

# Local Man's Popularity Shows on Holiday

14 MAIL TRIBUNE, Medford, Or. Sunday, Dec. 13, 1959



**WOW! REAL RAINDER?**—That may not be what Santa is telling this youngster, but whatever it is, he seems to have the boy's undivided attention. The man behind the beard says he meets thousands of children each year during his Santa activities.

## Activities Began At Family Event Seven Years Ago

By BOB WALTERS  
Mail Tribune Staff Writer

To thousands of youngsters in the Medford area, that bearded, heavy-set gentleman in the red and white suit is none other than old St. Nick himself.

But to his friends, he's just Ray Huson, a good-natured truck driver who likes kids. Ray has played Santa at the Big Y super market for the past five years and this year donned his costume for the opening of the Christmas season in Medford as well as for a group of Cub Scouts at Washington school.

Few people realize, however, that he's also the "right jolly old elf" who calls on children in about 50 Medford homes each year.

**Began Seven Years Ago**

Ray's Santa activities began about seven years ago, he said, when he borrowed a costume from a neighbor and impersonated Mr. Claus at a Huson family gathering. The following year, he bought his own suit and visited the homes of a few friends.

"The idea," Ray punned, "just snowballed." He's been the city's unofficial St. Nick ever since.

Ray begins taking reservations for house calls about Nov. 1 each year and, by the time his list is complete, he's usually scheduled to call on youngsters in about 25 homes Christmas eve and 25 more on Christmas morning.

"I arrange my schedule just like my truck route," he said, "and let the parents know what time I expect to be at their homes. I can usually come within 15 minutes of the right time."

**Arrange With Parents**

Ray makes arrangements with the parents to pick up gifts, usually hidden on the porch or in the family car, before making his entrance.

"Then I just bang on the door a few times and barge right in," he said. He stays only about five minutes in each home so that the children are still as excited when he leaves as when he arrived.

This system, Ray said, has always worked fine — except the time two years ago when he went to the wrong house.

Two little girls were waiting for him in the house he was supposed to visit but their home was in a new development where all the houses seemed to look alike.

**Gets Right In**

"I looked through the window of one house," he said, "and saw two little girls of about the right age. I couldn't find any presents hidden outside but I figured their folks had just forgotten — so I went right on in."

The girls began screaming with joy and jumping up and down when they saw him, Ray said, but the parents were "flabbergasted." They were standing in the background, whispering to each other and obviously trying to figure out what was going on.

"I knew I'd made a mistake," he said, "so I told the girls that if they'd hurry off to bed, I'd be back later with presents. They were gone like two shots out of a gun!"

"The parents," he laughed, "were still standing there looking at each other when I left."

**Necessary Expenses**

Ray doesn't charge for the house calls but is paid for his Santa duties at the Big Y. Most of the money, however, seems to be poured into the necessary expenses of being a self-sufficient St. Nick. This includes a cleaning bill which annually runs to about \$30.

He owns two red velvet suits, one trimmed with real fur and the other with white satin, and wears a pair of German boots which he thought were "ideal" when he spotted them in a local military surplus store. But the big, wide belt and the shiny buckle were the hardest articles to find.

"I looked and looked for a belt buckle — Portland, San Francisco and Medford," he said, "and finally got one from a coat belonging to one of my wife's friends."

**Source of Belt**

Ray, who stands about 5-7 and weighs 230 pounds, told a bit sheepishly of where he got the belt.

"Everybody's razzing me," he said, "because I had it made at a tent and awning company."

Ray's beard, made of yak-hair in Germany cost \$50—and he claims it's never been

pulled, classic Santa-kiddy stories to the contrary. He's avoided this, he said, by holding a child's hands while he or she is sitting on his lap.

"This works two ways," he explained. "They love to have you hold their hands and yet they're not tearing you to pieces."

**Dealing With Children**

Ray talks to "thousands of children before the year's over" and he's developed something of a system in dealing with them.

"That ho-ho-ho stuff just doesn't go," he said. "It scares them every time. You have to be real confidential with them and let them whisper in your ear. You're not talking to anybody else but them—and they love it."

The youngsters who visit him very seldom cry, he said, "and when they do it's usually the parents' fault because they push them up there before they're ready."

Ray claims that he almost never runs into a genuine brat—or at least they're angels by the time they're face-to-face with Santa.

**Standing in Line**

"When they're standing in line," he said, "you can see them simmering down as they get closer. They're up there for just one thing and that's to tell Santa what they want."

Ray recalled one youngster he encountered a year ago who was an example of this type.

"He was a little monster," Ray said. "I could see him coming — pinching, pulling and shoving — but he calmed down when he got to me."

"I asked him if he'd been a good boy and he said, 'Oh, yes, sir,' and I said 'Oh, no you haven't' and really lit into him. When he left, he kept saying, 'I'll be good, I'll be good.'"

**Non-Believers**

Ray naturally meets quite a few non-believers, but he's learned how to handle them, too.

"It's a lot easier to keep them on your side," he explained. "If you wink and let them think they're in on a secret, they go right along with you."

Most popular gifts with the boys this year, he said, seem to be the toy sawed-off shotguns modeled after the one used in a current television series. Dolls still top the list for girls.

"I never definitely promise them what they ask for," he said. "I just tell them to be good and that maybe we can find something nice for them."

**Promises Something**

Last year, however, he broke this rule and promised something to a little boy—after he got some coaching from the lad's father.

"This boy wanted a real horse," Ray said, "and I didn't know what to say. Then I saw his dad—a cowboy if I ever saw one—standing behind him and nodding his head 'yes.' So I promised him his horse."

Ray and his wife Bettie, both natives of Medford, live at 3435 Forest ave. and have two children, Bill, 5, and Suzy, aged 7 months.

Young Bill, according to Ray, is the only youngster whom he thinks may have recognized him in his costume.

**Christmas Opening**

"I think he spotted me at the Christmas opening two weeks ago," he said, "but he won't admit it. He just mentioned to his mother how much dad's mouth looked like Santa's."

Just before leaving, Ray called home to tell his wife he would be there soon. Bill answered the phone.

Ray talked to his son for a while, hung up and laughed.

"He wants me to take him to Grants Pass," he chuckled, "to see Santa Claus."



**'JOLLY OLD ELF'**—Medford's St. Nick, Ray Huson, twirls his long white mustache before encountering a long line of youngsters at a local super market. The beard, which Ray claims has never been pulled, was made of yak-hair in Germany and cost \$50.

## No Deceit Intended In Filing Plans for Mortuary—Planners

No deceit was intended by the operator's of Siskiyou Memorial park when they filed plans with the city building department for a mortuary.

This was the expressed opinion of the city planning commission Thursday night, when it recommended a conditional variance for the Siskiyou Memorial Park association to operate a mortuary.

A question of possible intent to deceive grew out of a discussion last month when it was shown that the city building department was considering plans for the building which did not clearly designate it as a mortuary.

The city building department said at the time of approval they thought the building was going to be a chapel, not a mortuary.

**Clears Issue**

Manville M. Heisel, attorney for Siskiyou Memorial park and its operators, cleared the issue when he discovered two sets of mortuary plans, one more detailed than the other. He said the city building department had mistakenly reviewed the less detailed plans.

James Richardson, 401 South Groveland ave., and Fred Conrad, 2101 Siskiyou blvd., spoke in opposition to various aspects of the mortuary.

Conrad disagreed with the views of two realtors, who spoke for the mortuary, that there would be no depreciation in property values, but said he would go along with the mortuary if he had some assurance that a policy outlined by Heisel in regard to the use of the new entrance on Groveland ave. would be carried out.

**No Objection**

Richardson, too, expressed no objection to the mortuary as such, but was wary of the traffic problems that might result. He wanted all entrances to the park to connect with existing arterials.

Several other residents, including Councilman James Dunlevy, protested the traffic potential of the new entrance.

Dunlevy, who said he was a member of the council approving the original cemetery variance in 1947, said he was surprised at the course of events taken by the cemetery since then.

In recommending the conditional variance, the commission recognized that a denial of the variance would amount to practical confiscation of the mortuary as it could be used for no other purpose.

**Other Action**

In other action at Thursday's meeting, the commission rejected a request for a change of zone from residential to limited commercial for approximately 46 acres of land on both sides of Table Rock rd. from Loder ave. to De Barr ave.

The commission felt this area should be retained as a residential area, and the size of the requested zone change would create an undesirable commercial strip on Table Rock rd. They also noted that three previous requests for similar changes in this area had been denied.

The commission also rejected a request for a change in zone from single and two family dwellings to commercial in the Laurelhurst addition. This change would have permitted a home nursery in this area. However, the commission felt this kind of zoning would be objectionable spot-zoning.

In rejecting another request for a change of zone, from residential to light industrial at the intersection of Merriam rd. and Midway rd., the commission was of the opinion that by granting this to a proposed trailer park, it would be opening the area up to more objectionable uses in the future.

It was also voted to continue hearings on a change of zone in the Highcroft addition and a change of zone to permit a veterinary hospital on Barnett rd.

## Bidding Strong on Green Timber; No Bids on Salvage

Bidding was strong for regular green sales but poor for small salvage sales at an oral auction timber sale held by the Medford district of the bureau of land management Thursday. The sale consisted of four green sales and three salvage sales that were sold and three salvage sales for which no bids were received.

The seven tracts that were sold contain a total volume of 13,194,000 board feet and sold for a total of \$507,594.90. The three no-bid sales represent a volume of 414,000 board feet.

In Jackson county, Mountain Fir Lumber company of Murphy and Lithia Lumber company of Ashland were the high bidders for tracts containing 3,617,000 board feet and 2,101,000 board feet respectively.

The tract purchased by Mountain Fir Lumber company is located at the head of Ninemile creek in southwest Jackson county, while the Lithia Lumber company tract on Hutton creek is just north of the Oregon-California line. The high bid made in the first sale included an offer of \$40.10 per thousand board feet for Douglas fir and a total offer of \$143,360.80. Prices on the second sale included an offer of \$30 per thousand for the Douglas fir, \$45.25 for the Ponderosa pine and a total bid of \$76,867.75. Three operators participated in each sale.

**Josephine Tracts**

The three tracts sold in Josephine county were purchased by Cabax Mills, Inc., of Grants Pass, Mountain Fir Lumber company and Harry Steward of Wolf Creek. The tract Cabax Mills, Inc. purchased contains 3,493,000 board feet located on Yeager creek near Oregon Caves. It brought a bid of \$46.10 for Douglas fir which was the highest offer for any species in all the tracts sold. The total price for the sale was \$155,806.90. They were competing with four other bidders for the tract.

Mountain Fir Lumber company bought 638,000 board feet of timber killed in the Wilderville fire last summer. Their offer included \$35.10 for the Douglas fir and a total price of \$21,881.80.

Harry Steward purchased 82,000 board feet of salvage timber west of the mouth of Five creek without competition for \$2,223.60.

The Robert Dollar company and Patterson Lumber company, Inc., both of Glendale, purchased tracts in Douglas county.

The three tracts that received no bids were all located in northwestern Josephine county. They will remain open for receipt of bids for 90 days in accordance with the timber sale regulations.

One small salvage tract located in Jackson county that was offered for sale on Nov. 5 but on which no bids were made, is also still open for bid under these regulations, according to the district manager's office.

## Council on Aging Sets Meeting at Center Thursday

The Rogue Valley Council on Aging will meet at 3 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 17, in the Senior Activity Center, 601 East Jackson st.

Frank Glonning, chairman, said plans for the annual council meeting will be discussed and reports on the Southern Oregon regional conference on aging will be given.

Mrs. Fred Rankin, a member of the state council, will report on two meetings she attended in Portland recently, and Dr. Frank Roberts and Mrs. Rita Holmes of the recreation committee will report on plans for organizing Fifty Plus clubs and the activity center. Mrs. Mary Frederick, president of the Medford Fifty Plus club will report on plans for the new year.

**Center Program**

The activity center program has been changed, center representatives said. The rug making class will not meet until after Christmas when it will start meeting on Monday mornings between 10 a.m. and noon. On Dec. 14, the arm chair travel group will meet at 1 p.m. It also will meet Dec. 21 and Dec. 28.

The drama and woodcarving classes which usually meet at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. on Wednesdays will not meet until Dec. 30. The Spanish and orchestra classes will meet each Thursday as scheduled. The orchestra has been practicing for two performances this week — one Wednesday at the Christmas party of the Medford and Camp White Fifty Plus clubs, and the other party Friday, Dec. 18, for the Chin Up club in the Girls Community club.

The painting class each Tuesday afternoon still is in need of a volunteer instructor. Anyone interested may contact Mrs. Nettie Williams or Mrs. Elsa Walker.

## Dormitory Loan Okayed for College

Portland — UPI — Sen. Richard L. Neuberger was advised Saturday by the Community Facilities administration of approval of a \$225,000 loan to Lewis and Clark college here to build a dormitory for 90 men students.

The college will supply \$86,000 of its own funds toward the cost of the project.

## Sandy High School Draws Suspension

Portland — UPI — The Board of Control of the Oregon School Activities association Friday placed Sandy High school on probation for the remainder of the school year as a result of a fight after a wrestling match.

A spokesman for the board said a protest was filed by Jack Hornback, superintendent at Tillamook High school after a Sandy wrestler allegedly struck a Tillamook wrestler.



**MEDFORD'S NORTH POLE** — Ray Huson, the city's unofficial St. Nick, finds time between his job as a truck driver and his activities as Santa Claus to read a story to his two children, Bill, 5, and Suzy, 7 months. The Husons live at 3435 Forest ave.

## Student's Hanging Termed a Suicide

Hillsboro — UPI — Police Saturday termed the hanging of a 17-year-old Hillsboro High school junior Friday night a suicide.

The body of Timothy Miller was found hanging by a sash tied to the top rung of a ladder in the backstage wings of the school auditorium about 8:15 p.m. by janitor Doyle Johnston.

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- Columbarium
- Ground Interment
- Mausoleum (Garden Crypts)
- Crematory

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## Gifts Collected for Mental Patients

The Mental Health association of Oregon is again collecting Christmas gifts for the 6,000 mentally ill patients in Oregon's two state hospitals, Mrs. Henry Padgham, coordinator of the project in Jackson county, has announced.

Main collection depot for this area is the Jackson county welfare office and Padgham Glass and Millwork company.

Additional information concerning types of gifts may be obtained from Mrs. Padgham at SPring 2-4248.

## Boy Scouts

**Troop 16**

Members of Boy Scout Troop 16 met with Scoutmaster Dan Kadi Wednesday in the Pythian building.

They were visited by the Washington school Webelos, Cub Scout Pack 6, who were accompanied by their assistant denmaster, R. D. Price.

The Knights of Pythias lodge, sponsors of Troop 16, are now in the process of organizing an Explorer Post 16 for youth of ninth grade and over. Those eligible are invited to attend an organizational meeting Wednesday, Dec. 16 at 7:30 p.m. in the Pythian building. They are encouraged to bring fathers to the meeting.

## N. Y. ENGINEER DIES

Red Bank, N.J. — UPI — Vincent P. O'Mahoney, a former construction engineer on major New York building projects, died in a hospital here Thursday. He was 77.

**TODAY — Audrey Sims**

Demonstrates

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**KBES-TV**

Following Pro Football — Approximately 4:15

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