

Siuslaw News
P.O. Box 10
Florence, OR 97439

Opinion

The First Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

"I never considered a difference of opinion in politics, in religion, in philosophy, as cause for withdrawing from a friend." — Thomas Jefferson (1800)

YES, VIRGINIA:

THIS 124-YEAR-OLD EDITORIAL REMAINS RELEVANT IN THE HEART OF CHILDHOOD

The following editorial was first published Sept. 21, 1897, in the *New York Sun*, written in response to 8-year-old Virginia O'Hanlon's poignant question: Is there a Santa Claus?

The thoughtful and heartfelt response from then editor Francis Pharcellus Church was printed as an unsigned editorial and has since become history's most reprinted newspaper editorial.

More than 120 years later, its relevance remains, not just in the lessons offered regarding the heart of childhood, but also in the wisdom that we recognize easily as children but risk forgetting in adulthood — unless you "continue to make glad" your own heart of childhood.

Dear Editor,

I am 8 years old. Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus. Papa says, "If you see it in *The Sun*, it's so."

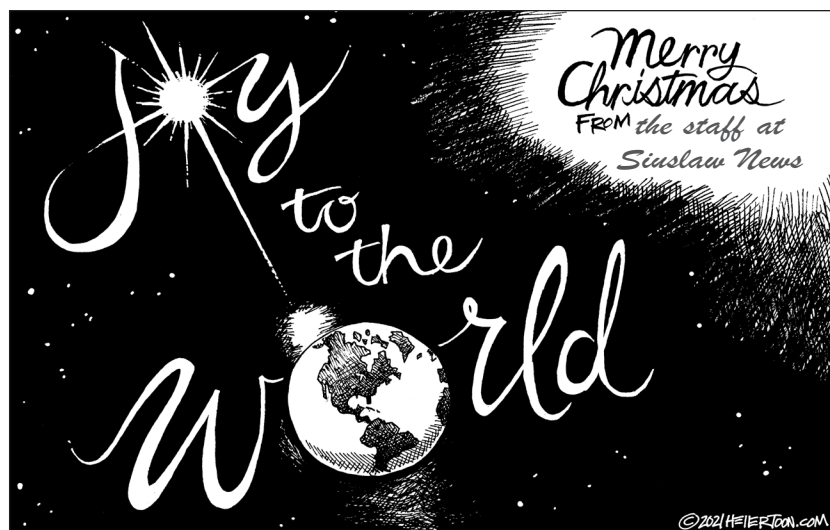
Please tell me the truth, is there a Santa Claus?

— Virginia O'Hanlon
115 West Ninety-Fifth St.

Virginia, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except what they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds.

All minds, Virginia, whether they be men's or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours, man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa



Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy.

Alas! How dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus! It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence.

We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The external light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies. You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if you did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove?

Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see.

Did you ever see fairies dancing on

the lawn?

Of course not, but that's no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world.

You tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart.

Only faith, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond.

Is it all real?

Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

No Santa Claus! Thank God! He lives and lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay 10 times 10,000 years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood.

"Is There a Santa Claus?"
reprinted from the Sept. 21, 1897,
edition of *The New York Sun*

Twelve Days of Christmas (Oregon Coast Style)

GUEST VIEWPOINT

By Patricia Allen

Area resident

On the first day of Christmas, Mother Nature gave to me:
A lonely crow on the sea wall.

On the second day of Christmas, Mother Nature gave to me:
2 bald eagles
And a lonely crow on the sea wall.

On the third day of Christmas, Mother Nature gave to me:
3 calling loons,
2 bald eagles,
And a lonely crow on the sea wall.

On the fourth day of Christmas, Mother Nature gave to me:
4 common murrens,
3 calling loons,
2 bald eagles,
And a lonely crow on the sea wall.

On the fifth day of Christmas, Mother Nature gave to me:
5 western grebes ...,
4 common murrens,
3 calling loons,
2 bald eagles,
And a lonely crow on the sea wall.

On the sixth day of Christmas, Mother Nature gave to me:
6 oystercatchers a picking,
5 western grebes ...,
4 common murrens,

3 calling loons,
2 bald eagles,
And a lonely crow on the sea wall.

On the seventh day of Christmas, Mother Nature gave to me:
7 gulls a flying,
6 oystercatchers a picking,
5 western grebes ...,
4 common murrens,
3 calling loons,
2 bald eagles,
And a lonely crow on the sea wall.

On the eighth day of Christmas, Mother Nature gave to me:
8 cormorants a fishing,
7 gulls a flying,
6 oystercatchers a picking,
5 western grebes ...,
4 common murrens,
3 calling loons,
2 bald eagles,
And a lonely crow on the sea wall.

On the ninth day of Christmas, Mother Nature gave to me:
9 harbor seals sunning,
8 cormorants a fishing,
7 gulls a flying,
6 oystercatchers a picking,
5 western grebes ...,
4 common murrens,
3 calling loons,
2 bald eagles,
And a lonely crow on the sea wall.

On the 10th day of Christmas, Mother Nature gave to me:
10 California sea lions rafting,

9 harbor seals sunning,
8 cormorants a fishing,
7 gulls a flying,
6 oystercatchers picking,
5 western grebes ...,
4 common murrens,
3 calling loons,
2 bald eagles,
And a lonely crow on the sea wall.

On the 11th day of Christmas, Mother Nature gave to me:
11 Steller sea lions swimming,
10 California sea lions rafting,
9 harbor seals sunning,
8 cormorants a fishing,
7 gulls a flying,
6 oystercatchers picking,
5 western grebes ...,
4 common murrens,
3 calling loons,
2 bald eagles,
And a lonely crow on the sea wall.

On the 12th day of Christmas, Mother Nature gave to me:
12 Gray whales breaching,
11 Steller sea lions swimming,
10 California sea lions rafting,
9 harbor seals sunning,
8 cormorants a fishing,
7 gulls a flying,
6 oystercatchers picking,
5 western grebes ...,
4 common murrens,
3 calling loons,
2 bald eagles,
And a lonely crow on the sea wall!

Merry Christmas one and all!

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Siuslaw News

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Wednesday Issue—General news releases, Monday noon; Classified line ads, Monday 10 a.m.; Legal Notices and Display Ads, Friday noon.

Saturday Issue—General news releases, Thursday noon; Classified line ads, Thursday 10 a.m.; Legal Notices and Display Ads, Wednesday 5 p.m.

NEWSPAPER SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

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Office Hours:
Monday to Thursday: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Friday: 8 a.m. to noon

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The *Siuslaw News* welcomes Letters to the Editor and Guest Viewpoints as part of a community discussion of issues on the local, state and national level. Letters are subject to editing for length, grammar and clarity. Publication of any letter is not guaranteed and depends on space available and the volume of letters received.

Email letters to cmeyer@thesiuslawnews.com

TO BE CONSIDERED FOR PUBLICATION:

Letters must address pertinent or timely issues of interest to our readers at-large. In addition:

- Letters reflect the opinion of the writer. The *Siuslaw News* cannot verify the accuracy of all statements made in letters. Authors should ensure any information is accurate, fair and not from second-hand knowledge or hearsay, and include sources where possible.
- Letters have a suggested 300-word limit and may be edited for grammar and clarity.
- Authors must sign their full name and include their street address (only city will be printed), as well as a daytime phone number and/or email address for verification. The person who signs the letter must be the actual author. *Siuslaw News* does not accept anonymous Letters to the Editor.
- *Siuslaw News* will not print form letters, libelous letters, business promotions or personal disputes, poetry, open letters, letters espousing religious views without reference to a current issue, or letters considered in poor taste. Letters also may not be part of letter-writing campaigns.
- Writers are limited to one published letter every two weeks.

TO SUBMIT TO THE SIUSLAW NEWS:

Emailed submissions are preferred. All letters need to include full name, address and phone number; only name and city will be printed. Handwritten or typed letters must be signed.

The newspaper, at the sole discretion of the publisher and editor, reserves the right to reject any letter that doesn't follow the above criteria.

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Siuslaw News Deadlines for December

Dec. 29 Edition

— Wednesday Edition —

Dec. 31 Edition

— Special Friday Edition —

General news releases – Monday (Dec. 20) noon
Classified line ads – Monday 10 a.m.
Legal Notices and Display Ads – Thursday (Dec. 23) noon

General news releases – Tuesday (Dec. 28) noon
Classified line ads – Tuesday 3 p.m.
Legal Notices and Display Ads – Tuesday 3 p.m.

The Siuslaw News office at 128 Maple St. in Historic Old Town will be closed on Friday.