



'Twas the Jest Before Christmas

By PAUL STEINER ILLUSTRATION BY ED MALSBERG

"Christmas," says Ken Murray, "is the time when a girl likes her past forgotten and her present remembered."

"I feel kind of embarrassed," Herb Shriner admits. "I got a Christmas card from the gas company, and I didn't send them one."

On the subject of unannounced holiday guests, Hoosier Herb has this to say: "My folks didn't mind having more guests at Christmas than expected. They'd just put more stuffing in the turkey."

Columnist Robert Sylvester advises: "Anybody who wants to buy me an expensive present can bear one thing in mind—I'm the man who has nothing."

Red Skelton has an electrician as a neighbor: "He gave all his friends shorts for Christmas."

Columnist Earl Wilson figured out why Santa Claus carried that bag of gifts around with him: "Have you seen those long lines at the post office?"

A financial note from Bob Hope: "The banks of the

country are in quite a predicament—it's time to pay off millionaire J. Paul Getty's Christmas Club money."

"It was just our luck," Amos 'n' Andy complained, "to bring home the only yule log in the woods with a skunk inside it."

Vaughn Monroe says, "Christmas is the season when your neighbor's radio keeps you up till 4 a.m. playing 'Silent Night.'"

Robert Q. Lewis' definition of a department-store detective: "A counter-spy."

"Family ties are closer at Christmas—louder, too," says restaurateur Nicky Blair.

Columnist Neal O'Hara muses: "Turkeys now come with instructions, but the do-it-yourself age hasn't produced a bird with built-in dotted lines to guide the carver."

"Men do strange things," says singer Marion Marlowe. "They buy their football tickets in June and their wives' Christmas presents Dec. 24."



I was just thinking...

ONCE UPON a time, my little Paul, a Baby only half as big as you are now was born in a stable. Kings brought Him presents and a bright star shone over His head. The poor people came to see Him, too, and even the animals there in the stable knew it was His birthday.

All of them—the kings, the poor people, and the animals—had been told a wonderful secret about the little boy, so His parents couldn't just love Him and play with Him as yours do. They had to take special care of Him always and hide Him away from a wicked king.

Pretty soon the little boy began to grow up. He didn't go to school as you will because He knew more than all the teachers and sometimes He told them about the things He had learned.

And then, like the stories in your storybooks, when He was old enough, He set out to seek His fortune. But He wasn't looking for gold and a crown. Part of the wonderful secret was that He was a prince in disguise and part of it was that the star brought Him to tell all the people how to love one another and say their prayers every day and be kind to the birds and animals and flowers.

He never had much money and sometimes He had nothing to eat. Sometimes His clothes were

ragged and His feet were hurt from walking the world to tell His story. But everywhere He went people saw the starlight on His face, and they began to try to live the way He wanted them to—good and honest and loving. And the world began to be better.

One day, Paul, you will go out into the world, too, and be a doctor like your father or a carpenter like His father. If you remember the story of the stable, it will be easier for you.

Well, when He was no older than your father, evil men captured Him and people who were too deaf to hear Him and too blind to see the starlight decided to make Him die.

Do you know what He did then? He forgave all of them, the evil men, the people who were deaf, and the people who were blind, and nothing they could do harmed Him.

He was born a little boy like you, but He never died. And you won't either, really, because He told the people that love and kindness and understanding are stronger than death. And they are.

Isn't that a wonderful story? Here's the best part of all: every word of it is true.

So good night, little Paul, child of God.

Sleep in heavenly peace.

Patty Johnson



ILLUSTRATION BY JACK WOOLHISER