

Is That So?

By EUGENE BURNS
Ranger-Naturalist

"At Christmas play and make good cheer. For Christmas comes but once a year," wrote Thomas Tupper in The Farmer's Daily Diet some 500 years ago.

And now for a few facts about this merriest, holiest of the year and its many customs, most centuries old.

Name: Christmas comes from Christ's Mass, the mass said in honor of His Birth. From the Italian word for Christmas, Natale, meaning birth, comes Noel, the French name for Christmas.

Date: The general observance of Christmas occurred some 400 years after Christ's birth. Because the exact date was unknown, not even the year, the official birthday was fixed to fall upon the date of the ancient Festival of Sol, the unconquered sun, which on December 25 had begun his return from the south after the winter solstice, or the shortest day of the year.

Trees: Our Christmas tree tradition may well have come from the Romans and thence by way of Germany where it was used as early as 1605. In Scandinavian countries, birds are given their own Christmas trees, too, appropriately trimmed with bunches of grain.

Candles: According to old tradition, the burning of candles on Christmas signifies the belief that flowers are supposed to bloom on Christmas eve. Among them, the holly—hence its use on this day.

Mistletoe: The use of this parasitical plant was handed down by the ancient Druids to whom it was a sacred plant—bringing peace and good fortune.

Yule log: Wassail bowl: the yule log which was kept burning all night and the wassail bowl in which drinks were mixed for Christmas toasts were long an important part of English Christmas ceremony.

Carols: During medieval times, the birth story was dramatized by Nativity plays in which carols were sung. The carols survived the plays.

Manger: Some 800 years ago, St. Francis introduced the crib which is seen in Roman Catholic and Moravian churches during the Christmas season. However, in Italy, each household has its own home-made manger, with the Holy Family and the animals grouped around it.

Fasting: Early Puritans to this country a doleful lot, turned the festival into a fast—and it was not until the Dutch came that Christmas was again celebrated with feasting and merry-making.

Saint Nick: The name Santa Claus comes from the Dutch for St. Nicholas, a kindly 4th century bishop from Asia Minor. In Germany, St. Nicholas has a feast apart from Christmas on Dec. 6—and then the saint comes to praise the good children and bring gifts.

Kris Kringle: Scandinavian children await the coming of Kris Kringle (The Christmas Child).

Father Christmas: French children set out wooden shoes on the hearth to receive the gifts of Bonhomme Noel (Father Christmas).

Shoe and Stockings: American boys and girls hang their stockings at the fireplace for Santa Claus to fill when he comes down to chimney. In Norway, the entire family leaves its shoes in a row in the hall on Christmas eve to signify that everyone will try not to quarrel during the coming year.

Christmas cards: The sending of Christmas cards by way of friendly greeting and remembrance has grown up since about 1860—one of our most recent customs.

Since the dawn of recorded time man has tried to push back the dark barrier of night with candle, torch, campfire, gas—and electric light. But regardless, night triumphs, even today, on four holidays—including Christmas eve.

Our Christmas calendar dates from a new-born infant's first wail drifting into the star-filled night at Bethlehem.

The journey of the "three kings" during this holiday season has further led to the celebration of the "Twelfth Night," immortalized by Shakespeare: the night before Epiphany, Jan. 6. In some Christian lands, like Spain, this holiday takes the place of Christmas.

Why does man limit himself to such a few night holidays? It is at night when light fails that truly the most interesting facts of nature are revealed. The vast majority of the earth's animals wait for darkness to venture forth.

First, consider the importance of night. If our earth were not to turn and all the sun's radiant energy were to fall on one side alone, the temperature of that sunny side would rise to killing heights while in the shadowed night side, the continued loss of radiated heat would produce an equally disastrous animal and plant-killing cold. And life on earth, as we know it, would perish.

If you are in snow country and the moon is out, note how the snow crystals reflect the moon—some of the frozen water crystals glittering almost as brightly as the stars.

You'll Be Astonished
But even on darkest, moonless

nights, you'll be astonished how the starlight sky produces enough illumination on fields and trails and in the open woodland for man to see remarkably well even though the brightness may be but a billionth time of that at noonday on a sun-drenched coral beach.

To make the total adjustment from day to night, man's pupil must expand—and in less than a quarter hour, the pupil does just that, filling most of the iris. (A bright light now reduces one to blindness.) By 45 minutes the retina approaches its maximum sensitivity—and then the human can see almost as well as an owl or a night-traveling lynx, and better than a whippoorwill or a rabbit. Proclaiming man's one-time night-time ability.

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Scope of Egypt's Activities Checked

Washington — (U.P.) — The United States is making a careful check in the European and Mediterranean areas on the scope of Egypt's alleged anti-Jewish activities, it was learned Saturday.

If the inquiry indicates violations of human rights the state department would be prepared to support United Nations censure of Egypt.

The department has asked U.S. diplomatic missions in London, Paris, Rome, Athens, Malta and Cyprus to report any evidence that Egyptian Jews are being deported. Meantime, Britain and France are reported investigating alleged mistreatment of their nationals in Egypt.

The U.S. action followed receipt of conflicting reports on Egyptian moves against Jews. American ambassador Raymond A. Bare has discussed the question several times with Egyptian premier Gamal Abdel Nasser in Cairo.

Nasser was advised of American concern and alarm over the reports. He also was warned of the possible damage to Egypt's world reputation. Nasser is understood to have replied that there was no massive deportation underway although some Jews are being deported for "specific reasons."

\$100,000 Damage From Medical Building Fire

Sherman Oaks, Calif. — (U.P.) — A fire caused an estimated \$100,000 damage at a Ventura blvd. medical building today. Firemen managed to save a drugstore, but several doctor and dentist offices were destroyed.

ON RADIO TONIGHT CHRISTMAS SING WITH BING

All America sings on Christmas Eve! Join your friends and neighbors up and down the block for an old-fashioned sing as Bing Crosby leads the carols for the second year on this special holiday broadcast. Guest star: Rosemary Clooney, plus the Norman Luboff Choir and Paul Weston's Orchestra.



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Quotes From the News

By UNITED PRESS

Vatican City — Pope Pius XII calling for a strong alliance against the Russian war machine before it is too late.

"Sad reality forces us to set forth the terms of the struggle in clear language. If we kept silent, we would have to fear the judgment of God."

Washington — Sen. A. S. (Mike) Monroney (D-Okla.) on whether he thought Vice President Nixon's trip to Hungarian refugee camps was politically motivated.

"I think there probably were some political considerations underneath—it wasn't going to hurt him any—as a prospect for four years from now."

Columbus, Ohio — Zoo Superintendent Earl Davis expressing high hopes that the first gorilla born in captivity would survive. "We are treating it as we would a human baby. If it remains in as good condition as it is today, we'll be happy."

Joliet, Ill. — Prison inmate Theodore R. Hefflin, hoping a Christmas day accordion recital would impress his parents: "I'd like to show my father I can put my mind to something long enough to attain something worthwhile."

Around Hollywood

United Press Correspondent
By ALINE MOSBY

Editor's Note: Aline Mosby is on vacation. Bing Crosby writes a topical guest column—how "White Christmas" became his big song success.

By BING CROSBY
Written for United Press

Hollywood — (U.P.) — Almost 15 years ago Irving Berlin played a song for me that was to be one of the production numbers in "Holiday Inn," a picture I was making with Fred Astaire. Irving's song was entitled "White Christmas." It had a pretty melody and tinsel-type lyrics.

"I think that will be okay, Irving," I told him.

Looking back those 15 years, I believe that was the musical understatement of the century.

"White Christmas" was the big musical number of the picture—and a good many years later was still so big that the studio made another picture using the song title as the title of the film—and of course using the song, too.

After "Holiday Inn" was released, I recorded "White Christmas" and it's the biggest-selling single record of all time, so I've been told. Figures of the record company through 1953 show more than nine million copies of the platter have been bought. I guess maybe there have been a couple dozen or more sold since then.

The reason for all this "White Christmas" talk is that it's that time of the year again—the joyful Yuletide. At CBS Radio we're going to put on our second annual "Christmas Sing with Bing"—a full hour of Christmas music on Christmas Eve by some of the finest choirs and singers available.

The "Christmas Sing with

California Schedules Big Building Program

Sacramento, Calif. — (U.P.) — Nearly \$112 million in new state building projects will go into construction in 1957, state architect Anson Boyd announced Saturday.

Boyd said schedules for bidding have been established to permit the earliest possible start of construction. About \$68 million worth of state structures will be built in Southern California. Northern California will get the remainder.

The projects will include major office buildings in San Francisco, Fresno and Los Angeles.

Hungarian Refugee's Son Born in Freedom

Altoona, Pa. — (U.P.) — The wife of a young Hungarian freedom fighter Saturday experienced fulfillment of her most desperate hope—a son was born to her in free America.

Mrs. Helen Gall, 22, said she cherished the 7-pound, 2-ounce boy as the best "Christmas present" of her life. But in a way, it was a Christmas gift to Uncle Sam, too.

The boy, by virtue of his birth in the United States, automatically became an American citizen.

"I am so happy," Mrs. Gall said from her hospital bed. "While flying to the United States, I realized the baby would be born as an American citizen and not as a Hungarian."

Mrs. Gall's husband, 24, fought in the Hungarian rebellion against the Communists. After three unsuccessful attempts to cross the border, they reached Austria, taking with them their desperate hope to have their child born in a land of freedom.

The Conklingville Reservoir in northern New York has a capacity of 283 billion gallons.

Mutual Security Program Check Due

Washington — (U.P.) — President Eisenhower's special advisory committee on foreign aid leaves this week for a firsthand check on America's far-flung mutual security program.

When it returns seven weeks hence it will advise the president on what future course it believes the program should take. Officials say this may lead to drastic overhauling of the multi-billion dollar project.

The committee, called the president's citizen advisers on mutual security, is headed by Benjamin F. Fairless, former board chairman of U.S. Steel Corp. He and four of his committee men will leave on a special air force plane Thursday on the first leg of their tour.

The 22,000-mile survey will take them to Spain, France, Germany, Austria, Yugoslavia, Greece, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, India, Burma, Thailand, Viet Nam, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Formosa, Korea and Japan.

Red Chinese Premier Plans To Visit Poland

London — (U.P.) — The Polish government announced today that Chinese Communist Premier Chou En-Lai will visit Poland next month after talking with Kremlin leaders in Moscow.

The official Polish news agency PAP announcement added new significance to Chou's hurried Moscow mission which was disclosed in Peiping and in Moscow.

Observers said Chou's decision to visit Eastern Europe despite his long absence from Peiping on the Southeast Asian tour

THE RING AGAIN

Berry, Okla. — (U.P.) — Sixteen years ago Mrs. Carl Thiele, now living at Greer Ridge, Mo., lost her diamond ring on the family farm west of here. Edgar Mielke, present owner of the farm, was cleaning up a pile of old lumber recently on the ground. It was Mrs. Thiele's ring. He mailed it to Mrs. Thiele, who had mentioned the ring's loss to Mielke before she moved to Missouri in 1941.

Back Erie borders on New York State for an airline distance of 64 miles.

appeared to indicate major moves were in the wind regarding the satellites.

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