



*An Old-Fashioned Yule  
...bringing home the tree*

May the message of Christmas renew in our hearts the hope and promise of that night in Bethlehem when the Star shown brightly above. As we celebrate the birth of the Christ Child, let us especially rejoice on this happy holiday, filling our hearts with peace and contentment, and extending many kindnesses to others in the true meaning of the season. May you have the very merriest Christmas.

*The Staff of The Scout*

## Fund-Raising Drive For Hospital Brings In \$2,728 In First Week

Response to the Murphy Hospital Authority's appeal for money to renovate Providence Hospital has been heartening - but the drive has a long way to go and the great majority of people have not yet responded.

Bill Christy, Citizens Bank assistant vice president and MHA treasurer, reported Monday afternoon that \$2,728 has been raised by 121 donations.

This is far short of what is needed, according to MHA chairman Jack Owens, Scout publisher. The renovation program is now being studied by a contractor, he said, and at the present time members of the authority don't know what the cost will be.

However, he added that it will probably be in the \$30,000 to \$40,000 range. Bids, he said, cannot be let

until the money is available and the renovation plan has been approved by the state Medical Care Commission.

Christy gave the following accounting: the authority last week sent out 5,433 appeal letters asking for donations, using the county tax listings for addresses. Of the total, 289 were returned marked "address unknown."

Of the 5,144 which were delivered to Cherokee County citizens, ten were answered with no donation - the letter, complete with the penny attached to "buy" readership, being mailed back to the authority as a wry joke. The 121 who donated the \$2,728 made contributions ranging from \$1 to \$500. The average donation was a little over \$22.

Christy, Owens and other authority members expressed hope that donations from the 5,013 who received letters and have not been heard from will begin coming in after Christmas.

The renovation is planned to provide patients with a psychological lift, help in recruiting needed doctors for Murphy and give the community a serviceable, attractive facility until a new hospital is built sometime in the future.

Those who have donated so far are:

Hugh and Edith Howard; D. M. Reese; Mrs. Harley West; Vernie Ayers; Mr. and Mrs. Abe Zimmerman; E. R. Hunt; Evelyn Minor; Peter J. McKeon; Mr. and Mrs. Garnie Nix; Mary Dockery; Lawson W. Palmer; Holland McSwain; Margaret Studios; James A. Parker; Robert L. Shercock; Dallas H. Stalcup; Emory D. Hughes; Lyda Mallonee.

Bessie Mallonee; Mr. and Mrs. Jeff Dalrymple; Claude Amos; Mr. and Mrs. George L. Wright; Mrs. Willard McClure; Bessie Montgomery; Mr. and Mrs. Henry Hyatt; J. R. Gladson; Clarence Hendrix; Alice B. Jeffries; Happy Jeffries; Don and Carol Hogsed; A. E. and Pearl Palmer; Bill Gossett.

Mrs. E. Rose; Mrs. Dewey Lloyd; Mrs. W. R. Martin; Mrs. S. D. Jones; Joe M. Hawkins; Leonard Moore; Isa Mae Harper; Humbel Hayes; Oak Park Grocery; Loy Lunsford; E. A. Howard; Garland Coleman; Frank Calhoun; Helen Wells, M.D.

Charlie R. McDonald; Robert Barker; Helen H. Chambers; John Jordan; Elbert Hughes; Phil R. Sandidge; Bonnie E. Thompson; Mr. and Mrs. Walter Sneed; Mr. and

Mrs. Ernest Kephart; Myrtle K. Plegmons; Fulton Thomason; Mrs. W. V. Allen; Mr. and Mrs. Frank Coffey; Getchel Sudderth; Cassie Dalrymple.

Frank L. Mauney; Cora Graham; O. C. Payne; Boyce Stiles; Sanford Grizzle; Emory Stewart; T. C. McDonald; James H. Kilpatrick; W. A. Ashe; R. D. Chandler; Grace Mauldin.

Charlie and Bessie Bates; Jane McCoy; John A. Hall; Arche Gibby; Joe R. Kephart; Judy, Betty and Bill; Murphy "66" Sta.; Grace and Don Hall; M. M. Leatherwood; W. M. Davis; Frank Ferguson; Pauline B. Bault; Ed Townson Auto Co.; Mr. and Mrs. Geo. L. Roberson; C. B. Wells.

Mr. and Mrs. Steve Dockery; Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Wilcox; Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Radford; Mrs. Lillian Blair; Mr. and Mrs. Lee Coker; Margie Davis (Mrs. Bob); Mrs. Bessie Mae Dockery; Mrs. Alice Palmer; W. A. Boyd; Zelta Thomason; Easley Mfg. Co.; Mr. and Mrs. Frank Robinson; Clyde E. Starks, Sr.

Mrs. Addilee B. Brown; Bobby Joe Shields; Crandall Moffitt; Mr. and Mrs. Veri Davis; Herman and Ruth Roberson; Dair M. Shields; Amanda D. Wells; Paul Rogers; Callie Little; Mrs. Claude Panther, Sr.; L. W. Shields; A. Greenawalt; Mrs. George Townson.

## Mother And Seven Children In Shack Facing The Other Side Of Christmas

By Wally Avett  
Staff Writer

We drove to the end of a dirt road, walked 150 yards down a muddy path slick with ground frost and there it was, a three-room tarpaper shack, home for a mother and her seven children.

"The Good Lord gives me the strength," she says patiently. "And I get \$170 a month and the commodities."

She and the Cherokee County welfare caseworker, a trusted friend, then smiled at each other and between them ticked off the commodity items for the reporter's notebook - "40 pounds of flour...four or five boxes of powdered eggs and milk, just mix it with water..."

"14 cans of cream, it comes in good...we got some green beans this month...yes, we get meat - chopped meat, seven cans. Got turkey this month...nobody likes it too much except the oldest boy...and there's dried beans, rice, rolled wheat and oats..."

Many items are not included in the commodity program and there are six hungry children and a two-month-old baby boy and she spends \$60 of the welfare check for more groceries.

And calling the house a tarpaper shack probably is not completely fair. In some places the imitation brick siding, ragged and worn, still hangs in place. The landlord charges \$6 a month for rent.

Then, there is the electricity bill, about \$5 a month. The front room, which serves as a living room and a bedroom, is lit by a lone, bare bulb. There is also an old refrigerator and a newer wringer-type washing machine, both run by electricity.

The washing machine also bites into the check; like any other consumer, the mother has to make monthly payments on it. There is no running water inside the house, no well nearby. The spring is about a quarter-mile away and the trips have to be numerous because neither the mother nor any of the children can carry a very large container of water the distance.

"It takes 16 trips to fill up the washing machine," she says. "And more for the rinse water. But it's better than before - we used to just have a scrub board."

The four older children go to school and the three small ones, boys aged five, two and the baby, stay at home. "I've got the five-year-old trained to watch the two-year-old and

keep him off the baby while I go to get water when I'm washing," she says. "The two-year-old will try to get the baby off the bed while I'm gone so I don't let any grass grow under me while I'm going to the spring."

The older children are also helpful, she said, especially the oldest boy, who now acts as the man of the house. The cooking is done on a woodstove in the kitchen and the front room is heated by another woodstove.

The 13-year-old cuts some wood for heating the house with a bowsaw. A better grade of wood, cut to suitable lengths, is sometimes purchased for the kitchen cookstove at \$5 a cord. The oldest boy has had to miss school some days to cut wood and the other children miss more than they should due to sickness and colds.

There is no television and no paint covers the inside walls. The bare wood has been scrawled on by the children with pencils and crayons and the mother has pinned up some of their art work brought home from school. On one wall hangs the remnants of a shattered mirror.

Some of the windows have glass, others have cardboard or rusty sheets of tin, which let in no light but do keep out some of the cold winter wind. The floor is rough, wooden planking with cracks and holes showing the dirt beneath.

There is no rat problem, however. A movement under the woodstove turned out to be a fat tomat. It was explained that he and a companion take care of any stray rodents. There are also two or three skinny dogs, who bark at visitors and get by the best they can amid the empty cans and other debris in the muddy yard.

The mother, now 30 years old, doesn't want to move. The Social Services Department (formerly Welfare) thinks almost any other house would be an improvement and would like to get the woman and her children closer to Murphy and more in the mainstream of life.

"This place seems so much like home to me," she says. "We lived here, in another house which used to be here, when I was a girl. I can still see my mother in every corner."

Her mother has been dead for several years and her legal husband, she says, deserted her after the fourth child. She says she does not know where he is or if it is true, as rumors have it, that he may have divorced her in a court somewhere and married another woman.



Christmas Prayer

The five-year-old is shown at the breakfast table in the drafty kitchen. A sprig of holly in the window was the only Christmas decoration although

the mother said she hoped they would be able to get a tree. (Staff Photos by Avett)

The man who has fathered her youngest children is a drinking man, she says, and he won't help her get a final divorce from her husband and then marry her. "If we can't do it right, we won't do it at all," she says. The caseworkers, however, doubt her resolve and are not certain that the relationship is finished.

She adds that seven children is enough and speaks movingly of prayer meetings and a new preacher in the community. The caseworker, however, says the mother said the same thing two years ago, that six children would be enough, and then became very active in religion after the birth of that illegitimate child.

The caseworkers have talked to her about voluntary sterilization but she will not

agree to their suggestions. However, several birth control devices are available to her, they seem more attractive, and the caseworkers hope that seven children will indeed prove to be enough.

Married and with the first baby at 17, she lived a meager existence with the husband. "He worked in the sawmill or cut pines for pulp wood," she recalls. "Then they got so little for the pines they called it 'starvation sticks.'"

And starvation, the caseworker says, is what marked one of the children. He is in school now, in the first grade, but he is mentally retarded to a degree and his educational future is uncertain.

"She apparently just about starved to death when she was

carrying him," the caseworker says. The condition has a scientific name and has recently been spotlighted in black communities in Mississippi. It has to do with the protein taken in by the pregnant mother and transmitted to the developing child. The deficiency affects the baby's brain and can never be corrected.

So, this particular little boy, the caseworker said, having felt starvation even before he was born, grew up in a pine-and-brier thicket in Cherokee County and "was like a little wolf." When he was about five, he was taken to Western Carolina University at Cullowhee for a check-up at a mental health clinic.

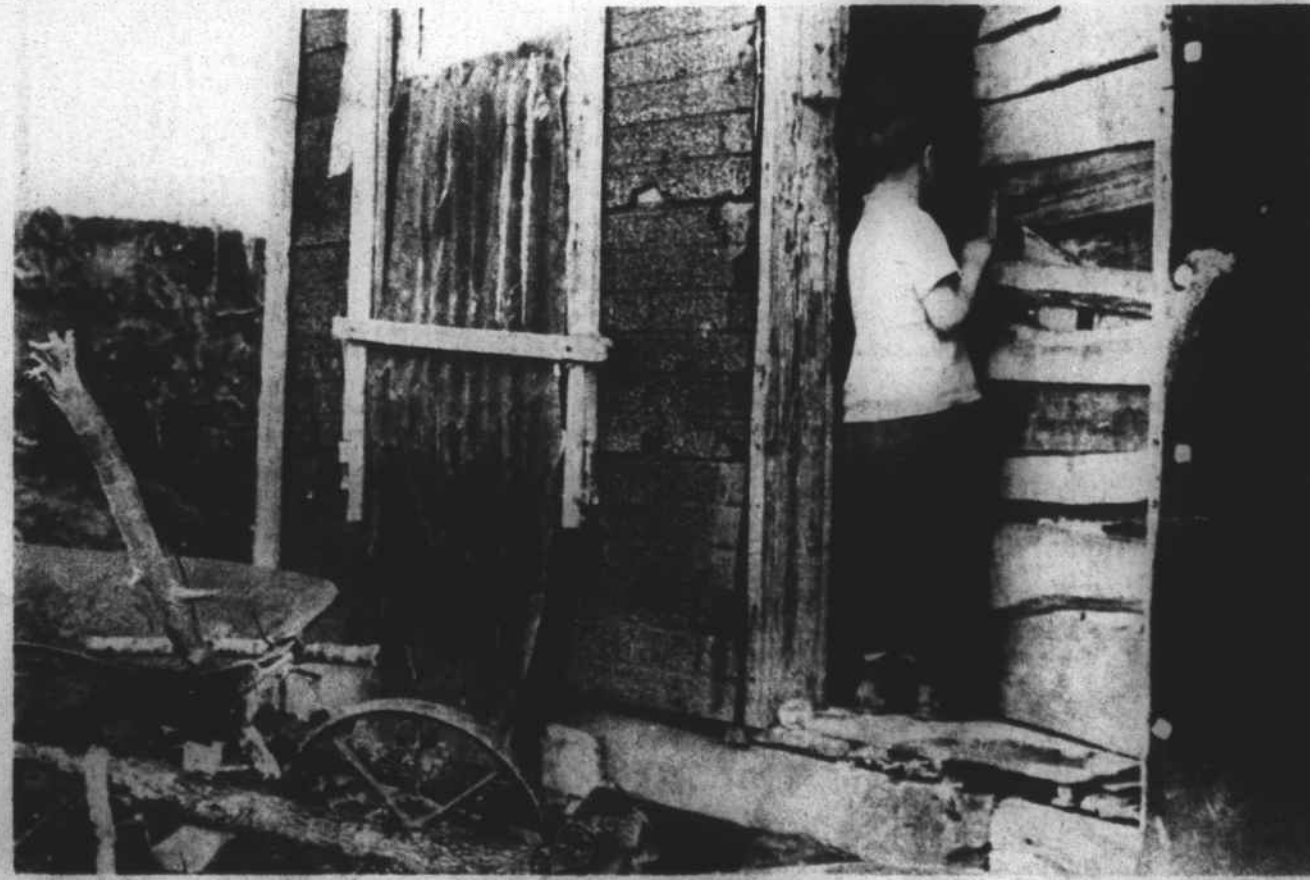
"He didn't understand, he'd never seen that many people," the caseworker recalls. Knowing only that he was fighting for his life, he struggled with all his strength against the four adults holding him and severely bit the doctor conducting the examination.

That boy, and his brothers and sisters, will get all the trappings of Christmas. They're already on the Jaycee Toys for Tots list and on the Lions Club list for a bountiful Christmas basket.

"Without those clubs, Christmas would really be bleak for them," the caseworker said. "But what makes me mad" and her face twisted in instant fury "is that the community will now forget these people until next Christmas - saying, in effect, if you can get by somehow for the next 12 months we'll see you next Christmas."

Last Friday morning on that rough wooden floor, the two-year-old raised a hammer and skillfully smashed flat the painted shell of a toy tin car. "He's gonna be a carpenter," his mother, sucking his baby brother, said from her perch on the arm of a ruptured sofa.

And somehow it reminded us of another little boy years ago, born, they say, in the straw of an animal's stall, who grew up to be a Carpenter.



Home, Sweet Home

Imitation brick siding and bare tarpaper flank the front door of the house. A sheet of rusted tin roofing covers the broken window at left, keeping out some

of the wind. The ramshackle wheelbarrow is used for hauling firewood.