

# AROUND ABOUT

With Justing Weatherford

When the last lights and ornaments have been packed away, the dry needles swept up, and the now-outdated Christmas tree hauled outside, the evergreen can still serve a happy purpose.

You might prop it up in the corner of your yard, perhaps tied to a clothesline post or a fence, where it can provide cover and a feeding station for birds. Hang suet balls, pine cones daubed with peanut butter, whole sunflower heads, and other treats on it to attract and feed your feathered friends.

Maybe the Lone Garden Club will be holding its annual Twelfth Night Burning of the Greens festivity, and you can manage to contribute your tree to that big bonfire.

Maybe you will find that you have a little extra armchair time between now and Jan. 2, and I am most willing to help by suggesting some super reading. Each year I blow the dust off my copies of Christmas classics that everyone should read at least once and which I can read over and over. First come Charles Dickens's superb "Christmas Carol," then Henry Van Dyke's "The Other Wise Man" and also "The First Christmas Tree." A little more recent are Nora Loft's "How Far to Bethlehem?" and Minton C. Johnson's, "How the Littlest Cherub Was Late for Christmas."

This month I discovered a new favorite when I was searching for my reading for the Bookworms' Christmas meeting where each member brings a carefully selected, seasonal bit of prose or poetry to share. My delightful discovery, a very short bit of prose, written by an unknown author and published in a Guideposts Magazine many years back, is so neat I want you to enjoy it too.

### THE CHRISTMAS THIEF

It was Christmas morning and the sexton was pale and wide-eyed. To the pastor he gasped: "Sir, I just opened the church—the Christ Child is gone from the manger-crib."

"That's ridiculous," exclaimed the priest. Yet it was true, he found. The beloved little statuette of the infant was gone from the shrine! The thoughts of the kindly clergyman were in a turmoil.

Even before he had verified the disappearance for himself, his thoughts were concerned with the thief. What fiend—what infidel—would perpetrate such an outrage? Was it someone who wished to defile the symbol of the very birth of Christianity? Did someone want revenge on the church, the pastor, the congregation—or upon God?

"Shall we call the police, Father?" the curate asked. The old priest shook his head. He glanced about the church he loved and which only four and a half hours ago had been filled with the happiest crowds of the year, the attenders at the Christmas Eve Midnight Mass.

Soon now the church would be filled with happy Christmas morning crowds. What would their stunned reaction be when they found the Christ child missing? Distraught, the pastor put on his coat and hat and wandered outside. To passers-by he murmured a "Merry Christmas" he did not really feel.

As he reached the corner, a small boy, running as he pulled a new red express wagon, almost knocked him down. "Georgie Potter!" The priest started to rebuke the lad, but the shining light on the ruddy little seven-year-old face stopped him. He smiled: "Well, is that a new wagon I see?"

"Yes Sir!"

Suddenly the clergy stiffened.

"Georgie! What is that in your wagon?"

It was the Christ child! The pastor stared transfixed. The beloved statuette of the infant Jesus, with its baby arms outstretched in wide benediction, lay with a blanket tucked about it.

The shining light was gone from the lad's face and he covered.

"Georgie, did you take that from the church?"

"But I promised!" the boy blurted. "I prayed and prayed for a red wagon. And I promised the Christ Child if He'd get me a red wagon for Christmas, I'd give him a ride in it twice 'round the block."

As the curtains close on another—some say the 1979th—Christmas season, let us hope that we all better understand Christmas as old Scrooge finally understood it, and as Dickens's masterful and timeless tribute describes it "a kind, forgiving, charitable time, the only time in the long calendar of the year when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely."

## Doctor's daughter married

Dr. and Mrs. James W. Norene are pleased to announce the marriage of their daughter, Tracie, to Michael Bunch Nov. 3 at 2 p.m.

The ceremony was held at the ranch home of Michael's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Alvin C. Bunch and was attended by family and friends of the bride and groom. The Bunchs live on Bunker Hill Road near Heppner.

Mrs. Robert Stickney was matron of honor. Robert Stickney was best man and their son, Richard, was ring bearer.

The groom's sister, Mrs. Loren Woodside of Lind, Wash. served the cake at the reception and dinner following the ceremony.

The bride and groom are now at home in Heppner where they are both employed.



Mr. and Mrs. Bunch

## Topic club celebrates Christmas

A Christmas observance was held at the Lone Topic Club on Wednesday, Dec. 19, at the home of Katherine Lindstrom with Jacie Bergstrom assisting.

Following a potluck luncheon of Christmas favorites, the program was presented. Mrs. Bergstrom told of the Santa Claus tradition and the origin of the Christmas Seal in 1907. Mrs. Lindstrom explained that Dec. 25 was selected for the observance of Christmas in 380 A.D. and carols were a product of the 15th century.

A gift exchange was held. The Reverend Cathy Barker was a special guest.

## No senior dinner planned

There will be no senior dinners served Jan. 1, but Jan. 2 diners will be served the following menu at Lone and Heppner: fish filets or burger patties, scalloped potatoes, tossed green salad, harvard beets, cornbread and jelly and jello poke cake and topping.

That afternoon there will be a blood pressure clinic in Heppner at the Neighborhood Center with County Health Nurse Pat Wright checking blood pressures at no charge.

The Social Security representative will be at the Neighborhood Center from 10 a.m. until noon Friday, Jan. 11.

## Hospital Auxiliary celebrates Christmas with nursing home patients

The Pioneer Memorial Hospital Auxiliary put on a Christmas celebration for the nursing home patients at the hospital in Heppner.

The Soroptimist Club donated Christmas stockings for the 23 patients and the AAUW provided fruit for the stockings.

The Lexington Grange donated three gifts for each of

the patients. Mrs. Lucky Felt made a Christmas cake and Mrs. Kenneth Smouse played the violin. Grade school children sang Christmas carols and Santa was on hand to give out gifts. The auxiliary decorated the hospital and the Forest Service donated some Christmas trees.

"It was real nice the way they decorated the hospital,"

Lucky Felt, hospital administrator, said. Renee Siminoe coordinated the program.

The hospital nursing home received \$100 from a previous resident in the home. The auxiliary is buying presents for the patients with the money Felt said the generous donator wants to remain anonymous.

## AFTER CHRISTMAS CLEARANCE

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