

Christmas 1978

Ring out ye crystal spheres,
Once bless our human ears
(If ye have power to touch our senses so)
And let your silver chime
Move in melodious time;
And let the base of heav'n's deep organ
Blow.
And with your ninefold harmony
Make up full consort to th' angelic
symphony.
—John Milton, *On The Morning Of
Christ's Nativity.*

At Christmas play and make good
cheer,
For Christmas comes but once a year.
—Thomas Tusser, *The Farmer's Daily
Diet*

I love the Christmas-tide, and yet,
I notice this each year I live;
I always like the gifts I get,
But how I love the gifts I give!
—Carolyn Wells, *A Thought*

Heap on more wood! — the wind is chill;
But let it whistle as it will,
We'll keep our Christmas merry still.
—Sir Walter Scott, *Marmion*

Strong hands to weak, old hands to
young, around the Christmas board,
touch hands.
—William Henry Harrison Murray,
John Norton's Vagabond

The Feds And The Trail

The meeting scheduled for Jan. 3 in Salisbury of landowners and other persons interested in the Appalachian Trail is long overdue. If federal representatives had encouraged such a meeting in the beginning, at least some of the issues that have fanned the discussion to such incandescent heat might not have arisen.

With the clarity of hindsight it is easy to perceive how matters got out of hand. Instead of calling a general meeting to explain the plan in the beginning, representatives of the Department of the Interior and groups working with it preferred to deal with landowners individually. The implication is that the representatives thought they could wrap up deals and obtain any necessary land more cheaply in this fashion. Divide and conquer.

Well, it didn't work that way. Landowners and other interested persons compared notes. The procedure spawned countless rumors, magnified in the retelling. The goal of a 1000-foot corridor where land was available and conditions permitted became viewed, wrongly, as the intent of local acquisitions.

The activities of some of the representatives didn't help. Routings were projected down the middle of an owner's land rather than around the edges. In at least one instance, the routing as proposed would take more than half of a family's small tract. In addition, the failure of the representatives to ask permission to go on some of the land they surveyed caused unnecessary ill will and stimulated charges of "trespass."

The story is not entirely one-sided.

Cost Of Electricity

Utilities are a favorite object of criticism these days, and with its request for a \$131.5 million rate increase Northeast Utilities presents an attractive target. The prospect of higher electricity costs will be about as welcome to Connecticut householders as the certainty of higher oil prices because of OPEC. It seems as if forces beyond our control are ganging up to make living continually more expensive.

Yet we must have electricity; and Northeast, which is often regarded as one of the more competent private utilities, is subject to the same inflationary factors as all of us. Some years ago it planned for substantial conversion to nuclear-fueled power plants. This reliance has been the cause of much concern and criticism by some environmentalists. Not the least of the reasons has been the failure of Northeast — or, more important, the federal

government — to come up with a satisfactory means of disposing of the nuclear wastes that are accumulating daily. The other side of that coin is that without such nuclear capacity, costs to consumers probably would have risen even more steeply.

It does not follow that Northeast and its subsidiaries should get all they ask — which, in the case of the Hartford Electric Light Co. is 16 percent. In the fashion of much bargaining these days, the utilities probably have asked for considerably more than they actually expect. Obviously the request must be carefully analyzed and the assumptions of future need challenged.

Yet any temptation to curry popularity by beating up on the utilities must be strongly resisted. It would be really shortsighted to deny the companies, for transient reasons, the amounts they genuinely need to provide reliably for the future.

Left Behind?

A remarkably misleading argument was used the other day by the promoter of a proposed 40-unit subsidized housing development for Canaan. Some people realize that "the town has to grow," he said, and "responsible people" realize that without growth the town would be "left behind."

Canaan may or may not need ad-

ditional housing of this sort for low-and moderate-income families. If a substantial number of people want it and the town authorities are in agreement, then by all means go after it.

But not on the phony ground that "growth" and "development" are the necessary tickets to "progress" or a good life.

From The Past . . .

Of the 247 members of the Connecticut House of Representatives and the 35 members of the State Senate who will open their season, at least socially, with the Gubernatorial Ball on Jan. 4 at the Hartford State Armory, those who have listed their occupation as farmers lead all the rest. There are 55 so-named members in the House and 1 in the Senate. Lawyers predominate in the Senate with 8 members and are second in total number with 23 in the House. — Dec. 22, 1938

Capt John W O'Neill, U.S Marine

Corps, was killed in action at an unspecified time somewhere in the Pacific Theater, according to word received by his parents, Prof. and Mrs. J.M. O'Neill (of Lakeville). — Dec. 23, 1943.

The first meeting of the Litchfield County University Club since the Declaration of War took place at the Battell House in Norfolk last Thursday evening. . . . About 200 members attended and the meeting was preceded by a turkey dinner at the Crissey place. . . . William B. Barnett was elected to membership. — Dec. 23, 1943.



Last Fling

Sunlight sparkled on the yet open surface of the Salmon Kill in Lime Rock earlier this month before freezing temperatures put on a blanket of ice for the winter. The mood was of a last fling before hibernation. Photo by Mary Lou Estabrook

Open Forum: Letters To The Editor

The Origin Of Noble Horizons

Mabel E. St. Martin of Sharon had a letter in The Lakeville Journal of Dec. 7 asking if it would be possible to have a reprint of the bequest by Mrs. Noble of Sharon to build homes for the retired people. Anyone wishing to see the entire provision may do so by going to the Probate Court in Sharon where the will is a matter of public record, or copies of the will can be had for a modest price from Esther Clark, judge of probate, Sharon, Conn.

The provisions are too long and too complicated, I feel, to make publication informative. On the other hand, naturally I don't want the public to think its right to know is totally frustrated, so may I simply pull out of a long, complicated provision the following, to paraphrase what my understanding of the Nobles' intention was.

"I suggest to my Trustees, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, that in applying income and principal of this trust they give preference to organizations, preferably in the States of Connecticut, New York or Florida, qualifying under the foregoing paragraph of this Article, which provide a place or places of abode for aged couples or aged persons both male and female."

In trying to carry out the intentions of the Nobles, the trustees sought and found Church Homes, Inc. in Hartford, Conn., experienced in exactly this kind of operation, and by using the Noble Foun-

OPEN FORUM LETTERS

The Lakeville Journal welcomes expressions of opinion from readers. Letters intended for publication must be signed with the full name and address of the writer. Open letters cannot be used, and ordinarily no more than one letter per month from any writer can be considered. Letters of more than 200 words will be subject to condensation. The deadline for letters is 9 a.m. Tuesday. Please typewrite if possible.

ation money influenced Church Homes into buying, building and operating Noble Horizons, thinking that because of Mrs. Noble's love for this area it would be nice if she and her husband could be remembered by a community for the elderly here.

As to the amount of money involved, again, this is a matter of public record at the Sharon Probate Court. Outside of paying expenses of operating the foundation, all available money has gone toward building and supporting Noble Horizons except for one fairly major gift to Church Homes to build the Noble Building at their community for the elderly in Hartford. There is still a long way to go due to mortgages which had to be taken to provide sufficient funds for building.

The trustees of the Noble Foundation (which is com-

pletely distinct and separate from Noble Horizons) have felt from the beginning that, instead of spending the entire principal on sort of a one-shot basis, it would better serve the intentions of the Nobles if as much as possible of it could be preserved to produce income, which income could be spent as seed money for as many homes or communities for the elderly as possible.

As I pointed out above, it will take all of the income from the Foundation to pay off the mortgage at Noble Horizons before the trustees may look elsewhere in Connecticut, New York or Florida to perhaps repeat the Noble Horizons effort.

At this time of year it is customary for us to appeal for donations to help elderly residents of Noble Horizons who find the buying power of their fixed incomes dwindling away in this inflationary time and, through no fault of their own, are unable to meet the charges which are necessary to maintain the quality of care at Noble Horizons mandated by the government and by real concern for the life of older citizens. Those who have surrendered their holdings and are on Medicaid are also in need of some daily additional funds. It is a policy of Church Homes never to turn away a resident for lack of money, and to this end we need a supplementary fund

Thomas R. Wagner
Lakeville

Sharon's Response To The Stevens Fire

I think the citizens of Sharon are the greatest. After last week's disastrous fire, which destroyed all belongings of the Roger Stevens family, the people of Sharon responded immediately. Cash and essentials were

raised within hours. Under the direction of Rev. Henry Stewart, of the First Church of Christ Congregational, an orderly collection and distribution of goods were made.

My sincerest thanks to the many organizations and in-

dividuals of the town who came forth in a time of necessity. As I said at a meeting a short time ago — "Best Damn Little Town in Connecticut!"

Bill Wilbur
First Selectman
Sharon

Donors And The Gift Of Sight

There was a curious coincidence in the make-up of The Lakeville Journal obituary page in Dec. 14 issue.

Level with the name, Abel Plenn, and in only slightly smaller type, the caption under Mary Lou Estabrook's magnificent photograph of both sun and moonlight read: "Continuous Light." The coincidence was this. The corneas of Abel Plenn's eyes were on their way toward a new life-cycle within hours after

their completion of their old one.

There is space on every Connecticut driver's license for a certain, beautiful word: Donor.

Donors, or givers, contribute the most living of gifts to their fellow mortals. In this connection that of aid to new vision.

Near this dark winter solstice, and during this coming season of both light and birth of transcendental human love, that is a brightening thought.

An evergreen wish for this Christmas to come and for coming Christmases: May everyone of those empty spaces on those licenses be filled.

Doris T. Plenn
Sharon

More Letters

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President Carter must have anticipated and discounted the flak about his decision to normalize relations with China. Not only does the move end the self-imposed blinders that have constricted American policy since 1945, a full tripartite relationship also provides a useful check-on Soviet-adventurism. Carter has been skillful in emphasizing the contributions of Presidents Nixon and Ford to an evolutionary process.

Senator Goldwater and other critics have this much of a point: If there were reason to think that the United States had really abandoned Taiwan (despite formal abrogation of the defense treaty in 1979), the move could properly be considered a disgraceful sellout of human rights for temporary advantage.

But there are many reasons to think that this did not and will not happen. The Chinese are experts at delicate nuances. Despite the lack of formal assurances that the mainland government will not invade Taiwan, recent praise of the Taiwan economy by Teng Hsiao-ping, emphasis on peaceful methods and strong statements by the U.S. constitute in effect a guarantee. Taiwan is worth more to China as a show-window and money-maker than as a subjugated regime. That is the strongest real defense.

Essentially the formula of one-China-but-autonomous-Taiwan has been available for several decades, but a ripening was required to make the process mutually acceptable. Hopes that the relationship will become generally advantageous are predicated on the assumption that the Chinese leadership is considerably less ideological and more pragmatic than that of the Soviet Union. It would be a vast mistake, though, to portray the new arrangement as anti-Soviet. Rather, it is a new effort to discard the delusion that diplomatic relations imply moral approval. Without normal relations we merely cover our own eyes and ears.

It would be pleasant, just before the festival associated with the Prince of Peace, to note that the outlook were as bright in the Middle East. Egyptian President Sadat seems to have tried to attach some unreasonable last minute conditions, but I continue to believe that the big underlying problem is the intransigence of Israeli Prime Minister Begin and his government. The risks if Sadat should be toppled in consequence are horrible to contemplate — a radicalization of the entire area that would surely also seal the doom of the Shah of Iran. Only the Soviet Union could benefit.

Deep as is the commitment of the United States to support the basic security of Israel, we should not be committed to bail out any particular Israeli government. Surely we ought to make clear to Begin that if his stiff-necked approach frustrates a peace treaty his government will be on its own for oil arrangements and financial support.

Another mar on the Christmas spirit is the vandalism to which Christmas trees and lights have been subjected in Salisbury and other Northwest Corner towns. Apparently a few misanthropes are on the prowl who take delight in destroying the Christmas enjoyment of others. They hate the community.

Plainly most young people, along with other citizens, have only contempt for such actions. Are the perpetrators (whom we assume to be young) then more unruly, more intractable, more disrespectful today than their elders were a generation ago? When you consider the laments of centuries past that the younger generation was going to the dogs, you become acutely aware of the possibility that this is merely the perennial complaint of the old against the young.

Still, I submit, there are some major changes. One of them is the loss of parental authority. You can attribute this to many factors: the decline of religious influence, too much luxury, the welfare state, FDR, the easy life, television, progressive education, you name it. Doubtless there really are many causes. But it seems to be a fact that some youngsters who a couple of generations ago would have been working, studying or competing during most waking hours now have not only leisure time and money but also easy access to cars and alcohol and other drugs.

Perhaps a basic cause of the lack of discipline is the laxness and remoteness of our courts. Kids who get into trouble are rarely made to face the consequences. Even repeat adult offenders in the Northwest Corner often beat the rap and return to thumb their noses at the community, to the growing dismay of police and local officials. The juvenile and criminal justice system is not serving the needs of rural towns. Instead, it contributes a great deal to the Age of Disrespect.

Well, I don't have a simple solution, though I think another resident state trooper would help. I am convinced of another thing: Kids want and need limits. Arnold Whitridge said it well the other day in his commentary on the Jonestown tragedy: Young people crave parental authority. Obviously when youngsters don't find reasons to focus their respect, their energies and loyalties may go in different directions. But I am certain that the most basic responsibility for curbing vandalism starts in the home, and there is where society ought to address its corrective efforts. By the time the community must deal with the problem, parental authority is already a failure.

This week's prize for colorful language goes to Falls Village First Selectman David Domeier, who described some opponents of commercial status for Canaan Airport as "prigs and ninnymammers." I didn't even know what a ninnymammer was until I looked it up: A simpleton, or silly person. Well, I admire vigorous expression, but I can tell you right now that the outspoken Mr. Domeier will never make a good bureaucrat.

Now let me wish all present, past, potential and would-be perambulators (and any other readers of this column) a very Merry Christmas.

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