

# the eclectic

THE BI-MONTHLY CAMPUS NEWS REPORT

December 1974 Volume III, Issue 29

## Christmas Traditions

By De Anne Bauer

Throughout the world, Christmas is a day of celebration in recognition of the birth of Jesus Christ. The universal feeling of "Peace on Earth, good will toward men" prevails, as young and old alike gather to listen to the story of the three wise men who gave Jesus gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Christmas trees are decorated, holly and mistletoe are hung, and carols fill the crisp, winter air. This is how our country celebrates Christmas, but how do other countries observe the birth of Christ? Here are a few examples:

### Great Britain

In this country, children hang stockings by the fireplace to wait for "Father Christmas" to fill them with treats. The day after Christmas is called Boxing Day. On this day British families give money to the milkman, postman, and others who have served them faithfully throughout the year.

### France

On Christmas Eve the French children place their shoes on their doorsteps so "Le Petit Noel" (the Christ Child) may fill them with gifts. Mistletoe is a symbol of good luck, and is hung in every doorway. The traditional Yule log must be brought in and placed in the fireplace on Christmas Eve. It must also be large enough to burn consistently from Christmas to New Year's Day. Small Nativity scenes are set up, and the family enjoys a feast of Strasbourg (liver pudding) and black pudding.

### Germany

Germans sometimes have a Christmas tree for each member of the family. The trees are decorated with lights and candy. Lubecker marzipan, a type of almond candy which is colored and shaped to look like meat, fruit, and toys is the favorite kind of candy for decorating the trees. Gifts are often homemade, and are distributed on Christmas Eve after the "Bescherung" (lighting of the tree). A feast of roast goose is often enjoyed.

### Switzerland

Young Swiss people visit nine fountains on their way to midnight Christmas Eve church services. Each one takes three sips from each fountain. Legend has it that if they do this, they will find their future wife or husband waiting at the door of the church.

### Italy

Italians fast the day before Christmas. They hold a ceremony where the family gathers around the one-half Presepio (miniature scene of Bethlehem with tiny figures of the Holy Family, shepherds, and wise men). While the mother places a figure of the Bambino (infant Jesus) in the manger, the rest of the family prays. Presents are then brought in and distributed from a large crock called the "Urn of Fate."

### Sweden

December 13th marks the beginning of the Swedish celebration, St. Lucia Day. The children of this country believe that little elves help them with the holiday preparations, so to thank the elves, or "Juul Nisse", they leave food on the table for them at night. A Swedish feast consists of fish and Juulgrot, a pudding made of rice and milk.



## A Tree Trimming

Noting a definite lack of Christmas decorations on the upper campus last week, a group of students took it upon themselves to decorate the diesel engine in the pit like a Christmas tree.

### Poland

Poles fast the whole day before Christmas. At nightfall they have a feast. A chair for the Holy Child always stands vacant at the festive table. Instead of presents, Poles bake small wafers called "oplatki", and stamp them with figures of the Nativity. Then they are blessed by the priest. These wafers are then exchanged among friends.

### Spain

After midnight mass, the Spanish fill the streets and begin singing and dancing the Jota, (Christmas dance). Nacimientos decorate the houses, storefronts, and streets

(nacimientos are nativity scenes)

### Finland

The Christmas season in Finland leads up to a special Christmas dinner. A traditional Christmas dinner consists of prepared fish called "Lipeakala", baked ham, casserole of stewed prunes, and mashed turnips, and a rice porridge for dessert.

### Netherlands & Belgium

In these countries, the people exchange gifts on December 6th (or St. Nicholas Day). A man dressed in rich robes of bishop, and representing a saint, questions the children about their yearly behavior and promises to return that night to bring them gifts. The children fill their wooden shoes with candy, cookies, and fruits, then leave them on their doorstep for St. Nicholas. The saint comes, taking the goodies and leaving gifts for the children.

# Opinion Page

## Wishful Thinking

The Christmas and New Year's holidays have traditionally been a time to think over the past year, count your blessings and then resolve to receive more of the same during the coming year.

The Eclectic staff, in counting its blessings at DMACC, could think of many such blessings: the opportunity to go to school during an economic slump, the education students are receiving here and the opportunity to meet many new and different people, to name only a few. However, they also came up with some things they had received that none of them really bargained for when coming to school. The list ran something like this:

"On the twelfth day of Christmas the college gave to me:

Twelve committees meeting;  
Eleven classes cancelled;  
Ten counselors counseling;  
Nine tow trucks towing;  
Eight classrooms missing;  
Seven teachers testing;  
Six projects pending;  
Five parking fines;  
Four failing grades;  
Three drop slips;  
Two admission tests;  
And an Eclectic Holiday wish."

So what was there we could put on our list of resolutions? Only that over the holiday break we would have as good a time as possible and that in the coming year we could present the student viewpoint better and more accurately than in the past.

From the Eclectic staff, happy holidays!

## A True Confession

By Jim Craig

I have a confession to make. At the ripe old age of 19, I still believe in Santa Claus. That's right, despite the commercialization of Christmas and all those awful people who keep telling me that I'm crazy, if for no other reason, because I believe in old Saint Nick. I'm not about to give up one of my favorite beliefs, not when I have managed to keep it this long.

For eleven months of the year, I try to keep track of all the bad things that happen in the world. This I accept as a part of the profession. But even if eleven months each year I hear how bad the world is, I absolutely believe there is still hope. That hope is of course, Santa Claus and the Christmas spirit.

Periodically, I tend to forget that feeling and seem more like Charles Dickens' "Ebenezer Scrooge." The newspaper staff firmly believes this is my state most of the time. But I still try to maintain something of the spirit at Christmas time and what better illustrates that belief than Santa Claus.



Nearly everywhere you go, and no matter how bad it seems, there is still something good. Not very long ago I was talking with a little Italian lady who had more than a little difficulty speaking English. As a result, we were having a lot of trouble communicating. But as we closed the conversation, we both said goodbye. But she added four little words that completely changed both our moods. As I left she said, "Have a merry Christmas." Here a total stranger had wished me a "merry Christmas." She had nothing to gain, but certainly nothing to lose. It struck me in a very strange way. What is this power that makes total strangers, friends at this time of year, and why at only this time of year?

In another instance, a man who scarcely spoke to me at all, let alone a friendly or kind word, took me by the arm and wished me "a merry Christmas."

Throughout the twelve long months of the calendar many people have shown me various types of kindness. It is because of all these people, that I maintain belief in this legend of "Santa Claus" from my childhood. Even if he isn't a real person, his spirit lives, and I for one hope he will continue to live. To all those people who dispense with the belief, I say "Humbug." May they be boiled without pudding and without a bow of holly.

In closing, I would like to wish more than the 3,000 students, staff, faculty and administrators on this campus a very, very merry Christmas and may all of you have many more to come.

## LETTERS

### Thank You

To the Editor,

It seems impossible to repay all the kindness and thoughtfulness that was given to me while in the hospital and at home. The plants, flowers, cards, visits, phone calls and fruit were greatly appreciated. You students, staff, and Des Moines Area Community International Organization (DMACIO) will always be cherished in my memories. You have proven to me that teaching reading and foreign student in bldgs.#24 at DMACC, is the best place to meet beautiful people.

From,  
Nancy Johnson  
Room #2406

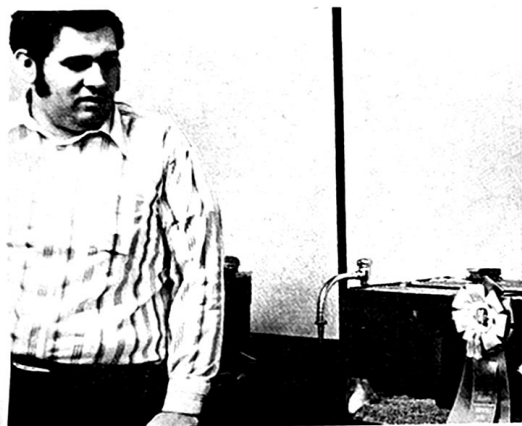
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## Biology Department Takes First Place

The DMACC Biology department recently took first place in the salt water division of the Greater Iowa Aquarium Association. The award made it the 1974 state champion. Working on the project were from left to right Robert Hanson, student; Burgess Shriver, dept. chm. math and science; Dorothy Franke, asst. director of general ed.; Barbara Eastwood, Marge Clarke and Tom Hillson, Biology instructors; and JoEllyn Engleman, lab prepator, math science department.



G R E R E T N I W P S H	SANTA CLAUS	MARY
R S N O W M A N R L E A	CHRISTMAS	TIMSEL
E N A N U E L H S B A N	ANGELS	BULB
E O F N G R A G A L S U	SNOWMAN	GARLAND
T W L H T I N H T U O K	CAROL	BELL
I B E L L A F A H B N K	SNOWBALL	STOCKING
N A W I N E C T M J T A	BELL	EGGNOG
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L C A R D L M A N G E R	WREATH	GIFTS
A A P A E L A T A T A I	NOEL	SEASON
N N E M E Y S H M D S T	TULE	JOLLY
D D A D R L E S N I T S	HOLY	CANDLE
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# "Silent Night"

by Julie Rutz

As the cold north wind blew through the trees in late December, a lone car drove down the highway. The night was chilly as it is always is three days before Christmas.

The young man, not much older than 20, all bundled up in woollens listened to Christmas carols on the radio. He had been traveling for some time now and was very close to his destination.

Driving through Iowa at this time of the year was definitely not the most exciting thing to do, he thought. But, being able to see old friends and relatives would make his trip worthwhile. He would never forget drinking hot cocoa with his crazy Aunt Margaret. Or all the good times he had with his best friend Jim. Yes, he thought, only a few more miles.

A smile came 'cross his face remembering.

His red snow-covered Vega suddenly started coughing, choking, and stopped. "What?" he said outloud. Then he remembered he had neglected to fill his gas tank.

He was the kind of guy who doesn't let this type of thing worry him. Only now it seemed that he was worried. Due to the fact that he was stranded in the middle of nowhere without any possible chance of getting anywhere, a quick outburst of madness splurged from his mouth. After he pulled himself together, he realized that within a close distance lay a tiny farmhouse. He wouldn't have known it was so close except that a small flickering light shown from the window of the farmhouse.

He decided to head for the house and possibly call the nearest station to get some gas.

When he first got out of the weather-torn Vega, he had forgotten how cold it was. His first breath of air froze his lungs. As he walked toward the light the sound of his feet made funny, squishy noises; at this he laughed even though he felt stupid about running out of gas. The more he walked, the colder he got so he began to run. He said to himself, "you are so ignorant!"

Finally he reached the farmhouse and rapped upon the door. His body was cold. As he stood outside in the freezing air he shivered to try to keep warm.

The door of the house creaked open and a tiny lady around 70 years old squinted to see her visitor. She somewhat resembled his grandmother. With this he felt at ease.

"Yes?" said the lady.

"Ma'am," he said, still shivering.

"I've run out of gas down the road. May I use your telephone please?"

"Why sure you can. Come in before you catch your death of cold."

When he walked into the house the smell of antiques came upon his red nose. The woman closed the door behind him and said, "My but isn't it cold out there?"

He agreed and found his way to the phone. After he made the phone call to the station, and found that it would be 20 to 30 minutes before he could get gas, his madness flared once again.

The woman, aware of the situation, offered him some hot tea and told him to sit near the crackling fire to warm himself from the cold. They sat in front of the fire and the grandma-like woman asked, "Do you live near here?"

"Why no, I don't," answered he. "I'm from Nevada and was on my way to visit some relatives for Christmas." He sipped his tea. It tasted so good going down.

"Oh, now isn't that nice," replied the woman. "I was in Las Vegas once, but that was years ago when I was quite younger. I love this time of year, don't you? It's such a glorious time. The birth of Christ, giving gifts, eating cookies and ham and all the trimmings. Christmas, yes, Christmas."

He sat in front of the fire sipping the last of his tea and said, "Yes, this is a beautiful time of year. Although I wouldn't mind it being a little warmer."

"Yes," said the woman. "But that's the beauty of it. To sit near the fire." With this she realized his cup was empty. "Oh, I do believe you need more tea."

"Thank you," he said.

"Would you like some cookies, too?" I bake them every time near Christmas. Especially for people like you. Well, I mean for visitors and such."

"I'd love some," he said. As the woman got up to get the cookies, he wondered what she was doing over her Christmas. Does she go to reunions? he thought. Where is her family?



The woman returned with a plate of newly baked gingerbread, sugar, and chocolate chip cookies. His mouth watered as he ate most of the cookies on the plate. He had forgotten he was hungry.

Again the woman sat down in a rocker-like chair and remained to talk for 10-20 minutes about all the great times she had during Christmas. The children laughing, getting caught under the mistletoe by "handsome" young men, singing carols in the streets, decorating the tree, giving gifts, making snow men and family reunions.

"Well," she said, "I mustn't keep you from getting on. I'm sorry. I always ramble on. It's just so nice to see such a friendly man like you. I'm so glad that you came."

At this moment he realized something which he had never thought of before. My God, he thought, she'll be all alone over Christmas! This nice woman alone.

"Would you like to come with me, I mean come to my relatives for Christmas?" he said kindly.

"Why, thank you. But," the woman hesitated, "I'm having a reunion here. I would...but I have so much to do here."

"Oh," he said. "Well, thank you so very much for everything. I had a wonderful time. Those cookies were great."

"Will you please come back again if you're nearby," said the woman. "Even if you don't run out of gas, come back."

"I'd love to. If I have time I will, OK?" he said.

He put on his coat and smiled. What a nice woman he thought. He walked out into the December air that wasn't so cold for his soul was warm.

Behind the door the woman, smiling, began to pick up the used tea cups. She sat down abruptly in her rocker-like chair and began to sing "Silent Night." Her voice cracked as she sang. Her eyes flooded with wet, sad tears. Tears rolled down her cheeks. There was to be no Christmas for her. Only memories of Christmases past. She sighed in relief and crumpled her head to her lap. Waiting for some memory to make her happy.

"Silent Night..."

