

# The Dallas Post

## EDITORIALS

### Christmas wishes....

#### Church

For Christians around the world, this season marks the birth of the One who came to teach them, to inspire them and ultimately to save them. The birth of the Christ child, in a cave that was used as a manger because His parents poverty kept them from more comfortable quarters, begins one of the greatest stories of human history. Throughout His life, Jesus lived in modest circumstances, never coveting material riches and instead taking pains to point out how a focus on the trappings of life can ultimately destroy it.

Many are the complaints that by commercializing Christmas, we have robbed the holiday of its essential meaning. While that argument has some merit, it isn't the whole story. By and large, people buy presents to demonstrate appreciation and love for the recipients, and they give them in the spirit of the season, expecting nothing in return. That's the same way in which the wise men of the East came to Bethlehem that cold night 2,000 years ago, following the light from a star that burned with the bright promise of a new beginning for mankind.

This is the season for sharing in so many ways, for spending leisurely hours with family and friends, recounting old stories, reviving memories and remarking on the great future in store for young people. Readers of the Bible know that Jesus spent many a day doing exactly those things, because He knew that shared experience is one of the rocks on which civilization is built.

Whether they hold religious beliefs or not, few can resist the influences of the season, when friendship, acceptance and hope fill the air, as the birth of a special child and of a new ethic is celebrated.

#### and State

This also is the time of year when wrangles over what can be displayed on public property come to the fore. Each year you can count on one group or another to demand that a manger scene, menorah or some other artifact be installed or removed, depending on their perspective.

While the vast majority of Americans are Christian, and many of them support the display of their symbols, everyone must be wary of tying church and state too closely together. One case this year involves the Klu Klux Klan wanting to set up one of their crosses in an Ohio town. They argue that since Christian and Jewish symbols are allowed, so should theirs be.

There's the rub. Once the state condones one display, it can hardly refuse others. There's no doubt the authors of the Constitution believed America was conceived "under God," but they were careful to spell out their conviction that church and state be kept separate, for the good of both. Believers argue that the link to Christianity is so strong as to override the prohibitions of the First Amendment, and further maintain that displaying symbols is far removed from establishing a state religion. They're probably correct, but the very fact that we don't have a state religion adds to the difficulty of refusing a display by everyone from Buddhists to devil worshippers.

Religious persons of any persuasion have adequate opportunity to exhibit their faith at home, at work and on church property. It is unwise to devote public property to that purpose, as it is dangerous to mix religion and government.

### Fasten seat belts, please

Three recent tragedies serve to remind us how important it is to fasten seat belts in automobiles. In one case, Bobby Hurley, former Duke University basketball star, was seriously injured when his pickup truck was struck broadside by a speeding car. Hurley, who wasn't wearing his seat belt, was thrown from the vehicle and suffered multiple injuries. His truck was barely moving at the time of the collision.

In a second incident, a member of the Houston Oilers football team was thrown through the window of the car he was riding in after it struck a highway barrier, and died after landing on the pavement 20 feet below. The driver, who was belted, was uninjured. The most tragic of the trio of accidents occurred Thursday when seven teenagers died after their overloaded compact car ran into a small 4-wheel drive truck. None of the teens was wearing a seat belt.

Most states, including Pennsylvania, have laws mandating seat belt use. But anyone who values their life and that of their passengers doesn't need a law to convince them that wearing seat belts saves lives. Wear yours; and insist that your passengers do, too.

### Do you agree? Disagree?

Editorials are the opinion of the management of The Dallas Post. We welcome your opinion on contemporary issues in the form of letters to the editor. If you don't write, the community may never hear a contrasting point of view. Send letters to: The Dallas Post, P.O. Box 366, Dallas, PA 18612. Please include your name, address and a daytime phone number so that we may verify authenticity. We do not publish anonymous letters, but will consider withholding the name in exceptional circumstances. We reserve the right to edit for length and grammar.



J.W.J.

### Our Christmas customs have many faces

By J.W. JOHNSON

This weekend, we celebrate Christmas. As a matter of historical accuracy, moving Christmas closer to summer is appropriate, according to most theological scholars.

To avoid discovery and persecution, Christians in the second century A.D., began the celebration of Christmas around the end of the Julian Calendar year so that it would coincide with a celebration of the pagan Feast of Saturnalia...the theory being that a celebration of Christ's birth would be unnoticed among the general revelry.

Most theological scholars agree that Jesus was not born on December 25; rather that he was born somewhere between the first and fifth day of July, probably 3-4 years later than what we now believe to be the start of A.D. To the Christian, of course, it is irrelevant when Christ was actually born; the message of life is what's important.

And it's likely that even if given irrefutable evidence of Christ's actual birthdate, after 1776 the celebration in this nation would have remained on December 25. Otherwise, too many marketing plans of those feasting on Calvary in December, and lunching on the Constitution in July, would have

been derailed, something the merchant class wouldn't have abided.

The dominant faith in this nation is Christianity—a belief in life after death because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ—hence a generally accepted celebration of Christmas as a national holiday. (Parenthetically, and given our ever shrinking planet, it would be wise for us to be aware that Christianity is a minor faith when viewed from a planetary perspective.)

Many threads have been woven into the Christian fabric since Jesus walked the earth. Many interpretations of his message have resulted in a variety of faiths subscribing more or less to the beatitudes and other teachings.

And yet the simple message of Jesus was one of life, of life that should be lived in the shadow of the Ten Commandments. It is only through ego manifestation by worshippers that the message gets lost in the interpretive ecstasy of denomination.

But what else do we know about Christmas?

The holiday was first observed in the second and third centuries, and our name for the day dates from the 11th century in England and Cristes Maesse.

The giving of presents is a custom taken from the Romans who exchanged gifts each January 1 as

part of the New Year's celebration.

German Christmas carols are traced back to the 11th century and British and French songs to the 13th.

The custom of decorating the house in green stems from an early English belief that certain flowers blossomed at Christmas. The use of mistletoe stems from the Druids, who long revered the plant.

The Christmas tree was first used in Germany. Some scholars believe the first occasion was in Strasbourg in 1605, although legend has it that Martin Luther decorated a green branch in his home in the preceding century.

The belief in Santa Claus, as a jolly man who brought gifts, also comes to us from the Germans, derived from the legend of St. Nicholas. (Santa Claus is a corruption of the Dutch, San Nicholass.)

Fireworks are sometimes used in the South during Christmas, and this stems from Italy, Spain and France, which enjoy the custom. It's thought the practice was introduced by French settlers in the Louisiana area. Christmas, was interestingly, observed earlier in the South than in the North.

And if there is a universal message in all the history, perhaps it's that we should accept with genuine gratitude, enjoy with moderation, and give with generosity.

### A. Case for conservation

By ALENE N. CASE

"Every animal that walks on earth, or swims, or flies is precious beyond description, something so rare and wonderful that it equals the stars or the ocean or the mind of man." James A. Michener.

"One seeks solitude to know relatedness." Joan Halifax.

"Every form of life is unique, warranting respect regardless of its worth to man." UN World Charter for Nature.

As I read, I am continually reminded of the depth of passion some humans feel for this earth and its wonders. And, then again, I am continually reminded of the depth of despair or greed that other humans know. The nightly news depicts a world that is miserable - murders, drug deals, starvation, war. And sometimes there is a marvelous connection that turns the whole thing around. A drug dealer spends a summer on a farm and returns to the city a changed person. A group of inner-city kids cleans up a vacant lot, plants a garden or some trees, and creates a whole new sense of community.

Respect is the word that I use to tie all these things together. People cannot respect our earth if they do not first respect other people. We cannot respect other

people without first having some self-respect. But, often people gain self-respect when they come in contact with the wonders of our world or with other people who show that they care. Respect for life is one big tangled mess!

Respect literally means to look at or to look back. Listening is at least as important to this concept as looking is. As any child can tell you, one good way to tell if an adult is listening is to see if that person is looking at the speaker. If not, the words are probably not being heard. Therefore, in order to respect anything or anyone, we must first make an active connection by looking and listening.

These connections, are broken in a great many ways. People who live in large cities rarely have opportunities to connect with nature except through television or books. It is almost impossible to gain a lasting respect for a forest if you have never walked through one. It is certainly very difficult to understand your place in any ecological sense if the only food you have ever eaten came from a supermarket or restaurant.

But, people can overcome these barriers. Others are much more difficult. Inconsistency is one of them. How can people respect those of us who say we care for nature and then show our disre-

spect for other people? I, for one, will have more trouble taking animal rights groups seriously after learning about the attempt to bomb several furriers during this holiday season. How can one truly care for the animals used to make coats and show such disrespect for the employees and patrons of a shop? The same question could be asked of those who put spikes into trees or of Pro-Life groups who shoot doctors or burn abortion clinics. All of these actions reveal deep disrespect for life and, as such, damage the credibility of the people involved.

Another human tendency that leads to disrespect is our need to label things. Yes, names are important. They actually contribute to our feelings of self-respect. But, when we start lumping people together into categories and giving these categories names, then we get into trouble. These groups begin to lose their humanity. Name-calling turns into hatred which turns into cruelty. But, we do not see that our actions are cruel because we do not respect the life we destroy. We do not see that all life is connected.

Interconnectedness is our hope. Once we recognize that we are connected to each other and to the natural world, our respect for life - all life - will lift us above the destructive activities which now seem to dominate our world.

### Letters

#### Habitat says thanks for all the assistance

Editor,  
On behalf of the local chapter of Habitat for Humanity, I would like to thank you for the coverage you gave to our recent Dollhouse Raffle. We appreciated your help in publicizing this successful event, and the time taken by Grace Dove to add an article about Habitat.

We would like to publicly thank

Bosco's, First Eastern Bank, Humphrey's in Shavertown and the West Side Mall Association, each of whom allowed us to display the dollhouse. This fundraiser was also generously supported by two churches, St. Therese's in Shavertown and Gate of Heaven in Dallas. We thank everyone who, by purchasing a raffle

ticket gave Wyoming Valley Habitat for Humanity the opportunity to continue its ministry - that of providing housing for the inadequately sheltered.

We hope your interest and support of Habitat will continue. Morag Michael  
Community Relations  
WVHFH

### Only yesterday

#### 60 Years Ago - Dec. 29, 1933 SCARLET FEVER OUT-BREAK REPORTED

John M. Baur of Laketon, the only local man represented among State liquor store employees selected this week will be assistant manager at Store #4002 in Ashley. Dallas Borough will have no store.

The number of scarlet fever cases in Lake Township increased to 14 this week and another case was reported in Dallas Township. Elmer Kerr, health officer for this district, expected the peak would be reached within a few days and that a steady decrease in cases would follow.

The Reverend and Mrs. John L. Thomas of Trucksville, celebrated their 50th anniversary December 26.

#### 50 Years Ago - Dec. 24, 1943 LABOR SHORT, XMAS TREES COST MORE

All indications point to a great demand for Christmas trees in Pennsylvania this season but at prices in excess of previous years, because of limited supply. Shortage of labor has made it practically impossible to harvest, the number of trees cut during other seasons.

Presentations of "The York Nativity" at the Irem Temple December 29 and 30, the Little Theatre of Wilkes-Barre is offering a production of rare beauty. It is a true community effort, employing as it does representative choirs from every creed and nationality, together with a trained dramatic cast.

You could get - Pork loins, 10¢; cranberry sauce, 17¢; iceburg lettuce, 9¢; yams, 2 lbs. 19¢; Virginia Lee chocolate layer cake, 45¢ each.

#### 40 Years Ago - Dec. 25, 1953 NEW ROSS TOWNSHIP SCHOOL OPENS

Outdoor Christmas displays throughout the Back Mountain region were never more attractive or elaborate as they are this year. Mild winter weather has evidently given everybody an opportunity to do the work of outside decorations in relative comfort.

The new school at Sweet Valley opened its doors Tuesday morning to 160 pupils who had formerly been educated in the six one-room schoolhouses of Ross Township. Excited children had packed all their belongings the day before in preparation for the event.

#### 30 Years Ago - Dec. 23, 1963 WORK STARTS ON NEW TOWNSHIP BUILDING

Construction of the new Kingston Township Building to be constructed on the site of the Trucksville Fire Company Building is scheduled to begin Friday, according to Supervisor Lester Hauck.

Clearing work on Frances Slocum State Park project in Carverton will begin shortly after the start of the new year, with excavation and earth-moving to follow in the spring. Irvin T. Miller contractor said all major work probably will be finished by fall of 1964.

Late Christmas night, a year ago, the editor of The Dallas Post died. It had been his dream to buy a small newspaper in a rural section and build it. Howard Risley had the satisfaction of doing just that, building a struggling newspaper of four slim pages to its present size and making it a power in the Back Mountain. The Back Mountain is richer for having lived here and having made of himself and his paper a symbol of the land he loved.

#### 20 Years Ago - Dec. 27, 1973 BORO NEEDS CRUISER

The second major snowstorm of the season blanketed the region Friday (appropriately the first day of winter) causing numerous accidents and forcing schools and businesses to close early.

Borough Council dealt at length with the municipality's current lack of a police cruiser and instructed Solicitor Charles Lemmond to draw up an ordinance calling for compensation to councilmen during the regular Dec. 18 meeting. Dallas Council is currently one of a few in the area that does not compensate councilmen.

The staff and employees of The Dallas Post and Greenstreet News Co. will entertain the newspapers' friends, neighbors and business associates during the traditional open house Dec. 28, 2-5 p.m. at The Dallas Post, Lehman Avenue, the firm's officers announced. Snacks and beverages will be provided.

# The Dallas Post

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