

Kids Korner

Christmas Eve At The Nursing Home

GAY BROWNLEE

Somerset Co. Correspondent

It was Christmas Eve. Outside, a winter storm was sending lots of wonderful snow. Wind howled and the snowdrifts got bigger and bigger.

But inside it was cozy. With each hour that passed, the four sisters and their two little brothers got more and more excited. They were so excited that their eyes sparkled almost as much as the decorated tree in their livingroom.

The telephone rang. "It must be important," the children whispered to one another as they listened to their mother talking. She sounded very sorry about something.

"Well, that's certainly a shame," their mother said. "If we can think of somebody to help you, we'll call right back. Thanks for calling. Goodbye."

"What's wrong, Mother?" asked the children.

"I feel so bad for the nursing home," Mother replied. "That was the activities director. It seems that nobody has volunteered to

entertain the residents this evening. She asked if I could suggest somebody."

"But that's awful," said one of the sisters. "Why, this is Christmas Eve."

"Mother, won't those old folks be sad if nobody comes to see them on Christmas Eve?" asked one of the children.

"Well, yes, I suppose so," Mother said. "Who can we call to help them?"

"Jesus will help us think of someone, let's ask him," said another child.

"Yeah, let's just pray about it," piped up another.

"That's an excellent idea," agreed Mother.

So the family prayed and sure enough, God sent an answer. God told the family they should be the ones to go.

God's answer pleased the children. But the mother began to worry. It wasn't that she didn't want to visit the dear folks in wheelchairs. She just didn't want to take her children out in a very bad winter storm.



Idella Bender, activities director; Shirley Teets, assistant activities director, and Jonas Fazenbaker, resident, gather around the Christmas tree at the Goodwill Menno-nite Nursing Home in Grantsville, Maryland, for the Christmas Eve program.

Besides, the family had never performed together in public.

"Mother, you could play the piano and we could sing," said a chipper little voice. "You could even read 'The Little Star' story that you read to us every Christmas," the little voice added.

All the children agreed, so Mother gave in. She called the nursing home to say that she and her children would provide a short program for the residents.

The family bundled into woolly coats, mittens, and hats. They stuffed their feet into boots, ready for the blizzard. Into the back seat of the old family car went the big kids. Mother kept the little ones in front with her.

Blowing and drifting snow made the winding roads more dangerous after dark. But since the family felt that God had told them to go, they knew He would keep them safe.

As soon as they arrived at the nursing home, the family forgot about the weather. Mother played the piano while the children sang Christmas songs to the people in wheelchairs who were gathered in a big room. The people sang along. So did some of the nurses who were taking care of them.

Then Mother read "The Little Star" story out loud. The little booklet had first belonged to her own grandpa and grandma, so she was very fond of it. Long, long ago, it had been a Christmas gift from their Sunday School teacher.

Mother read how the little star was getting ready to shine his brightest with the other stars because something very, very important was about to happen on the earth.

"When the angels touch their harps and the cherubim begin to sing, that's the time to shine," Mother read how the master star

was giving instructions to all the stars.

As the story continued, the people heard how the little star ended up being late. He missed the glorious moment. He was scolded for fooling around when he traveled across the sky. The master star asked him why he was late.

The little star hung his head. He had stopped along the way to shine his light for weary travelers, he said.

Then, he saw a lost lamb and took time to shine his light again. That took so long that he got lost himself and fell far behind the other stars. Of course, all of them except the little star had shone brilliantly, as planned.

After hearing the little star explain, the master star was proud of the little fellow and gave him a high honor. The master star appointed him to become the "Star of Bethlehem," which shines in the eastern sky around Christmas time.

The story was finished. Mother and the children closed their program with another holiday song. Everybody clapped their hands.

The family shook hands with many of their elderly friends and wished them a "Merry, Merry Christmas!"

When the family was safely home they cuddled around the happy Christmas tree. Twinkling lights and ornaments reminded them to be thankful for the Baby Jesus who brought so much love into the world.

"You know, children," Mother said, hugging them close, "I believe we are the ones who got the greatest blessing at the nursing home."

"Don't ever forget that God's love shines brightest in the lowliest deeds of kindness that we do for others," she said.

Smart Stuff

WITH TWIG WALKINGSTICK

Why do pine trees have cones?

So they can make more pine trees!

Pine trees are part of a group of plants called conifers. (Say Kahn-uh-fir.) All conifers reproduce by making cones. And just like people, dogs and cats, there are male and female pine cones.

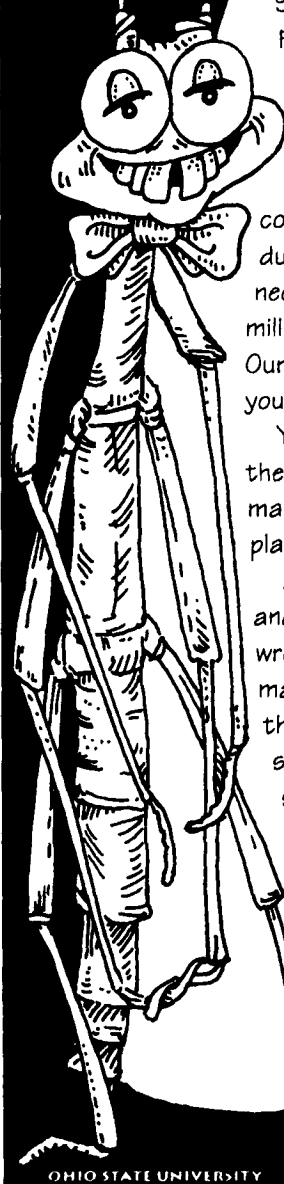
Both kinds of cones grow on the same tree. Male cones have the job of producing pollen. Pollen are tiny, dust-like particles that have important cells plants need to make seeds. These small, long, soft cones shed millions of pollen grains into the air during springtime. Our forestry friends say if you shake a pine tree then, you'll see puffs of pollen swirl up from the branches!

Young female cones sit upright on the branches so the pollen can easily land on them. Then the female cones make seeds that are wrapped in a leaf shaped like a plane's propeller.

As the seeds grow, the female cones become hard and woody. (These are the cones used in holiday wreaths and centerpieces.) Once the female cones mature after about a year, they turn upside down on the branch, drop off the tree, and let their winged seeds flutter away. And if a seed lands in a good spot, it will grow into another pine tree, and start the process all over again!

Scientifically yours,

Twig



Peace on Earth