

Potpourri

Ever since learning about the Swedish custom of St. Lucia day, Potpourri has been yearning to find someone to photograph in the role of a Lucia girl. Imagine our joy when we called the Frank Bash home recently to hear Judy Bash say, "Oh, yes, Margareta knows about the custom. And her robe and crown arrived today from her mother in Sweden."

Margareta Larsdotter-Aulin, Swedish exchange student, is spending the school year here attending Medford High school and is living in the Bash home. She was as pleased as we were to have the traditional St. Lucia robe and crown to wear in order that she might open the Christmas season here as she would at home in Sweden.

Margareta explained that in her home town in Sweden the oldest daughter in the household rises about 5 a.m. on St. Lucia day, puts on the long white robe and after lighting the seven candles, balances the "krona" of lingonris leaves and berries on her head. She then carries trays of hot coffee and special rolls or hofles to first her parents and then other members of the household.

Songs are sung, and sometimes poetry is recited. The ceremony is solemn, but not necessarily religious. After the home ceremony is over, the Lucia girls and "Star boys," the latter wearing white tunic costumes and with tall white caps adorned with stars, and carrying sticks, visit other homes. The young people often gather as classes and visit their teachers' homes, and the day generally is a festive and gay one.

Judy Bash, a sophomore, and Margareta, a senior, are enjoying each other very much this year. Margareta thinks Medford High school is "wonderful" and is working up a lot of school spirit. She was a little dismayed at her first football game — thought the boys were "too rough" but decided later that everything was all right. She will return home next summer.

Literature available on the origin of St. Lucia day states that the custom dates back to pre-Christian times. It is said that long before Christianity was introduced to the northern countries of Europe, December 13 was set aside by the so-called barbarians for celebration of the sun. According to the old calendar, this was the shortest day and longest night of the year, and, after this day, the long dark nights gradually yielded to the lengthening rays of the sun. When the Christians arrived, they abolished such pagan celebrations and substituted their holy rites. It was St. Lucia, the saint of light (lux) they chose to honor on December 13. The original Lucia was said to be a beautiful maiden of 17 who lived in Sicily around 304 A.D. and various legends are told about her.

The origin of the Advent wreath is also obscure, but it is believed that it may have had its beginnings in the pagan fire wheel. In Christian symbolism, the wheel or wreath stands for eternity. Its use is said to be especially fitting during Advent, the season of the anticipation of the coming of our Lord.

A rebirth of the custom of making and using an Advent wreath before Christmas is on the increase in America; they are being used in schoolrooms, churches and institutions as well as homes.

The National Fire Protection association posts these rules for a fire-safe Christmas.

Cut a growing tree or buy one that hasn't dried from prolonged storage.

Stand the tree in water or snow outdoors until you are ready to use it indoors.

Bring the tree indoors just before Christmas and take it out soon afterward as possible.

Place the freshly cut tree trunk in water and keep level of water above the cut the entire time the tree is indoors.

Don't use candles on the tree.

Check lighting sets each year before using for frayed wires, loose connections and broken sockets.

Be sure the fuse on the electrical circuit you use is not over 15 amperes.

Don't plug too many cords into one outlet.

Don't let Christmas wrappings accumulate in the home.

Use non-combustible materials that have been flame-proofed.

Untreated cotton batting, paper and certain cloth costuming will ignite easily and burn with great intensity.

At least one Junior Service league member arrived at the annual Christmas ball Friday night without a headdress, although she had one made. Hope Lewis (Mrs. Jack) reported that she took the headdress home one day last week, but couldn't find it anywhere Friday night. Mrs. L. even offered her three children a reward of money if any one could find the missing headdress. "I went as high as a quarter and then decided I must have burned it by mistake," she sighed. "When my kids can't find anything for a quarter, it isn't there."

Prize-winning fog story. A valley resident, driving at a snail's pace south on Highway 99 last Wednesday night, was hunting for an unfamiliar driveway turn-off. As he drove more and more slowly, two Greyhound buses behind him also decreased their speed. When he turned into the lane, the two bus drivers followed along, unaware that he had left the main highway. Citizen reports that the startled housewife nearly fainted when she looked outside and saw a sedan and two big buses coming down her driveway.—O.S.

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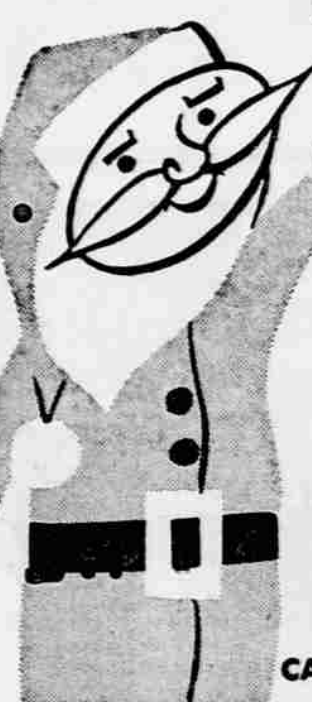
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