



This is what it's all about

The live Nativity scene at the Congregational Church December 11 was as popular as ever. Depicting the arrival of the famous visitors from the East are, left to right, Tom Nordquist as Joseph, Shirle Nordquist as Mary, Art Sell, Doug McCann and Dave Christensen as the Three Wise Men.

(Cindy Pitts Photo)

Xmas observance banned in 1644

There was a time when Christmas went underground. People who advocated Christmas were in danger of arrest and imprisonment and it looked as though Christmas was on its way out.

It all happened around 1644 when the Puritans in England forbade any merriment or religious services, by act of parliament, on the ground it was a heathen festival. What resulted was much grumbling, breaking of the law and a Christmas underground which wrote and distributed pamphlets in favor of Christmas.

In 1648, for instance, was published "Canterbury Christmas." This

pamphlet gives an account of the subsequent proceedings after the Cryer of Canterbury had upon Wednesday, December 22, "openly proclaimed that Christmas day and all other superstitious festivals should be put downe, and a market should be kept on Christmas day. Which being not observed (but very ill taken by the country) the town was thereby unserved with provision and trading very much hampered; which occasioned great discontent among people, caused them to rise in a rebellious way."

Among the rarest of the pamphlets issued at that time is entitled "The Examination and Tryal of Old Father Christmas." In this little volume, "one old Christmas was commanded to be brought to the Bar, then was a jury for Life and Death to

be impaneled." "The Judge was called Judge Hate-bate, the Sheriff's name was called Leonard Love-peace."

In the end Christmas is acquitted, but is cautioned by Judge Hate-bate, "for avoiding all such scandals as have been cast upon you for the future, do think fit to abandonish you, that you remember your Office is not so much to feast the Body, as to fresh the soul, by thankful and pious Meditations."

Charles II re-established Christmas in 1678 and "jolly Old Father Christmas" has never had to stand trial since.

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Christmas Card Quandry

By DAN NORDINE

We gave up sending Christmas cards many years ago.

Christmas cards are a nice tradition. They serve to keep you aware of the many people who have somehow been a part of your life over the years. Some of the cards are from friends, neighbors and relatives you see on a regular basis, others are from people who have once been in your life and are now more of a memory.

I always enjoyed getting the cards, but was never a real big fan of sending them. Deb, my wife, and I tried that route when we were first married. We made up our list of those we were going to send them to, diligently signed the cards, addressed the envelopes and licked stamps until we were ready for a stomach pump.

Most of the cards were in the mail with time to spare. But not all of them...

It never failed, once the list was complete (or so we thought) and the cards were in the mail, the very next day would bring cards in our mailbox from people we hadn't thought about in years. Maybe an old friend, and acquaintance or a distant relative.

That evening we would open up the list, add the new name and prepare another card for the mail. As we mailed the new card the following morning and picked up our mail for the day, lo and behold. There would be another one. Somehow we had forgotten another person or family.

When I think back on it now, we really hadn't forgotten these people. Most of the time they were from a person or family we had had little to

do with in our past. If not for the card they sent us, we may never have remembered they existed.

But we dutifully sent the card.

And as we picked up our mail the following morning— you guessed it!

This went on for a few years until finally we began to ignore the cards that came from the more obscure corners of our memorable past. Once we did that the cards stopped coming.

The trouble with it all was once we started leaving names off our list we began to feel guilty. What if the people we eliminated from the list thought we did so because we were mad at them. Or what if they thought we were just being snobs!

So we decided it was better to quit sending the cards altogether. With time, we also began to receive fewer cards each year. We have now settled at a point where newer acquaintances may send us a card, but the following year we don't get one from them.

It just got to be too hard to keep up. Maintaining a list almost had to be done on a year round basis in order to make sure everyone who should be included, actually was included. And it gets hard to think about Christmas cards in July when the thermometer is pushing 100 degrees.

We still get one card every year. It comes from a long-time friend of mine, a hunting and fishing buddy of many years. We never actually did a lot of hunting and fishing together, we sort of claim the "buddies" status because we swapped stories on a weekly basis for close to 25 years.

I don't return one, but he sends me a card every year.

His card is always one of those Photo—Christmas cards you can get wherever you have film developed. The card itself is always very unique.

I recall one card where he had placed his Springer Spaniel hunting dog, who was also his best friend, on a stool. A bowl was placed on the dog's head and a towel around his neck. At his feet laid an electric trimmer and a pair of scissors and a comb. On the wall, behind the dog, was a sign which said, "Haircuts — One Bone!"

My friend is also a ham radio operator and on another occasion photographed the dog sitting at the ham radio station with a headset covering his ears. The microphone was placed on the desk in front of the dog and his paw was placed on the mike switch. Printed below the photo were the words, "Merry Christmas from radio station K-9."

My friend works as a county sheriff's deputy and in 1995 was involved with emergency procedures during a tornado that hit the county seat. He took time out from his duties to snap a photo of the funnel as it went directly behind the county courthouse. This was last year's Christmas card and it read, "Just another day at the Sheriff's Office."

Now as Christmas approaches, we look forward to his card. I can't help but wonder how he is going to keep topping the previous year, but he always does.

If I don't get one this season, I may have to consider sending cards again. At least one card!

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Distributing gifts

Going to the post-office is a jolly method of distribution. Pasteboard and brown paper, aided by judicious grouping of chairs and tables, easily transforms a room into a post-office, and a wisely selected postmaster may make the collection of mail an occasion of much merriment. Have general delivery and lock boxes, and at the general delivery window see that each person is properly identified.

A Christmas hunt is always exciting. The clue, given at the breakfast table, is written on a slip of paper in some such words as these: "Pass the parlor, shun the hall, seek the summer kitchen wall." In that vicinity the gift will be found, wrapped and addressed. It adds to the fun if the directions lead first to other rhymes, three or four being followed up before the treasure is found.

The cobweb party is not new, but is always good sport and is especially adapted to Christmas festivities. The tangled threads may lead to the laden tree or to the bulging stocking hanging from the mantel-shelf.

Still another hunt takes the form of a polar expedition and is great sport in the country when there is snow enough for it. Immediately after a breakfast the entire party sets out for a walk. When they turn toward home, the host or someone selected as guide informs them that supplies are hidden along the way in various caches and they will do well to look out for them. Each cache is merely a mound of snow covering lightly a quantity of gift packages.

securely wrapped. There need be only three or four mounds and the gifts should be divided promiscuously among them. If the walk has been long, the first cache to be found—that is, the one farthest from home—may hide a box of cookies, which will be hailed joyfully and will make the gifts in the next cache an even greater surprise.

The last cache to be reached may be the centerpiece on the dining table. Here it should be of cotton glittering with diamond dust, with the pole rising from the middle of it, a fat, squat pole with a jolly Santa Claus atop.

Small gifts may be concealed in a Jack Horner pie, brought to the table when dinner is finished. Choose a deep, round pan of a size to fit the number of the party and put into it the presents, each daintily wrapped and marked with the name of the one to receive it.

To a far-away relative may be sent the kiddies' latest photo (It may be only a snapshot if it be well taken) accompanied by a little verse after this sort:

We're very small, but we want to send

*To our Auntie far away,
Some love and a kiss, with a happy wish*

*For a Merry Christmas Day.
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THANKS!
For Reading
The Pioneer!

Merry Christmas!

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