

Boys Home Residents Have Varied Ideas On Christmas

By: Bill Thompson

What do boys think about at Christmas? This was a question we asked several boys at Boys Home at Lake Waccamaw, N. C. Boys Home is a home for neglected and underprivileged boys. These boys' ages ranged from 10 years old to 18 years old as their opinions about Christmas were varied and, in many cases, these answers showed an innocent awareness and offered an insight into what Christmas really is.

For a boy spending his first Christmas at Boys Home, each day brings something new. Little Don English, just ten years old, said he liked Christmas plays and I'm going to be one of the kings this year. Saving money to buy gifts is also something new for Don. He wants to buy his brother, Steve, (who is at Boys Home) a "football of his own". Don's little eyes sparkle and he tries to push his unruly hair down on his head as he speaks of Santa Claus and hopes that Santa knows he moved since last Christmas.

We talked to Johnny Eddins in his fifth grade classroom at the elementary school at Boys Home as he was drawing a manger scene with crayons. When asked what Christmas meant to him, Johnny said frankly, "Why, it's the birthday of Jesus! Didn't you know that?" Johnny has been at Boys Home a little over a year and he remembered the big party at the Home and "the most presents I ever got". Johnny said that what he would like most for Christmas would be for his little sister to have a nice Christmas as he had. Isn't that the spirit of Christmas?

As one walked around the campus at Boys Home, the anticipation of Christmas could be seen on the faces of the boys. Little Ronnie Burney, running across the lawn, had a small, red song book in his hand. "Are you going to hear us practice our Christmas play?" What do you say to two bright eyes and a grin from ear to ear? We went to the practice.

There were several boys in the practice room and Mrs. McCray, the music director, came in shortly. It is no easy job to quieten 20 little boys full of Christmas enthusiasm. But they soon began to work.

The manger scene was set with papier mache' animals and straw was scattered on the floor. In a wooden trough was a baby doll (obviously borrowed) wrapped in a blanket. There was also a very dignified Joseph and a somewhat embarrassed Mary.

Presently we heard voices singing (together?) "We three kings of Orient's 'Ark'" as they came walking down the middle of the room. Little Don English was there just as he said he would be with his tinfoil crown and holding a pillow with nothing on it—not even a pillow case. He was the head of the procession and he led the group to the manger where they placed their pillows. Again we heard a song. "It came upon a midnight clear, that glorious song of old. . . ." From the side of the room came a little boy with a shock of red hair and about a thousand freckles—and angel's wings on his back. At the same time three boys wearing bathrobes and carrying sticks newly cut from the woods, walked down the aisle. As they

Garden Time

By: M. E. GARDNER

For this column I am drawing rather heavily from the recent remarks by Dr. Donald D. Moore, Southeastern Baptist Seminary, when speaking to a Raleigh group. His subject: "Yuletide Traditions."

Dr. Moore discussed family traditions and pointed out that many are quite recent innovations.

Christmas was first celebrated

all stood around the manger everyone began to sing "O Come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant. . . ."

Immediately after the song was over, the trance was broken and wise men and shepherds became little boys.

One of the Boys Home Singers who had been singing in the background came and sat beside us. Charles Wells was rather nice looking and about fifteen years old. When asked what he liked most about Christmas, he said he liked the time the Singers made all over North Carolina to present Christmas programs to the various civic clubs. Charles evidently liked to sing. He said he particularly liked Christmas music and he liked meeting all the nice people on the singing trips.

Unfortunately Christmas is not a happy time for everybody. One of the older boys said the best Christmas he could have was for his father to come back home. And there are others with similar wishes. For those boys the best they can hope for is a "substitute Christmas."

What do Boys at Boys Home think about Christmas? The same thing everyone thinks about—being with loved ones, happiness for everyone.

about 320-353 A.D. Before that time celebrating birthdays was considered to be pagan. "Jesus, Light of the Nations," the first hymn, was written in 368 A.D. The more popular carols of today came later; "Joy to the World" in 1719 and "Silent Night" in 1818.

The practice of trimming the Christmas tree came from medieval mystery plays and moved into England in 1841. German immigrants brought the idea to America and it was in this country that trees were first displayed in public places.

Mistletoe and holly were both considered sacred (I have given my readers the story of holly, and its Christmas meaning, in previous columns). In Rome mistletoe was a symbol of peace. Two warring parties who stood under a "sprig" of it were from that time onward at peace. From this originated the

custom of kissing under the mistletoe.

The origin of Christmas cards is disputed, according to Dr. Moore. One theory holds that the first cards were created by an English artist in 1842 who sent 100 cards to friends. A German immigrant brought the idea to America in 1875.

Many old Christmas customs are still followed in some foreign countries. In the Slav countries, children sleep in the hay on Christmas night to commemorate the lowly birth of the Christ Child. In Holland the Dutch children fill their wooden shoes with straw so that Santa's "white horse" will have something to eat while making his rounds. This gesture, the children hope, will move Santa to be generous with candy and other Christmas goodies.

A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Merry Christmas

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