue to the roof of her

mouth and when the two had fused, surgery was performed to remove the section of her tongue grown to the prosthesis in the roof to close the cleft palate.

Unpleasantness aside, the family prepared for the Annual Christmas pageant at Viewpoint.

The older Lewis children excitedly gathered their paraphernalia to become shepherds, a wisemen, angels and the like. Young Dee's big brown eyes sparkled with excitement as she chattered non stop during the short drive to the church.

Entering the sanctuary, Mrs. Lewis chose to sit near the front, affording Dee a better view of the pageant. The altar was set for the pageant and Dee became very subdued.

As the congregation sang the familiar carols, Dee's eyes were riveted upon the make-shift manger. The blanket-wrapped doll was surrounded by a haloglow from the hidden flashlight.

Now the bathrobed clad shepherds and towel turbaned wisemen took their places while Mary and Joseph kept their vigil at the side of the baby's bed.

Loosening her hold upon Dee so that she could see better, Mrs. Lewis felt the youngster slip from the pew seat.

Soundlessly, but as if magnetically drawn, the three-year-old moved down the aisle and entered the altar chancel. Drawn to the manger bed, Dee knelt in silent adoration.

Raising her hand in a tiny half-wave she looked back only once at her mother.

Never once touching the baby, mutely she knelt.

Making no effort to join with the others, oblivious to the activities going on around her, dark hair falling across the "baby" she was content to simply be there.

She had obeyed with complete abandonment the call to "Come Let Us Adore Him."

To those of us who watched, it seemed as if the lights gave Dee her own "halo" as she knelt there. Her misshapened mouth and the pain she had endured was lost in the wonder of the moment.

Dee had chosen her place, there at the foot of the manger and she made no move to leave until the pageant was ended. Then and only then did she join her mother and family.

"Love Came Down at Christmas" and we at Viewpoint saw Love in action that Christmas when Dee with her crooked smile, showed us what Christ meant when He said, "Except Ye Come as a Little Child."

There have been many Christmases and just as many pageants at Viewpoint, but we remember that Christmas when showing us how to forget our imperfections and problems Dee taught us to Come To Christmas.

This story is true, names and places have been changed.

As Christmas 1982 draws near, Dee is a lovely 17 year old high school junior. Her birth defect is scarcely noticeable, obscured by the lovely smile that matches her out-going personality.

Active in music and choir at Viewpoint Church (not the real church name) Dee plans to pursue a career in Pediatric Nursing.

She exemplifies a vibrant Christian attitude and meets each continuing surgery with a challenge. I'm confident that the Christmas Pageant this year will find Dee not too far away from the manger bed of the Christ Child.

Editor's Note: Maxine McLean is a free lance writer from Laurel Hill.



Mr. and Mrs. Tommy Pickler, 112 E. Prospect Ave., show wreath at front.

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