

The Sound of Christmas

What would Christmas be without music? The music of many things . . .

Carols telling of the birth of a king. Unrestrained laughter from children watching a toy monkey in the store tumble down a sliding board . . .

Bells from yonder church calling worshippers to the Christmas Eve service; tiny bells tinkling on reindeer harness as Dasher, Dancer and Prancer carry a bulging sleigh through the night.

A Christmas ball as it tinkles in fragments on the floor . . . the impatient click-click of the dog's paws as he paces back and forth on the kitchen floor while Mother stuffs the turkey.

And yes, the tears, too, as Sally, who wants to sit up and wait for Santa Claus, is carried off to bed.

These are the sounds of Christmas. In the towns far north the crunch of boot against snow, the sharp zip of a figure skate against ice in the pond. At home, a pie bubbling in the oven.

The pastor's voice as he reads the second chapter of Luke, "And there were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night . . ."

The lilting voices of young people at the Christmas dance, the hellos and

"Merry Christmas" greetings. The all-encompassing majesty of the Hallelujah chorus . . . the bleat of a lamb in a reproduction of the manger scene.

The rip of tissue paper, the snap of ribbons, the squeal of delight, "Oh, this is just what I wanted!"

The snore of Dad after Christmas dinner, catching up on the six hours of sleep he missed the night before.

The deeper sigh of wind through the forest where Christmas trees once stood, trees that now bear on their branches crystals of light, spheres of silver and gold, instead of raindrops and snow.

Little Billy lisping his Christmas recitation in the program at Sunday school; the brush of wings as miniature angels hurry to their appointed places in the school tableau.

All this blends into the symphony of Christmas.

But beauty in music is heightened only by the rest that comes once in a while — when a baby, in his mother's arms, amidst all the excitement, smiles up at her. Does he know what the festivity is for? Hardly, yet his smile seems to say, "You know, it all started with a baby, and to this day, I'm the best gift there is!"

Carelessness is Costly

(Note: Because of the high number of accidents last December, an intensive campaign is under way to make holiday highways roads of life instead of pathways to death. One hundred twenty-four deaths occurred on highways in this state in December 1959, thirteen of them on Christmas Day.)

Traffic authorities can name three specific traffic hazards that come with the Christmas season year after year.

They are slippery streets, reduced vision and an increase in the consumption of alcoholic beverages.

All three add to the holiday traffic death and injury toll.

These specific hazards are further complicated by still another that presents a definite problem in itself and intensifies the danger of the other three.

This is a seasonal disability known as "holidayze."

Holidayze is compounded of Christmas cheer, last minute shopping, splendid window displays, crowded streets, bundles and packages, sounds of carols, pedestrians and motorists hurrying to get home — all factors resulting in a kind of holiday heedlessness and all calculated to intensify the hazards that are a natural result of the winter season.

There are no real statistics on holidayze. But the heedlessness is still there. Therefore at the beginning of this Yule season we want to suggest a simple slogan: "Don't let death take your holiday!"

On foot or under the wheel, slippery roads multiply the driver's problems and lessen his control of his vehicle. They make pedestrian footing unsure, often precipitating walkers into dangerous traffic situations.

Darkness, too, is a holiday menace. Longer hours of darkness prevail throughout December, so much of the travel involved in getting to and from work, in shopping, in visiting, must be done in dusk or darkness. This adds to the accident toll.

The holiday spirit means an increased amount of drinking at this time of year. At office parties, group celebrations, family gatherings and numerous other get-togethers intoxicants are often served. The festive spirit of the

season causes many people to imbibe more freely than they usually do.

But the Christmas spirit can be made to work in our favor. While it's true that the public is, to a great extent, engrossed in holiday making, it is also true that people are more kindly disposed than you will find than at any other season. Maybe we should appeal to the spirit of good will that prevails throughout the holidays.

Perhaps we should dwell on the theme, "Peace Upon Earth to Men of Good Will," making it clear that good will should be practiced at all times—including time spent on the streets and highways.

What will it cost to try it that way? What will it cost not to?

Funeral Service

(Chapel Hill Weekly)

A pet chicken belonging to the five-year-old daughter of a young Chapel Hill preacher ventured into the street the other day and was run over and killed. She and her playmates decided to give it a funeral.

They placed the body in a casket that a grown-up would have sworn was a cardboard cereal box. This they lowered into a little grave dug in the backyard. They covered the grave with a nicely rounded mound of earth which they decorated with wild Michaelmas daisies and marked with a piece of wood for a headstone.

When the chicken's owner was telling her father about the funeral he asked her who preached the sermon.

"We didn't have a sermon," she said, "but we had a prayer. Jimmie read it. He's the only one who knows how to read. He's an Episcopalian and he brought his prayer book and read from that. It was real nice. We sang too."

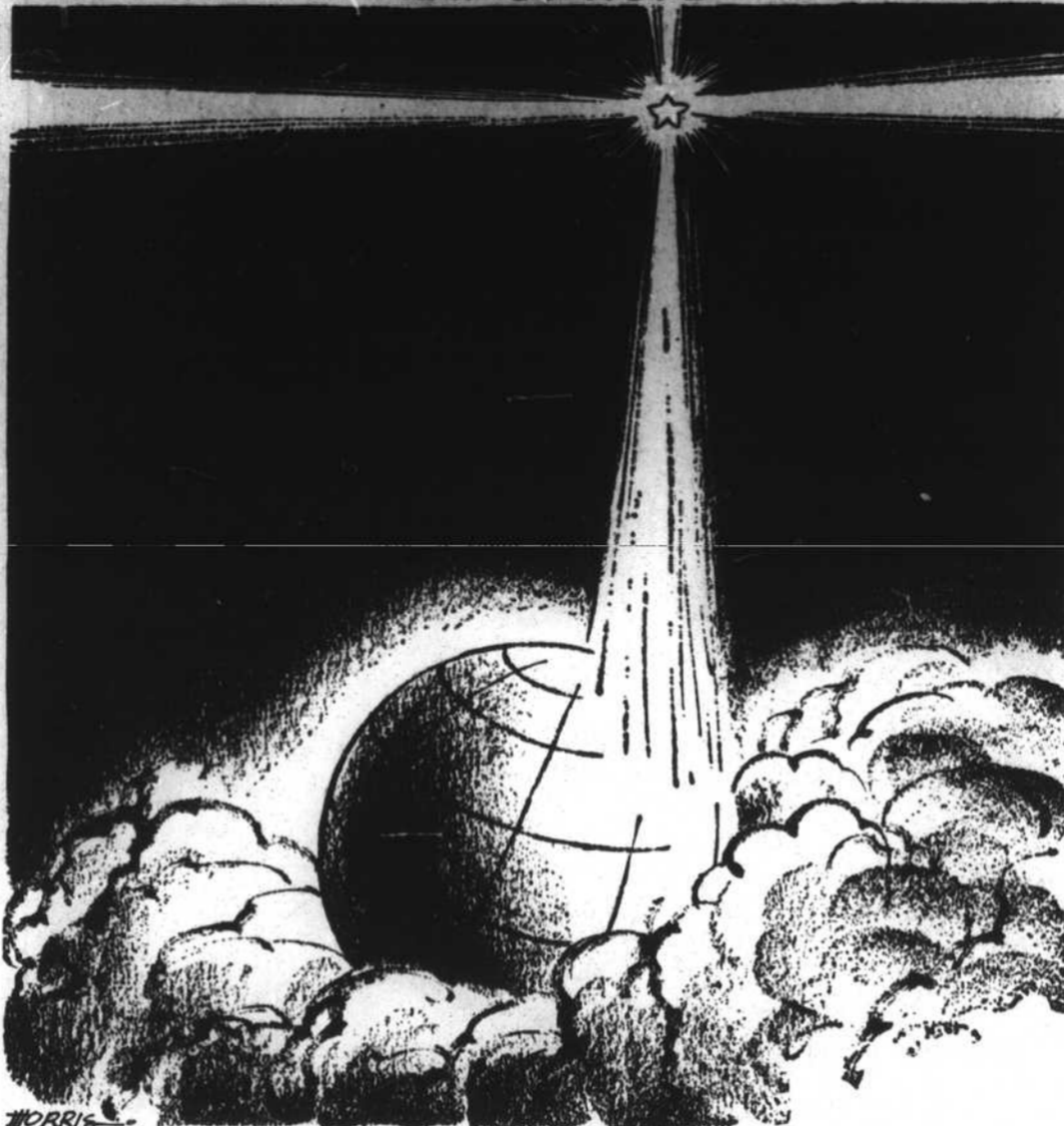
"What did you sing?"

"There was only one song all of us knew. So that's what we sang."

"What was it?" the father asked.

"Don't Give a Damn for Duke University," the little girl said.

RAY OF HOPE



Symbolic Plants of This Season

By NELLIE LAZENBY GEER

(Note: The following is the first part of a two-part article presented at the December meeting of the Morehead City Garden and Civic department meeting of the Woman's club.)

Of all the plants that are used to decorate at Christmas time, none is more loved than holly. Wreaths of holly on front doors, on Christmas cards and wrappings, all attest to its popularity. There is the old carol,

"Deck the halls with boughs of holly,

'Tis the season to be jolly . . ." Holly was symbolic to the Romans. They believed that Saturn caused the holly bush to grow in all its beauty at a season when other trees were bare of their foliage.



After it blooms, it dries up and is tumbled here and there by the wind. The moment it touches moist earth, it sends down roots and blooms again.

The bay tree is also associated with the Holy Family. According to tradition, it was a bay tree that sheltered the Holy Family during a thunder storm. As a result, it was believed that lightning would never strike a bay tree. Many people took its branches and leaves into their homes at Christmas time as a protection against misfortune.

The Christmas tree, which is the center of most Christmas decorations, is usually spruce or fir. Traditionally, Martin Luther, the great reformer, is supposed to have introduced it into the home during the sixteenth century. But its use as the "tree of the Christ child," goes back farther

than that. Legend connects it with St. Winifred of Britain, who went into Germany as a missionary in the eighth century. He found a young child being sacrificed by pagans to their god, Thor.

The crowd stood under a great oak tree, the oak being sacred to their god. The hoary priest lifted high his hammer to strike the boy. Saint Winifred turned aside the blow with his cross. He told the crowd the story of Jesus and told them to render service, not human life.

"And here," he said, "his eye falling on a young fir tree, standing straight and green with its top pointing toward the stars, 'here is a living tree with no signs of blood on it, that shall be the sign of your new worship. See how it

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The Plotting Public

There's a nation-wide conspiracy afoot.

It's a conspiracy that has its roots deep in the past. It develops, grows and reaches more remote corners with every passing year.

Millions of people participate in this plotting, most of them unaware that on a mass basis they are carrying out something that psychologists or propagandists could never manipulate or dictate.

Guarded whispers, secret maneuverings, concealing of ideas, and placing of items under lock and key play an important part in the plot.

You are part of no conspiracy, you say? But you are! Every human being has a basic urge to plot and plan. Everyone likes to be in on a secret, even though knowing

the secret may put him in an uncomfortable position at times.

Frequently, there are some who try to blast this conspiracy wide open. But it defies destruction. The Nazi underground in its most efficient hour would have had difficulty breaking it up.

It's a conspiracy of the old against the young, of believers against the infidels, of the well-adjusted against the abnormal. Things indicate that there is not going to be any end to the plotting. It has the earmarks of perpetual motion.

And who's the central figure around which this grand conspiracy rotates?

Santa Claus!

—The Carteret County News-Times December 1959

Louise Spivey

Words of Inspiration

KEEPING CHRISTMAS

It is a good thing to observe Christmas day. The mere marking of times and seasons, when men agree to stop work and make merry together, is a wise and wholesome custom. It helps one to feel the supremacy of the common life over the individual life. It reminds a man to set his own little watch, now and then, by the great clock of humanity which runs on sun time.

But there is a better thing than the observance of Christmas day, and that is, keeping Christmas.

Are you willing to forget what you have done for other people, and to remember what other people have done for you; to ignore what the world owes you, and to think what you owe the world; to put your rights in the background, and your duties in the middle distance, and your chances to do a little more than your duty in the foreground; to see that your fellowmen are just as real as you are, and try to look behind their faces to their hearts, hungry for joy, to know that probably the only good reason for your existence is not what you are going to get out of life, but what you are going to give to life; to close your book of complaints against the management of the universe, and look around you for a place where you can sow a few seeds of happiness . . . are you willing to do these things even for a day? Then you can keep Christmas.

Are you willing to stoop down and consider the needs and the desires of little children; to remember the weakness and loneliness of people who are growing old; to stop asking how much your friends love you, and ask yourself whether you love them enough; to bear in mind the things that other people have to bear in their hearts; to try to understand what those who live in the same house with you really want, without waiting for them to tell you; to trim your lamp so that it will give more light and less smoke, and to carry it in front so that your shadow will fall behind you; to make a grave for your ugly thoughts and a garden for your kindly feelings, with the gate open . . . are you willing to do these things even for a day? Then you can keep Christmas.

Are you willing to believe that love is the strongest thing in the world . . . stronger than hate, stronger than death . . . and that the blessed life which began in Bethlehem nineteen hundred years ago is the image and brightness of the Eternal Love? Then you can keep Christmas.

And if you keep it for a day, why not always? But you can never keep it alone.

—Henry Van Dyke

A CHILD'S CHRISTMAS PRAYER

Dear Christ-Child I kneel today
By my own small bed to pray.
How I wish I might have said
Prayers beside Your manger bed!
Oh, I wish so very much
That I could reach out and touch
Your small hands, Your little feet . . .
Every baby is so sweet:
Every baby is so dear!
But today I know you hear
Children's prayers, and so I pray:
Christ-Child, bless us all today;
All the children of all lands,
Keep us clean, our hearts and hands;
Keep us loving, kind and true,
So that we may be like You.

—Grace Noll Crowell

Babouscka Seeks the Child

A beautiful Christmas legend is told of Babouscka, a story known and treasured for centuries by the peoples of all the European countries lying between France and Russia.

In the land that is now Southern Russia, on the night when the Christ child was born, an old woman sat alone in her little cottage, gazing into the flames that danced on her hearth. Outside the shrill, cold winds of winter howled dismally. Snow was blanketing the earth in a white carpet, and the ice-covered branches of the trees crackled in the wind. The old woman was glad that she had a fire, that she could sleep warm and snug in her bed, that she did not have to go out into the cold.

Suddenly came a rap on her door, and when she had opened it, three stately old men, with flowing white beards, wearing regal robes and bearing expensively wrapped packages, entered her cottage.

"We have traveled far, Babouscka," they said, "and we stop to tell you of the Baby Prince who has been born this night in Bethlehem. He comes to rule the world and to teach all men and women to be loving and true. We carry Him gifts. Come with us, Babouscka!"

But she shrunk back as she heard the storm beating mercilessly upon her little cottage, and would not leave her cozy room. So the old men journeyed on alone through the snow and the wind and the cold. Babouscka could not sleep that night for thinking of what the men had told her, and at last she decided that, when the dawn came, she would set out alone to find the Babe, and perhaps on the way she would come upon the old men.

In the morning she put on her heavy cloak, took up her staff, filled a basket with gold balls, wooden toys, brilliant trinkets, and set out to find the Christ child. But she had forgotten to ask the three old men the way to Bethlehem, and they had journeyed so far through the night that she could not overtake them.

Up and down the roads she hurried, through woods and fields and

towns, saying to all whom she met: "I go to find the Christ child. Where does he lie? I bring him some pretty toys." But no one would tell her the way; every one shook his head and said, "Farther on, Babouscka, farther on!"

So she traveled on for years and years, and never found the Child. In Europe they say that she is still traveling, and that, on Christmas Eve, when children are fast asleep, she comes softly through snowy fields and towns, wrapped in a cloak and carrying a basket. Stealthily she enters each house and holds a candle close to the little children's faces. "Is he here?" she whispers. "Is the little Christ child here?" Then she shakes her head and turns away sorrowfully, sighing, "Farther on, Babouscka, farther on!" But she leaves a toy from her basket for each sleeping little one—"For his sake," she whispers, and hurries on through the night.

And next morning, on Christmas Day, when the children find toys in their beds, they are told that Babouscka must have been there while they slept.

—Sunshine Magazine

Christmas Everywhere

Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas tonight!
Christmas in lands of the fir-tree and pine,
Christmas in lands of the palm-tree and vine,
Christmas where snow peaks stand solemn and white
Christmas where cornfields stand sunny and bright,
Christmas where children are hopeful and gay,
Christmas where old men are patient and gray,
Christmas where peace, like a dove in his flight
Broods o'er brave men in the thick of the fight;
Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas tonight!
For the Christ-child who came is the Master of all;
No place too great, no cottage too small.

—Phillips Brooks

F. C. Salisbury

Here and There

The following information is taken from the files of the Morehead City Coaster:

FRIDAY, DEC. 15 and 22, 1922

Plans for the new school building at Smyrna have been accepted by the county board of education and bids will be called.

The County Health department informs the public that smallpox has broken out in the county in the Newport section and advises vaccination.

The Beaufort High School basketball team suffered defeat at the

hands of the Newport school team with a score of 18 to 12.

The Rev. J. S. Bell, at the conference held at the AME Zion church the past week, was made a presiding elder of the Beaufort district.

The death of Mrs. Isadora Langdale, wife of D. E. Langdale of Beaufort, occurred Dec. 17 at age 62.

Recent marriages: Chester M. Mears and Laura E. Mann both of Newport; Thomas T. Potter of Beaufort and Allie Guy of Smyrna; Joseph Fulcher and Carrie Guhrle, both of Morehead City.

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