

Girl Who Wrote To Santa 61 Years Ago Soon To Retire as School Teacher

News York—(UP)—Sixty-one years ago Virginia O'Hanlon wrote one of the world's most famous letters. In it she asked the question—is there a Santa Claus?

"I am ready to retire," said the gentle, blue-eyed lady today. She spoke with only the slightest quaver, in sure, cultured cadences.

"Next July, I will be 70 years old, and I've been teaching in the New York public schools roughly 43 years. I intend to finish out the spring term. Retirement is mandatory at 70."

One short half-term as a junior principal and then retirement in a quiet apartment in Manhattan, the island that has always been home for Mrs. Laura Virginia O'Hanlon Douglas. She was born in Manhattan July 20, 1889, not far from the spot where Clement Clarke Moore wrote the verse that begins "Twas the Night Before Christmas."

Her father, Dr. Philip F. O'Hanlon, a physician and surgeon, later moved his family uptown into a four-story brick house with brownstone trimming at the front. Her room had a fireplace where she always hung a stocking on Christmas Eve. The tree was in the parlor downstairs.

Uses Old Ornaments

"One of my earliest memories is of the sound of the bells on the sleighs outside—a lovely sound in winter—I'm sorry children don't hear them

now," she said. "And I still have the old-fashioned ornaments we used on our Christmas tree. They are used to help decorate the tree of my seven grandchildren every year."

One day, when Virginia O'Hanlon was eight, she came home from Public School 93 with word that some of her little friends were saying there is no Santa Claus. She put it squarely up to her father.

"My dear father was always a great pal of mine. I felt he was being equivocal in the way he was answering—he wasn't saying yes with conviction, and he wasn't saying no. I told him I was going to ask our family newspaper, the Sun. Papa was delighted—it was an out for him."

Virginia got a sheet of the family's best heavy writing paper. She went to her father.

Man Hit in Leg Target Shooting

Frank Burwell, 21, of 908 Lawnsdale st., Medford, accidentally shot himself in the lower right leg while practicing target shooting near the Old Stage rd., state police reported.

Officers said the bullet entered the leg just below the knee and traveled 10 inches down his leg. He was treated by a local physician and released.

her's second-floor office, took a stub pen, and wrote a letter starting "dear editor" and ending: "Please tell me the truth, is there a Santa Claus?"

Editorial Widely Used

The answer, an editorial written by Francis B. Church in the Sun, has been reproduced all over the world and is held to be the most famous editorial article ever written.

"My family used to write the Sun about such things as pronunciation of words," she said, "and when I wrote my letter I never expected there'd be anything but a yes or no answer."

"Our first word of the editorial came when a lovely gentleman, Mr. Matthews, an officer of the Astor's Fund, met my father and said: 'Did you see today's answer to Virginia's letter?'"

The famous answer assured Virginia, that there is indeed a Santa Claus—"he exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist . . . thank God he lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay, ten times ten thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood."

Mrs. Douglas smiled when asked if she ever met the author: "No, we never knew him, although he was a neighbor of ours in the summer. You see, it wasn't known until he died that he wrote it. Everybody thought Mr. Dana, the editor, wrote it."



SEEKING information on American production, Soviet Deputy Premier Anastas Mikoyan plans to visit United States in January.

Excessive Speed Blamed for Crash

Belle Glade, Fla.—(UP)—Excessive speed at a dangerous curve has been blamed for a two-car collision which killed nine persons and hospitalized another.

The Highway Patrol said a car containing nine Puerto Rican laborers was going 85 to 95 miles an hour early Sunday when it spun out of control and slammed into a car driven by an off-duty policeman.

Eight of the Puerto Ricans and the policeman were killed.

Aliens Must Report Addresses

Portland—James L. Turner, district director of the immigration and naturalization service, has estimated that 20,000 aliens will report their address in the state of Oregon in January under the federal alien address program.

Turner said that 19,583 aliens reported their address during January, 1958. The law requires all aliens in the United States, with few exceptions, to report their address during each January. Throughout the United States almost 30 per cent more applications for naturalization are received during January, February and March than are received during other months. The immigration official attributes this sudden rise to the alien address program.

Aliens not required to make this report are diplomats, those accredited to certain international organizations and those who have entered temporarily as agricultural laborers.

Forms for making the reports will be available to aliens at all post offices and offices of the immigration and naturalization service at Portland during January.



ARRIVING IN SAN FRANCISCO with rare deep sea animal life, Soviet marine research ship Vitjaz is center of scientific interest. From left: Captain Igor Sergeev, Dr. Nikolai Sysoev, top scientist aboard, and Mrs. A. A. Pavlova, interpreter. Marine research in Pacific Ocean was conducted under International Geophysical Year program.

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Mexican Bus Crash Kills 72

Oaxaca, Mexico—(UP)—A bus loaded with Christmas shoppers overturned on the Pan-American highway 40 miles southeast of here Sunday, killing 72 persons and injuring two in the worst traffic accident in Mexico's history.

All of the victims were believed to be Mexicans.

The speeding bus overturned and plunged over a six-foot bank paralleling the road when the driver swerved in an effort to avoid two persons walking down the highway. The two pedestrians and 70 of the 72 persons aboard the bus were killed.

The only survivors, the conductor of the bus and a 15-year-old Indian girl passenger, were seriously injured.

HITLER CRITIC DIES

Los Angeles—(UP)—Author Lion Feuchtwanger, 74, a merciless critic of Hitler and the Nazi government, died at Mt. Sinai hospital Sunday.

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