

"Tips and Tales"

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An Irregularly Published Independent Screeed Produced by and for the Residents of Sunnyside for Sharing News and Information About and of Interest to them

A CHRISTMAS STORY

TRUTH REVEALED? Since I recently had my 98th birthday, my early childhood may bring back some events pertinent to my life. I could mention my first radio, first electric light but I think I will deal with my experience with SANTA CLAUS. In my early years my parents moved from an apartment in Middletown, N.Y. with lighted gas jets to a 20 room farmhouse lighted only with kerosene lamps and candles. Also there was no indoor plumbing. Turns were taken in taking the Saturday night baths in a big laundry tub, including waiting for hot water from the kitchen stove. There was another wood burning "parlor stove". There was a grate (12"x 18") above this stove which enabled some heat to move into the master bedroom above. I was allowed to sleep there.

In our family there was no sign of Christmas before Christmas; they always waited for Santa Claus to bring everything on Christmas Eve. This one year I went to bed hardly able to wait for the goodies in the stockings and gifts on Christmas morning. I was sure there would be a stocking with an orange, hard candy, homemade candy and cookies and other surprises. Even in this house on Christmas morning there was a pine tree with lighted wax candles, (lighted by Santa?) This one night I couldn't go to sleep, maybe too much noise downstairs. I crawled out of bed, tip toed over to the grate in the floor, looked down and saw – NOT SANTA CLAUS – but my mother and father putting goodies in the stockings. Stories of Christmas live on – but the Christ of Christmas is Love Eternal.

Epilogue: Many years later I took my family to see the farm where I lived as a boy. A new owner (2nd) was changing it into a bed and breakfast. Walking around the house I saw the discarded grate. They gave it to me and I took it home. I then took it to a woodworker in Dayton and he made it into a nice foot stool. So stop around and see the step stool with a story!

>John Earl

WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR STUFF

I never saw a hearse pulling a laden U-Haul to a cemetery. The moral of this story: SAVE THE TRIP--clean out your things and give to Sunny Treasurers today.

>Shared by Lee Morrison

ARE ALL YOU FOLKS GETTING READY FOR CHRISTMAS?

Well, our "Sunnyside Veterans" certainly are!

Again, they will help us collect toys for children. If you would like to join in to help our local Salvation Army distribute toys to children in need, you may join the fun!

Tammy Steele will again assist with the toy collection. Beginning November 5th, a Christmas tree will be set up in the Corson Lobby. Please stop by the tree and choose an ornament from the tree. The ornament will indicate a toy for a girl or boy and an age range. You can then return the gift to the lobby anytime during the week or bring to our wrap-up program on November 28th. Review the November Funsides for more details.

Collection of doll cradles, bedding, dolls, and doll clothes is already underway. If you prefer to offer a check to the SA, Gene Drifmeyer will deliver it. Gene is at 8809 and will answer any questions you may have.

In 2011, "Toys from Sunnyside Veterans" was a **huge success**. Let's do it again in 2012!

>Gene Drifmeyer

CALORIES

(Noun)

Tiny creatures that live in your closet and sew your clothes a little bit tighter every night.

A DECEMBER EXPERIENCE

The month of December has a special meaning for me. Seventy one Decembers ago, my brother and I were on board the destroyer USS Worden in Pearl Harbor when the Japanese attacked on December 7, 1941. His battle station was the No. 1 gun on the bow, and mine was the No. 4 gun on the after deck house near the fantail. During the second wave of the attack, I was busy carrying powder cases from the magazine and placing them in the breach of the gun when I heard the chief gunner's mate call out, "If anyone's ever prayed, now's the time"

I knew what he meant; a bomb was coming our way. I said a silent prayer and while it was going through my mind there was a thunderous blast. A bomb had just missed us off the fantail.

Two things transpired that day which have had an impact on my life through the past 71 years. One thing; "God" became more than a word in my vocabulary. He became very real and present. Secondly, when my brother heard the blast and saw that it was near the fantail where my gun was located, he left his own gun station and came running back as fast as he could. Before our ship had settled down I heard him calling my name. The salvation of God and the love of my brother, both made clear through that December experience, are still an important part of my memory.

>Dick Young

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN At Massanutten Presbyterian

This month's biographical character sketch is of a member of circle 4 with a very positive outlook on life, named Helen Miller. Helen is known for her historical record keeping of the church, and was most gracious in answering questions, always with a warm smile that embraced this author and made her feel welcomed!

Helen Miller grew up in Harrisonburg in "another denomination" (Evangelical United Brethren), but converted to Presbyterian when she married her husband who insisted that "they could ONLY be Presbyterian." They moved to McGaheysville when she was forty and then transferred her membership to Massanutten Presbyterian. Since Helen was new to the denomination, she went to seminars to learn about Presbyterians. She related a particularly pivotal one at Massanetta Springs which pertained to organizing women's groups. It subsequently inspired her to rally the women at Massanutten into attending the conferences and focusing their own groups.

Helen was the Bookmobile librarian in Page and Rockingham counties and often brought books to Sunnyside, never dreaming that she would live there herself someday. PW ministered to the residents of Sunnyside by visiting them, doing little things that they couldn't do themselves and sometimes providing some little extras. She loved meeting all of the people and moved to a cottage there when her husband was in health care in 1988. Prior to that time they were raising three children. (One son Phil and his family are also members of MPC)

During her tenure at MPC, Helen created a notebook of its history, which has been housed in the church library. In the early days of Massanutten's history, the church actually shared a minister with another church, as was often the custom in smaller churches. Helen interviewed the families of the thirteen charter members of the

church and secured pictures of all of the ministers. Those pictures, along with information about the original furniture can now be found in the Heritage room which was donated and designed by the Longs, the Newmans, The Armstrongs to name few. In the early years, with a small membership, all of the women just had to be very involved in the church in order to keep it going. Helen served as a circle chair many times, as “head” of the women in the church, and an officer in the district and the Presbytery. She was also a youth leader for a few years as well as a deacon and an elder. She muses that there were more boys than girls in the youth group and they “gave her a time!” but she enjoyed all parts of church work, as well as “women of the church.”

As MPC’s membership began to grow, plans were made to build a new church. Helen fondly verbalizes a visual picture of the moving day, in which a procession of folks walked down the sidewalk carrying items to the new church. It was led by the minister, an elder carried the Bible, and four people carried the pulpit on poles. “It was a thrilling event; it just got to you (on this momentous occasion) and many people were almost in tears.” Two of the stained glass windows are mounted in our current church and the others were sold to a church near Elkton. They sold or gave away every bit of the old building—even the building material was given to another church. The steeple and bell tower were moved to the Pleckers next door, who had reportedly always been good about watching out for the church. Helen giggled as she remembered a funny element to the day’s move. She said a terrible smell emanated from the old church—the smell of a dead rat—“and I don’t mean that about people!” They were sure it was the right time to be moving out!

Helen concluded our time together by stating that she doesn’t want to sound like she has been bragging. But most people just have no idea how much of the little detail work that the women of the church have always done behind the scenes. According to Helen, Presbyterian Women have always enjoyed a lot of great fellowship, done

many things for others, and have been privileged to learn a lot of the news of the church too.

She has loved it all!

TREE TRIMMINGS

Christmas – 1960: “Remember ‘Twee?’” Sally asks her brothers, Jack and Charlie. They smile and nod. “Oh, yes, we’ll never forget ‘Twee.’”



Christmas Eve - 1933 - The little tree tumbled off the truck and lay in the gutter at the side of the street. Panicky, he watched the truck roll away, carrying with it the others that had been his companions in the lot by the grocery store. ‘Til now, Christmas Eve. Now, unsold, they were to be added to the pile at the football field that would blaze high next week to bring in the New Year.

“I’d rather burn up with my friends in a jolly celebration than lie here alone and forgotten,” the little tree murmured to himself. “I know I’m not tall and handsome, but surely I could help make someone happy on Christmas morning.” He sighed, and rolled over, watching the occasional car swoosh by, feeling the cold gusts ruffling his branches.

He’d been delighted to be chosen to be a Christmas tree. He felt proud to leave the farm to serve such a high purpose. His mother had shed tears and didn’t want him to go, but the little tree pictured himself covered in tiny lights and miniature crystal globes and shiny tinsel. (He’d heard the other trees talking.) Oh, what a glorious sight he’d be! Small, yet perfect. He could hardly wait. But now, to end up in the gutter ... he felt so, so ... forlorn, so ... forgotten.

A man came stumbling along, one foot on the curb, the other in the gutter, mumbling a tune the

little tree thought sounded a bit like “White Christmas”.

“Well, lookee here!” the man exclaimed. He bent down and picked up the little tree, then squatted on the curb to get a better look. He held it in both hands, and spoke to it as if the little tree were a person. “You’re lost, too, ain’t ya? Just like me. Christmas Eve in the gutter. Now thash pitiful. You’re pretty, though. Little, but pretty.”

The little tree thought the man had fallen asleep he sat there for so long. Until he spoke again. “I gotta get along, little tree. You remind me my family’s waiting for me and I gotta get home to them. Have a nice Christmas, buddy.”

The man propped the tree against the curb, then stepped out of the gutter onto the sidewalk and hurried away. The little tree’s tiny heart swelled a bit. Perhaps he’d at least helped one family that Christmas eve.

Snow sifted down silently. A trolley slowed and stopped, letting out some passengers at the corner; its bell jingled cheerfully as it rumbled away down the late night street. Two chatty women hurried past. “Oh, I can’t wait to get home and get my tree decorated,” one of them said. “Ralph promised to have it in its stand with the lights already on by the time I get there.”

“Mine’s already up,” her friend replied. “We decorate ours a week ahead. All I have to do is get the gifts out of hiding to put underneath.” Their voices faded as they rushed away. They hadn’t even noticed the little tree. It was getting colder and colder here in the street, the snow beginning to stick to the ground, and to its branches. He was starting to think he would disappear and not be found until Spring. He sighed, and shifted, trying to find some warmth, somewhere.

“Well, hello. What have we here?” A man in rough work clothes and carrying a dinner pail stood looking down at the little tree. “And who might you belong to?” He reached down and picked up the tree, then shook it briskly, dislodging the snow. He looked at it critically for a moment, then glanced up and down the empty street. “Did someone drop you by mistake?” He

peered into the darkness again, up and down the street. No one.

“By golly, little tree, I think Santa Claus dropped you here just for me. My kids are going to be thrilled with you. To say nothing of my wife. Come on, let’s go home.”

Saved! All his dreams of tiny lights, and miniature crystal globes, and shiny tinsel came rushing back, and the little tree shivered in anticipation. Bouncing along on the man’s shoulder he caught glimpses of other lucky trees, already trimmed and twinkling brightly through the darkened windows of handsome homes, awaiting the morning; awaiting the arrival of Santa Claus.

As they tromped along the streets, the homes grew smaller and shabbier. Most of the windows were dark with only the occasional pale electric candle to brighten the night. A sense of foreboding alarmed the little tree. What was he getting into?

Finally they arrived. From the sidewalk the house seemed dark and drab, but once inside it was an entirely different scene; warm and cozy and filled with a delightful aroma. They went through the darkened living room to the kitchen. A woman bent over a table full of freshly baked sugar cookies, carefully spreading each with frosting.

“Ta da!” The man thrust the little tree high for the woman to see. “Look what I found, Ruby, just lying in the street when I got off the trolley. I swear Santa Claus knew we couldn’t afford one and left it there just for us. Can you believe it?”

“Oh, Hank, that’s wonderful! The kids will be so happy. It’s hard to have Christmas without a Christmas tree.” She crossed the room and took the little tree out of his hands. “It’s beautiful, and smells so good.” Poking her nose close, she breathed deeply. And smiled. In his heart the little tree smiled, too.

Now he waited anxiously for his decorating to begin. He would be so handsome.

“What can we use for ornaments do you think?” Ruby asked, bursting his bubble. No tiny twinkling lights? No miniature crystal globes? No tinsel?

By the time Ruby and Hank went to bed, the little tree was decked out in a few pretzel twists, a couple of hair bows, and a paper chain quickly fashioned out of the Sunday funny papers. If he'd been able, the little tree would have cried. He dreaded seeing the disappointment on the faces of the children in the morning. For this he'd left the farm? For this he'd abandoned his mother? For this?

"Shhh. Don't wake up Mommy and Daddy."

The little tree watched glumly as three small children crept down the stairs and into the living room. The oldest, a boy, tiptoed closer. "Lookee! Lookee! Look at the Christmas tree!" he whispered. His eyes gleamed.

"Oh! Santy Claus must have brought it. I didn't think we were going to have one." That from a younger boy, still wiping sleep out of his eyes. He reached out and pulled one of the pretzels off the tree. And ate it. "It sure is pretty."

The little tree stood a bit taller.

The big boy pulled his baby sister closer. "This here is what you call a Christmas tree, Sally. Can you say 'tree'?"

"Twee."

"This is a real tree, not one of them fakes. You can tell 'cause it smells so good. Be careful," he warned as she leaned in for a sniff. "It's sort of prickly." He, too, removed a pretzel and popped it into his mouth.

At this rate I'll be nude before breakfast, thought the tree.

Just then their Mom and Dad came downstairs, and everyone's attention turned to the packages on the floor beneath the tree. Carefully sewn new pj's for all, handcrafted wooden 'treasure boxes' for the boys, and a sock doll for Sally. Nothing was store-bought, yet not a murmur of disappointment did the little tree hear.

While the others were eating breakfast in the kitchen Hank slipped back into the living room holding a bag of pretzels. "I can see keeping you

dressed is going to be nearly a full time job," he joked. "These may be the tastiest decorations any tree has ever had. Certainly the most popular, for our kids, anyway." The little tree preened proudly. Thoughts of twinkling lights, miniature crystal globes, and shiny tinsel faded away. Somehow pretzels took on a new charm.

Through the rest of the day, and indeed, for days after that, the little tree basked in the attention of his new family. Pretzels came and went, but also new ornaments were added. Jack, the big boy, made a star out of tinfoil for the top of the tree. Charlie gathered pine cones from the yard and carefully attached them with bright yarn from his mother's knitting bag. And Sally brought her blanket and pillow and new sock doll and made a nest on the floor, looking up at the tree as if it were magical even as the little tree dried out and dropped its needles around her.

"My twee," she kept saying. And so "Twee" he became.

In the evenings the family sat around 'Twee' singing Christmas carols accompanied by Hank on his harmonica. Ruby read aloud to them; stories about the baby Jesus, and old Scrooge and Tiny Tim. They finished off the sugar cookies with cups of cocoa, and once for a special treat Jack helped his mom make fudge.

Every night, as they trooped upstairs to bed, each child called out, "Goodnight, Twee". Actually, Hank and Ruby said it, too, on their way to bed. "Good night, Twee." He liked that. It made him feel ... what? Well, 'special', was the best he could think of. No, make that 'very special'.

When finally, inevitably, the little tree was left at the curb, his branches were almost bare, and only a scrap of paper chain and a few pine cones remained tangled in them.

More important than anything was that he knew, somewhere in his little heart, that this family would always remember him. He could almost hear them, years from now, saying to each other, "Remember 'Twee'?"

Post script - 'Twee' ended up as mulch around the trees in a city park. He loved it when toddlers came by and he could hear them saying, "Twee, Mommy, twee."

>Gail Kiracofe

**"What happens when frogs park illegally?
They get toad."**

THE ENTERTAINMENT

Ness School was a rather typical, red brick, one-room school in York County, Pennsylvania, in the 1930's. It had large windows on two sides, a rear wall for the cloakroom with the bell rope hanging just inside. The front wall was covered with blackboards. High above the blackboards hung a framed black and white picture of George Washington. The ceiling of the single room was high, flat and a dingy cream or gray.

In the front corner of the room stood a large stove which had a metal shield designed to be a reflector painted silver; a piano and the teacher's desk. The piano is the focal point of this story. The only two things of note on the sides were the windows with large window shades and kerosene lamps suspended on black metal fittings which could swivel. The kerosene lamps play a role in this story, too, for the entertainment was held to raise money to replace those lamps with electric lights. Apparently our teacher had negotiated with the School Board and with a local electrician, Ralph, to work out permission and to get an estimate for costs but the money had to be raised by the school.

There was great excitement when we were all made aware of a possible program to be put on for our parents and for community members. The program which our teacher and our mother called an entertainment was to be held on two nights and any money raised was to be used to pay for the new electric lights.

As plans went forward, the news spread by word-of-mouth and some parents were enlisted to help. Our mother, a student of this teacher 30 years

earlier, supported the idea and when a used rug was needed to cover the make-shift stage, she retrieved one from our attic. The rug saw service once again for two nights.

We rehearsed and rehearsed and finally the opening night came. With Kitty at the piano, we opened with patriotic songs sung with gusto. "America the Beautiful", one of my lifelong favorites was among them. Audience participation was encouraged. The guests were jammed into the big kids' desks while we students doubled up wherever we could. No one sat on the floor as the floors were oiled in those days to reduce the dust.

The program unfolded as the evening progressed. Every child who was willing to perform was involved. There were pieces (recitations), solos, trios, choral readings, several short playlets, and a guest artist or two; one on the fiddle and another on the harmonica. Near the end of the evening there was more group singing while a basket was passed to collect the gifts from the audience. The program closed with several upper grade students doing the Gettysburg Address which they were required to learn.

The effort to raise the money apparently was successful as Ralph proceeded to install the lights. Some of the work was done while schoolwork went on. Sometimes Ralph had more eyes on him than on the teacher.

Days passed and everything seemed to be complete but still there were no new electric lights. The interior lights were ready but the Edison Light Company had not come to connect the school to the lines passing the building.

One day, a particularly dark and bleak day, our teacher walked over to try the switch and the lights came on. There was a gasp and a roar as we basked in the glow of the new lights. The entertainment and the glow of those lights lived on for generations afterward. For some of us this project may have sown the seeds of the need for community cooperation and support which is part of our lives sixty years later.

>Richard J. "Dick" Williams

A CHRISTMAS MEMORY

As long as there were "believers" in our house, there wasn't a sign of Christmas in the house until Christmas morning. My parents put up the tree, decorated it, and put out the presents on Christmas Eve after the children were in bed and asleep. What dedication to carry out the belief that Santa was a very busy fellow on Christmas Eve!

The week between Christmas and New Years was always a time for visiting relatives and having visits from relatives. This was not a time for exchanging gifts, but rather to admire the gifts we received from our immediate family and to sample the home made goodies that were made for just such visits. The visits started on Christmas Day and continued throughout the week. (The relatives were both sets of grandparents, and three sets of uncles and aunts.)

The Christmas I remember most was when I was in the 6th grade. My wish from Santa was a typewriter. My father did find a used clunker, and I got my wish. Putting paper in that machine and pecking out my name or someone else's name was a real joy. Then my mother volunteered my services at the church (that was before the days of paid church secretaries.) Sometimes I was pecking an original and two or three carbons. What fun to erase when there were errors and there were many! I often wonder why I wanted a typewriter, particularly after I was "roped in" to doing the church typing. It would be another five years before I acquired limited typing skills.

>Lucille Gohdes

THIS DOESN'T HAPPEN OFTEN

When I was just fourteen, we moved to Ft. Lauderdale, FL. My Dad had just accepted a pastorate at First Presbyterian Church there. I was in the 8th Grade. One night a sound woke me up. I kept listening until I was sure what it was and looked out my window. I saw something in the driveway! Quickly I went to my parents' room..."Mom," I said, "I think there is a baby in our driveway, and it's crying!" Wow! We went downstairs and out to the driveway, and sure enough, there WAS a baby, very tiny, and it had

sort of rolled off its blanket onto the driveway. This baby was only days old, a little boy as I recall. Well, we took the baby inside our house and tried to comfort it; in the meantime, we called the police. Two officers came around. We told them the circumstance of finding a baby with no name, no nothing! Before the officers arrived, my sister and I begged our parents to keep the baby--guess what? They said no! Well, to make a long story short, one of the officers did adopt that baby boy, and that gave me a great deal of comfort. To this day, I believe the young mother knew my dad was a minister and that we would do the right thing for her baby. I think we did!

>Dot Hollandsworth

"We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing." - George Bernard Shaw

"HOTSPOTS" AT SUNNYSIDE Your Computer Club Status Report!

Over the past several months, the availability of wireless internet service in public areas on Sunnyside campus has improved significantly. New Wi-Fi hotspots are available at several locations on campus. The executive conference room near John Dwyer's office now has a hotspot. The Sunnyside Room has wireless internet service available when needed.

Most recently, the Bethesda Theater has both a wireless hotspot and the capability for HDMI connections in the audiovisual system in the theater. An anonymous donor provided a generous donation to help make these technology improvements possible.

The need for internet access is expanding rapidly as iPads and other portable devices become part of our lives. I'll bet that, after Christmas, there are even more new iPads, tablets, and laptops on campus which can use these hotspots. Many thanks to the donor and others who have encouraged these advancements.

Our Computer Club's most obvious activity is helping with your current computer problem or email stubbornness. We also are seeking awareness of new technology. Maybe there is a special personal opportunity for you. New announcements (and new advertisements) happen every day, involving entertainment, education, information, communication or physical aid.

It has been said that as soon as we say "that is impossible", we find someone has already done it. We can learn together, find surprises and have fun. Maybe we will find that particular use (or App?) that meets your personal need. Your participation also can help relieve the frustration that comes built into some (or all?) of these devices!

In a broader sense, an active and supported computer club is evidence of "Technology Awareness" at Sunnyside and should serve as an incentive to potential future residents.

The Computer Club here at Sunnyside continues to meet twice each month; on the 2nd and 4th Mondays at 1:00PM in the Allegheny Room of the Highlands. NOTE: in December, 2012 the Club will meet only once, on December 10, since the 4th Monday is Christmas Eve.) Watch Channel 970 for announcements. Whether you want to learn more about your software, fix a printer problem or would like some advice, the Computer Club offers personal assistance. Come and enjoy the fellowship!

>Richard L. Williams

SUNNYSIDE VETERANS' GROUP

Although there have always been veterans at Sunnyside, the Veterans Group was formerly established in 1999 and the following mission statement was approved on 6 April 2000: "TO PROMOTE A BOND OF FELLOWSHIP AMONG VETERANS OF THE UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES WHO HAVE PROVEN THEIR PATRIOTISM, LOVE OF COUNTRY, LOVE OF OLD GLORY, AND

PRIDE OF SERVICE. TO INSTILL OUR SACRED BELIEFS IN FUTURE AMERICANS SO THAT OUR COUNTRY WILL FLOURISH SPIRITUALLY, MORALLY, AND ECONOMICALLY."

Our Veterans Group has grown to over 115 members. We meet quarterly and during 2013 our meetings are scheduled on 28 February, 23 May, 22 August and 28 November. Meetings are at 1400 hrs. at the Bethesda Theater. Family members and guests are welcome.

Potential programs are: Mission of the Virginia National Guard, the JMU ROTC program, Women in the military, New military equipment under development and experiences of local Afghanistan veterans.

Our primary project, which has been active for several years, has been preparing and presenting an incased American flag to the family of our Veterans at their Memorial Service.

A special project just been completed. One of our own veterans Richard Young and his two loyal and experienced writer friends, Charles Blair and Jean Kilby, planned, interviewed and edited 40 of our veteran's stories which make up our new book titled: "U.S. VETERANS AT SUNNYSIDE". The first 50 or 60 copies were sold to our veterans story writers. Another 60 copies were ordered for residents that attended November 11 Chapel for the Veterans Remembrance Day Service. Copies will be donated to our Sunnyside libraries. The anticipated \$1.50 potential profit of each book will be donated to the "Wounded Warrior Project".

Copies of the "U.S. VETERANS AT SUNNYSIDE" can be ordered by contacting Dick Young at phone number 437-8770 or by email at: rchrdyng@ntelos.net .

And another special project: "TOYS FOR TOTS" was initiated and coordinated with The Salvation Army by our member Gene Drifmeyer. The purpose is to offer our residents the opportunity to provide Christmas gifts to children that may not otherwise receive gifts for Christmas.

A Christmas tree is placed near the entrance to our Chapel and is decorated by small colored cards which identify the age category of a boy or girl. Residents are encouraged to select one or more cards, purchase gifts and placed them under the tree without wrappings. Salvation Army personnel will then match the type of gift with a child.

Our Veterans Group is proud of our Veterans continued service our country.

>Bob Spicer and Whit Scully

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