

Old hands worked hurriedly for Christmas

By Jerry Webb

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NEWARK, Del. — All day the old man worked in the unheated shop pounding and sawing the hard wood — shaping the metal parts and fastening it all together. He was in a hurry for there was so much to do and the days until Christmas so few.

The old man was building a sled for his grandsons and he wanted it to be just right. And yet there was a deadline that must be met. So, in spite of the cold he labored on, planing the oak boards that would be the runners. Just the right curve and they must match. And it all must be done by hand for there was no electricity in that old shop. Only the lights from the big windows to see the close work. Wood joints had to be cut with hand tools and holes bored with a hand-turned drill press. And there was always the need to hurry—something that just wasn't in the old man's nature.

He was raised at a time when things moved a lot slower and hurrying was difficult for him. Tired old hands forced him to rest frequently and standing on the cold cement floor made his legs hurt.

Time was running out for the old man. Not just the days until Christmas, but his time on earth. He was past 70 and knew that the time for building sleds and telling stories and walking with his small grandsons down country roads would soon end. But this job he had to do—one final gesture in the truest spirit of Christmas to three

little boys who wouldn't be getting much else and who would someday understand the significance of his effort.

He had seen so many Christmases and he loved to sit by the fire and tell about them. Of his childhood days on a small farm before the turn of the century. The gifts, the big dinners, the sleigh rides—things he remembered and told and retold with each Christmas season. The sled his grandfather had built for the boys in his family was often mentioned. And how on the first snow, all of the boys in the neighborhood would gather at the top of a favorite hill for their winter adventures. Those sled rides were the fastest trips he made until he was a grown man and the automobile finally came to the little town with the unlikely name of Fair Play.

He saw a lot of progress in his life—the automobile, steam engines, tractors, the combine, airplanes, radio, television. In fact, he lived to hear about the first man in space, although by then he didn't understand or care.

He remembered the Christmases when he and his new bride made the long trip by horse and buggy to visit her family in the city. And he remembered their first Christmas on their own farm. That was the farm where his children grew up and where he now watched his grandchildren grow.

Times had not always been good for the old man. There'd been periods of prosperity when Christmas was a great occasion with parties and lights in all the trees in

the large front yard. And there were also times of true poverty. His first married Christmas when they shared bran with the cow and cooked one of the laying hens and served her with turnips because the meager potato crop was gone. He remembered Christmas after the banks failed during the Depression, the year his savings vanished. He remembered Christmases since then as the family struggled to keep itself going—to keep its pride and

to have a merry Christmas even though there wasn't much money.

The Depression lasted a long time and no one felt it more than farmers. Prosperity didn't come to agriculture until many years later. Too late to help a proud old man.

So he did what he could to make Christmas brighter. He built a sled with his own hands and with the skills accumulated over a lifetime of rural living. The blueprint was in his mind; it had been

there for years. It would be like his own childhood sled—only better. It would be lighter and stronger and bright red and three boys in their wildest romps wouldn't be able to destroy it.

So on into the night he worked, using a kerosene lantern for light, putting on the final touches and applying the red paint.

It was something he had to do, a destiny he had to fulfill. Those boys needed a sled and they needed it for Christmas.

That was the last thing he built, although he saw many more Christmases. He never picked up his tools again other than to fix a screen door or re-nail a board on the barn. His sled was done, his destiny fulfilled, the cycle renewed. Now he could rest.

Holiday toy sells can be resisted

MEDIA — Each year at this time, children receive a not-so-subtle brainwashing from toymakers advertising on television. Children are likely to be watching television lavish advertisements that what their pre-Christmas appetite for dolls, race sets, and other expensive toys.

According to experts, advertisers know what they're doing. They have studied children and know the best way to create desire in a youngster. For instance, a few toys are advertised repeatedly, making the child feel he just can't get along with them. If a child clamors for expensive toys he's seen on television, parents should meet the problem head-on, and listen to what he wants. Then, the parent can check the toy himself, either in a catalog or a store, evaluating each toy according to its safety, cost, and suitability for the child.

If a toy doesn't meet any of these requirements, then it's best for one to sit down with the child and explain why he shouldn't expect that particular item to be under the tree Christmas morning. Although this may be difficult, it's better than allowing him to eagerly anticipate something he won't get. Parents will find it

easy to steer some children towards a gift already have on one's list. Older children can be offered the alternative of saving his money to buy the toy. This tactic can help to teach him the value of money.

Christmas Classics he'll appreciate



Dress Knit Slacks

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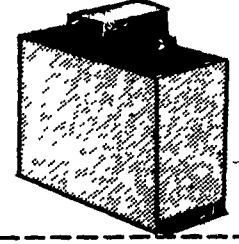
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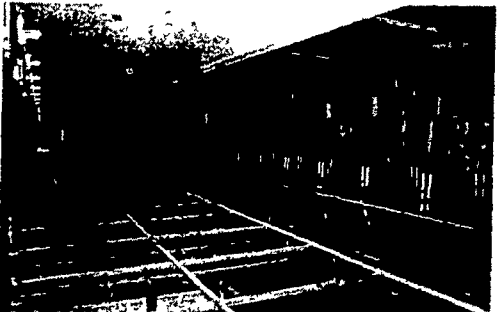
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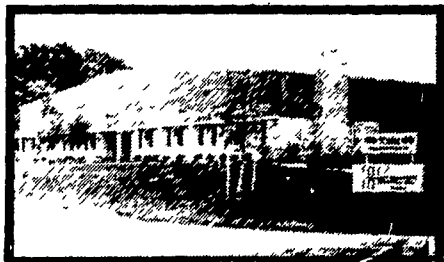
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