

Christmas Customs Come From Many Old Countries

Christmas, 1954, which is almost upon us as this is written, should be a happy one for most of the world's people. But, as in past years, those of us in the United States, or Alaska or Canada, find ourselves in the position of being the chosen people.

We observe December 25th as the anniversary of the birth of Jesus, although the exact date of this anniversary is a much confused one.

The December 25th date, which many scholars think to have been an arbitrary date set by the Bishop of Rome upon the request of the Bishop of Jerusalem, is now accepted by the vast majority of the world's Christians.

EGYPTIAN THEOLOGAINS, however, fixed the date as May 20th centuries ago, and other scholars have come to the conclusion that the proper date was April 19th or 20th, or even January 6th.

Christmas itself, as a day of observance, has had its ups and downs, and various customs which we follow at Christmas-time have been derived from various countries at various times in past centuries.

For instance, the early Puritans at one time forbade the celebration of Christmas and any observance thereof, and in England, they ordered stores to remain open on Christmas Day. The General Court of Massachusetts in 1659 passed a law which made observance of Christmas a penal offense. And it was a number of years before there were general observances of

Christmas Day in New England as a result of this attitude.

OUR CUSTOM OF USING a tree in the observance of Christmas is of German origin and was begun in 1605 in Strasbourg. The use of mistletoe is traced to the Druids, whose priests gathered mistletoe and put it on the altar of their god as a sacrifice to him.

In addition to placing mistletoe on the altar, sprigs of it were distributed among the people and hung in their houses, and the plant was regarded as a symbol of hope and peace.

The myth that Santa Claus descends the chimney comes from the Norsemen, who believed that, at the Winter Solstice, the goddess Hertha appeared in the fireplaces of their great halls, bringing merriment and good fortune.

THE PREDOMINATING THEME at Christmas time is one of religious observance and giving in the modern world. For children, it is their happiest day of the year, and for adults, it should be the most soberly enjoyed day of personal religious satisfaction and dedication. The recent trend toward over-commercialization of Christmas, and the tendency of some to observe this religious anniversary with out-of-tune celebrations, should be guarded against.

Make Christmas Day, 1954, a day of genuine Christmas spirit through your own religious dedication and thanksgiving, and by a genuine resolve to further the cause of peace on earth and goodwill to all.

Same Old Line of Criticism

Paul Butler, the new chairman of the Democratic National Committee, in his first official speech following his selection to his post, lauded President Eisenhower, holding him to have "a lack of capacity to govern and to unite people."

Some day Mr. Butler will have to "eat those words" . . . for long ago in the terrible days of Hitler's menace to the peace

of this world, General Eisenhower proved his ability to ". . . unite people."

(And what has happened to those nice words spoken by long-established Democratic leaders who, prior to Butler's selection as chairman, declared themselves opposed to personal attacks upon the President of the United States?)

Labor Monopoly Spells Tyranny

Although Congress years ago enacted laws opposed to monopoly in any type of business organization, it definitely excluded labor groups from being defined as harmful to American ideas, even though it came to be a monopoly.

Why did Congress exclude labor? Simply because its members, for the most part, are afraid of losing labor's votes. If the proposed merger of the CIO and

AFL organizations takes place in the near future it eventually will "take over government". Then, no matter how benevolent its contemporary leaders may be, in the end it will become a part of the pattern and behavior of Twentieth Century mankind . . . that same pattern and behavior (believe it or not) is still potentially that of the tyrant.

A majority vote to elect men and women to public office, and are willing to abide by Constitutional laws they legislate, we do not relinquish an individual's right to oppose, honestly and fairly, such legislation. History often proves that a minority voice is capable of uttering and defending an eternal truth.

In recent years several men have built rafts and crossed great expanses of ocean, living to tell their stories. . . at a profit. When will one of more adventurous women do likewise? Surely, girls, you are as brave as some foolish men!

It is becoming increasingly true that men who reach middle age and seek new employment are finding it difficult. Many of them, with special talents and abilities, will find work, to be sure. But to those who realize that social security payments and/or pensions won't take care of their wants, perhaps they will decide to exercise those old thrills that so helped our forebears — personal frugality always pays good dividends.

From The Eccentric's Point of View . . .

Along with others, we long have respected and admired the champion Red Wings hockey team. For the past six years these boys have brought ice glory to the Motor City & State. Just because they aren't showing up as good this year doesn't warrant forsaking 'em. . . so here's to the Red Wings — win, lose or draw!

Both Michigan U.S. Senators voted to "condemn" Joe McCarthy. We believe they registered the sentiments of most Michigan voters in so doing. While we still approve that which Joe was trying to do—expose and kick Communists and their sympathizers out of government—we heartily disagree with many of his methods. Joe could get further on his project by being what Teddy Roosevelt was: "speak gently but carry the big stick."

Whenever a government, presumed "to represent the people", enacts legislation that fails to recognize the right of minorities to differ with majorities, . . . when that happens you no longer have freedom. While we in the U.S.A. accept the right of

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Seeking a Crack in the Wall



HORSE SENSE AND NONSENSE

BY ALICE E. MORGAN

Hi, Neighbors! It's practically Christmas Eve and we suppose you're about as wild as we are.

Every year we swear up and down that never again will Christmas find us in the middle of such a rat race. Every year finds us right in the middle, with maybe a bigger field to run against than any we've had before.

Every evening after work, we "take inventory" again. The results are sheer disaster. For each thing we did during the previous evening and the day, we think of two more which we have left undone.

The mail has brought a few more Christmas greetings from folks we really want to remember, but something's slipped. There isn't a card in the house that's fit to send—and if there were, the stamps would be all gone!

IN THE middle of it all comes the glorious thought that we perhaps can cover our laziness by sending New Year greetings, giving ourselves another week. We know, of course, that that date will find us as confused as we are this minute.

But isn't Christmas wonderful? There's a feeling of excitement in the air. Everyone has it and shows it.

The fridge along, loaded with last-minute gifts and Christmas dinner goodies, tree trimmings, gift wrapping for family presents, and maybe a few bulky, miserable-to-carry home decorations.

CORNERS take up their ribs, branches tickle their noses, and sacks split willy-nilly, dumping contents all over the place.

In spite of all this, a broad smile wreathes the faces and voices are

ONE THING OR ANOTHER

By George Wm. Averill

How kind can you be to your vigorous competitors? Is the question one local salesman-resident has been puzzled with since Thanksgiving Day.

One of his good clients asked for tickets to the Lions-Green Bay game, and was supplied with the ducats.

The client admitted later that he took to the game as HIS guest the salesman for the competing firm.

"That wasn't so bad," moans the unfortunate salesman, "but I had to get those tickets from a scalper yet!"

It takes longer than you think to get municipal bonds cremated after they all have been paid off.

Mayor or Charles Renfrew, City Clerk Irene Hanley, City Treasurer Russell T. Berger, and CPA John J. Harding last week each spent one hour and 25 minutes counting the number of bonds and coupons totalling \$330,000 before they could be actually destroyed.

The bonds were for the 1938 financing of the city disposal plant, and some of the refunded city depression debt.

Little Rhode Island may be the smallest state in this 'ere Union, but it's way out in front with the longest (official) name: "The State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations."

Mankind these days is proud of the fact that it finally has built a plane which can exceed the speed of sound—better than 700 miles an hour.

But man was way behind nature in attaining this speed.

For hundreds of thousands of years, the cephenymia (a species of botfly) has been flying at a speed estimated by scientists at better than 800 miles an hour. This is two hundred feet a second faster than sound.

This insect is about a half-inch long, looks something like a honey bee. Its body is tapered and its head is similar to the nose of an airplane—rounded. It is made for rapid acceleration and deceleration. Thus, could it be considered to act something like an "unidentified flying object", more usually referred to as a flying saucer and therefore still ahead of mankind's performance?

Announcement was made last week that the world seems headed back into much colder weather, even though we are only 30,000 years out of the most recent ice age.

In fact, enough of that ice still remains at Antarctica today to cover the earth with an ice sheet 120 feet thick.

It then would appear that already we have enough yet, thank you.

The recent campaign, while not noticeably cleaner than other recent ones, was not particularly dirty. The one exception might be in New York, where violent last-minute charges were hurled against one of the candidates for governor.

But these do not compare with the denunciations of the Billie Cleveland presidential campaign of 1884. Then Cleveland was accused of immorality and Blackmail of corruption.

The dirtiest campaign of all, however, is generally thought to have been that of 1828, when Andrew Jackson defeated John Quincy Adams for re-election. Though the two principals conducted themselves with dignity, the battle is fought by their subordinates resembling frontier fighting, in which gouging was one of the mildest methods known.

If partisan orators keep within bounds, the credit may probably go to the rank and file of voters, who instinctively resent wild charges and do not permit them to influence their judgment.

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Happenings of Long Ago

Bite Of News Gleaned From Old Files Of The Eccentric—The Items That Make Up The Historical Background Of The Birmingham Of Today.

50 YEARS AGO
December 23, 1904

"At the last meeting of the ladies literary club it was voted to take \$100.00 from the treasury and use \$25.00 of it, for payment to the Indiana Stone Memorial fund and to send the remaining \$75.00 to the Pontiac club to be used for the support of the "Rest Room" for the Women of Oakland County."

"Mr. and Mrs. A. Adams celebrated their thirty-third wedding anniversary recently at their home on Woodward avenue. A number of guests were present."

"Ed Kressell of the fourth grade at school furnished amusement one day last week for the entire room. The lad had some matches in his front pants pocket and in arising hastily, bumped against his seat igniting them. The motions Ed underwent while getting those matches out of his pocket would have made a dog laugh. The boy's leg was slightly burned and his pocket was a total wreck before he succeeded in extinguishing the blaze."

"The many friends of Raynald A. Whitford will be pleased to learn that quite an honor has fallen to the young man, who is student at the University of Michigan, at Ann Arbor. He has been chosen a member of the U of M Glee club, and will sing second tenor with that famous musical organization."

30 YEARS AGO
December 19, 1924

Appointment of J. H. McBride, local hardware dealer, as chairman of the district hardware convention for 1925, has resulted in

THE OLD TIMER



"Some men with big ideas about how to run our ship of state can't even paddle their own canoe."

the selection of Birmingham as the location of the hardware convention which will come some time next August.

"Calling their organization "Eco Machine club" a group of sixty Masons living in Eco City have banded together, and with the assistance of Rex Humphrey of the Leinbach-Humphrey company, have purchased a club house. The clubhouse is the former residence of Malcolm McDonald on the 13 1/2 Mile Road situated in the new section of the Eco subdivision.

The beginning of what may result in a lawsuit to determine the ownership of Birmingham's streets was started here Monday night when the village commission directed attorney Doty to write the Michigan Public Utilities Commission at Lansing that local police will continue to arrest drivers of the long body trucks that violate local traffic regulations.

Beginning this week and continuing until spring, the police leads have been re-arranged to provide for two policemen to serve on night duty and two on day service.

15 YEARS AGO
Dec. 23, 1939

Birmingham Goodfellows had a great day last Saturday, selling newspapers so fast, and so well that the receipts, when all returns are in are expected to total \$1,400, or about \$300 more than last year.

Announcement was made this week by the naval reserve aviation base at Gross. He that Guy Howard, son of the Otis W. Howards of Birmingham, has completed the aviation training course at the naval air station at Pensacola, Fla.

Fred Adams, 516 Kennesaw road, a student at Albion college, was this week placed on the inter-mural allstar football team announced by Coach Dale R. Sprague, an assistant director of physical education.

Zoltan Sepechy, a member of the faculty of the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, was the recipient of \$150 prize money for his painting "Country Market" which was entered in the Michigan artists exhibition.

SLEEP TIGHT—

SLEEP LIGHT!

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—or Detroit Edison

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