

Peace on Earth?

by Anne Cospers, Editor

I love Christmas and its overindulgent glitz. The glitter, food, decorations, parties and presents, I love it all. Even the extra time spent with relatives, although by the end of the season Philip Larkin's poem *This Be the Verse* is running through my head like a Zen mantra.

Togetherness can be traumatic. Used to my own family, I know what to expect. Their idiosyncrasies rarely leave me feeling blindsided or surprised. The in-laws, however, play a different game, one that I am still learning. It's enough to make me question the holiday hype about "goodwill towards men" and if peace on earth is really possible.

Then I realize that, perhaps, I'm looking in the wrong places.

There is a drawing on our refrigerator. The artist is a minority classmate of my daughter's and the drawing was created when they were in second grade. The crayon work, done in true "kid art" style, shows him holding hands with Rebecca. This simple work is both an antidote to hatred and a reminder that there is hope for a different, better future.

Less tangible, but no less powerful, is a story about our former neighbor. This took place several

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Trading Yule Memories

by Lisa Chernesky, Staff Writer

It was at a Labor Day picnic, one year, when my sister Angie and I discussed how stores were rushing the Christmas season. August was barely over and colorful holiday wrapping paper was being sold next to the college-ruled loose-leaf notebooks at the back to school sales. What was next? Angels and elves watching from the shelf as Halloween ghosts and ghouls arrive, sell, and then move on to the 75% off clearance bin? When we were kids, it wasn't until Thanksgiving when holiday items appeared on the store shelves. The "When we were kids" complaints turned into the more pleasant tale of "Do you remember...?" and "What's your favorite ornament/gift/memory...?"

Angie's favorite holiday item is a music box that plays about 20 different songs. The size of a small brick, it looked like a wrapped gift. The tree lights plugged into it and blinked in time to the music. I told her that I had had it at my house for several years. Immediately, I saw an opportunity to benefit us both, so in the same breath, I added, "I'll trade you the music box for the Nativity."

"Hey!" our mother interjected. "I only lent it to you. I never gave you that music box!"

"Deal!" my sister shouted.

"It's the only way I'll ever get the Nativity," I told Mom. "I have something to trade."

"You don't want that old thing, do you?" my mother asked.

Of course I did. My favorite decoration has always been that Nativity. My mother trimmed the greenware and glazed it white at Shoemaker's Ceramic Shop in the 1950's. The only embellishments were the tiny rhinestones and pearls in the gifts and crowns of the three wise men. The stable, purchased at Woolworth's, completes the set. Each year, I would arrange and re-arrange the Holy Family, shepherds, and wise men. People in the stable, animals out. No, animals in the stable,

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Fall Concert

Sunday, December 10, 2006
2:00 p.m.

Christ United Evangelical Lutheran Church
Catawissa

No Admission Charge

Coming Events

Dec. 5, 7:00 p.m., Catawissa Military Band holiday concert in the central gazebo of the Columbia Mall, Columbia Mall Drive, Buckhorn.

Dec. 7, 6:30 p.m. Castle Illumination at the Bloomsburg Public Library. Children's program of holiday stories featuring Anne and Rebecca Cosper, music by Scott Atherton, and an appearance by a very special guest.

Dec. 17, 7:00 p.m., Touch of Brass will sponsor the Community Carol Sing at the First United Methodist Church of Berwick. Freewill offering to benefit local charities.

Dec 19, 7:00 p.m., Christmas caroling by members of the Catawissa Military Band. Anyone wishing to sing with the band is asked to meet at the Band Hall at 7:00 p.m.

We are pleased to announce that Tai Woong Kang has two art shows scheduled for the upcoming year. The first is Feb. 21 - 27 at the Brocken Gallery in Tokyo, Japan. The second is March 28 - April 3 at Gallery Soo in Seoul, Korea. Best wishes for successful shows.



Submissions or comments may be sent to the Editor at delta2@ptd.net or Stevan Galbreath at sagalbreath@hotmail.com.

Written material may be given to Stevan Galbreath.

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Pepparkakor (Swedish Spice Cookies)

Editor's Note: We are pleased to include the recipe for Swedish Spice Cookies in this issue, just in time for holiday baking. Many thanks to my mother for graciously sharing so that others might enjoy this tradition.

1 cup sugar

1 cup butter

3 egg yolks

1 cup Swedish syrup (or 1/2 molasses and 1/2 corn syrup)
Boil and when lukewarm add 1/2 tsp. baking soda

3 or 4 tsp. cinnamon

1/2 tsp. allspice

1/2 tsp. cloves

3 tablesp. cream

3 tsp. powdered orange peel

3/4 tsp. powdered cardamom seeds

3 1/2 or 4 cups bread flour

1 tsp. baking powder (mix in flour)

Mix ingredients and refrigerate dough overnight. Roll out and cut with cookie cutter. Bake in moderate oven.

DID YOU KNOW

The Christmas Song (also known by the first line *Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire*) was written on the hottest day of July 1945. A 19 year-old Mel Torme went to visit his friend Robert Wells in the Los Angeles suburbs to work on some arrangements. When he arrived, Wells gave him a copy of the first four lines that he had written to take his mind off the heat. Torme suggested that they work it into a song, which they did in about 45 minutes. Later in the day, they performed it for a number of recording executives and musicians. Among them was Nat "King" Cole, who asked for, and was given, the recording rights. Neither Wells or Torme had any idea that the song they had written as a mere diversion would become such a hit.

Although Cole was Capital Record's biggest star, it took him more than a year to get studio time for the original recording. Even then, he was only allowed to use his own trio as the back-up group. When the song became a best-seller the executives relented and authorized a second release with full orchestra accompaniment. It is this recording that is now considered definitive -- surpassing Mel Torme's own version. First released in the fall of 1946, *The Christmas Song* established Cole as a mainstream singer. Mel Torme had a long career as a singer and Robert Wells went on to become a successful television producer.

Stevan Galbreath

Peace Cont.

years ago, when the wounds inflicted on September 11, 2001 were still fresh.

An Iranian couple, with a young son, moved into an apartment across the street from our house. The husband worked long hours and the wife, like many mothers of preschoolers, was lonely. She would visit us when we were in the yard and we would talk while the children played.

Once, while pushing her son on the swing, the scarf our neighbor used to cover her hair came loose. My daughter noticed and asked her why she wore the head covering. My neighbor wasn't sure how to respond, so I simply told Rebecca that she wore the scarf for religious reasons.

That was enough to satisfy her for awhile, but later, when we were alone, she asked me about our neighbor's religion. I said that she is Muslim and her religion is Islam. Rebecca, aware of the hostility of some people, was surprised but didn't hesitate to say "But I like her."

Four words that spoke volumes about intolerance, how it is easy to hate in the abstract, and much harder to hate individuals.

I can't think of better or more hopeful words to remember this holiday or throughout the year. "But I like her." Merry Christmas.

Answers to Christmas Quiz

1. Franklin Pierce. 2. 1915, five years after Hallmark was founded.
3. Christmas Past, Christmas Present, Christmas Yet to Come and Jacob Marley. 4. A shepherd's crook.
5. Max. 6. 1965, Bonus: CBS.

Yule Cont.

people out. Every now and then, my mother would have to glue a wing on the angel or an ear on the donkey. As we grew up and moved out, my mother scaled back on her decorating. Little by little, ornaments and decorations were distributed amongst me and my sisters. Some stayed in the attic.

Closer to Christmas, I went to my sister's for the dinner and the trade-off. I wanted to set up my Nativity as soon as I got it home. I felt the same childhood excitement. Carefully, I unwrapped each piece. The glaze finish had dulled and cracked. The crevices were brown with age. The cow was missing horns and an ear. The wisemen have lost jewels here and there. It's far from the bright set my mother had made 50 years ago. In it's current condition, it would be a yard-sale leftover. No one else would buy it. But that's ok. I would never sell it!

Happy Holidays to all.

Christmas Quiz

1. Who was the first U.S. President to decorate an official White House Christmas tree?
 2. What year did Hallmark introduce its first Christmas cards?
 3. Who are the ghosts in Charles Dickens *A Christmas Carol*?
 4. What does the shape of a candy cane represent?
 5. What is the name of the Grinch's dog?
 6. What year did *A Charlie Brown Christmas* debut?
- Bonus: Name the network.

NOTES

Congratulations are extended to Josh Shelhamer for passing the audition and being accepted into the 300 piece Tuba Titans. The group performed as part of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and also made an appearance on the *Today* show. Josh, a three year member of the Military Band, is a student at Central Columbia High School.

The CMB Newsletter is available on a subscription basis to non-band members who make a donation to the band. The donation will be used to cover printing and mailing costs. Contact Stevan Galbreath, manager, for information at sagalbreath@hotmail.com.

*Your tax deductible contributions are gratefully accepted by the
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Catawissa, PA 17820

Thank you for your continued support.

The Story of *Silent Night*

by Jef Eichner
Contributing Writer

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The story of *Silent Night* could fill a book on its own, but in the interest of brevity, here is the short version. The song was written on Christmas Eve 1818 at the St. Nicholas Church in Oberndorf, Austria. Earlier that day it was discovered that rust, from the proximity of the Salzach River, had caused the church organ to breakdown (not, as is widely told, a mouse nibbling through the bellows). Without an organ for Christmas Eve service, the assistant priest, Father Josef Mohr, decided to write some lyrics and asked his organist, Franz Gruber, to write music that could be sung by the choir with guitar accompaniment. Due to a shortage of time, the arrangement was kept as simple as possible.

Gruber was actually a school teacher and church organist in nearby Arnsdorf. However, his stepson was filling in for him there so he could supplement the family income by playing for his friend Father Mohr. Gruber's regular church was named Our Lady of the Swamps -- it's difficult to imagine what it would have been like if *Silent Night* was written there.

World Travels

As far as Gruber and Mohr knew, all they did was come up with something to get them through a difficult situation. In the spring of 1819, an organ builder came to repair the church organ. While there, he heard the song, copied it, and took it with him on his rounds of the Austrian villages where he worked. It was acquired from him by two families of strolling folk singers, the Rainers and Strassers, who added it to their repertoire. The song's popularity grew, and in 1834 the Strassers sang what they called the *Song from Heaven* for

the King of Prussia. He loved it so much that he ordered it to be sung every Christmas Eve by his cathedral choir. The Rainers brought the song to America in 1839 and performed it in German at the Alexander Hamilton Monument in New York City.

An English translation of *Silent Night* appeared in 1863, but its author was unknown until 1959 when it was determined to be the work of Reverend John Freeman Young, an Episcopal priest in Florida.

Gruber and Mohr

By the mid 1800s the song had achieved worldwide popularity, but no one knew who had written it. At one point it was attributed to Michael Hayden (composer Franz Joseph Hayden's brother) and occasionally to Mozart. In 1854 word of the song's success had reached Franz Gruber in the small town of Hallein, Austria, where he was living. Although he was able to produce an original manuscript, few people were willing to believe that such a famous song had been written by a small town organist. Gruber spent the last eight years of his life trying to get recognition for composing it.

Father Mohr, who had an on-going

drinking problem, was constantly in trouble with church authorities (oddly enough, one of those times was for using a guitar in church when *Silent Night* was written). He had been transferred twelve times in eight years. Mohr died penniless of pneumonia in 1848, never knowing the popularity of the song he co-wrote. Years later Mohr and Gruber were given recognition as the authors of the renamed *Silent Night*.

A New Chapel

In 1900 the original St. Nicholas Church was torn down due to structural problems caused by the same river that damaged the organ 82 years earlier. The *Silent Night* Chapel was built in its place.

Statues of Mohr and Gruber were commissioned, but since no likeness of Mohr existed, the sculptor wanted a cast of his skull to work from. The skull was disinterred and sent from Wagrain to Vienna, but after the sculptor had made his cast, it was accidentally returned to Oberndorf. The Oberndorf City Council refused to return it and instead placed it in a carved Nativity scene in the *Silent Night* Chapel. Today Mohr's body is buried in Wagrain while his skull is on display in Oberndorf.

An American Gruber

By Stevan Galbreath, Assistant Editor

In one of history's ironies, Franz Gruber's direct descendant, Lt. (later Brig. Gen.) Edmund "Snitz" Gruber (1876-1941), was also an amateur composer. During 1907, while serving in the Philippines with the 5th U.S. Field Artillery, he wrote the *Caisson Song*. Although several of his colleagues did contribute to the lyrics, Gruber himself worked out the melody -- on a guitar. It was not copyrighted or published and, as was the case with his ancestor, he did not receive composer credit. By the time John Philip Sousa used it as the trio of his 1918 *U.S. Field Artillery March* (the first time it was published), the *Caisson Song* was thought to be a traditional piece dating from the Civil War. Gruber was not officially recognized as the composer until he filed for copyright (with Sousa's encouragement) in 1931. The Army adopted it (with less memorable lyrics) as its official song in 1956.