

Between the Bookends

By Nancy Burch, Librarian
Vernonia Public Library

Every year we hear the poem, *The Night Before Christmas*, but few of us know that it was a special gift written by Dr. Clement Clarke Moore for his six-year-old daughter, Charity. During the fall of 1822, Moore learned that Charity might not recover from tuberculosis. Charity also knew that she was very ill, too tired to pick up toys, and asked her father for a special Christmas gift that year—a story. As Moore was turned toward a window to hide the tears in his eyes he watched the wind whip the fallen leaves and the words "As dry leaves that before wild the wild hurricane fly..." came to mind and he knew that Charity's gift would be a poem—a very special poem. Other phrases were written reflecting Moore's knowledge of Dutch Christmas traditions. The reindeer were named for the eight goats that, according to Dutch folklore, travel with Sinter Klaas and Black Peter on a boat along the canals in Holland. Just in time for Christmas Eve in 1822, Moore had all of the words put together in his head, but not on paper. As Moore nervously recited his poem, he wondered if Charity would really like the poem or would rather have had a real toy. As he finished Charity smiled, told him it was perfect, fell asleep, and from that day forward grew stronger and recovered from the tuberculosis. Dr. Moore never intended to publish the poem, but a relative sent it to the *New York Troy Sentinel* where it was published on December 23, 1823, and became an instant hit with its special American Santa Claus.

Many families include the reading of Dr. Moore's poem as part of their yearly Christmas traditions. If hearing it for the first or the 101st time, the words of the poem bring to life the magical aspects of the season. Close your eyes and visualize some of the following phrases:

... The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow
Gave the lustre of mid-day to objects below,
When what to my wondering eyes should appear
But a miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer...

...His eyes—how they twinkled! His dimples how merry!
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
And the beard of his chin was as white as the snow....

...He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle.
But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight,
"HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ALL, AND TO ALL
A GOOD-NIGHT!"

The newly published, *Chicken Soup for the Soul, Christmas Treasury*, provided this information on Dr. Clement Moore and his well-loved poem. In this timeless holiday collection, people from all walks of life share their most memorable holiday moments, and remind us that the true reason for the season is love, caring and sharing. A new holiday tradition could begin this year as the uplifting, inspirational stories in this book are shared with family and friends.

The mother/daughter team of Mary Higgins Clark and Carol Higgins Clark has continued their tradition of releasing a new book just prior to the holidays. Entitled *He Sees You When*

You're Sleeping, this story takes place a few days before Christmas, as Sterling Brooks awaits a summons from the Heavenly council. Sterling has waited for 46 years in the celestial waiting room for the decision on whether he will be deemed fit for entrance into heaven. Though his actual misdeeds on earth were few, he was too self-absorbed to really think about anyone else or to make a commitment to the woman he loved. The council decides on a test for Sterling—he is sent back to earth and given the opportunity to prove his worthiness by helping someone else. This story is filled with suspense and humor and is perfect for the holidays, with its warmhearted tale of redemption and love.

Another new acquisition and a "must read" is John Grisham's latest novel, *Skipping Christmas*. Once again, Grisham has presented a different side to his writing—a humorous style. Luther and Nora Krank's only daughter, Blair, has joined the Peace Corps and has been assigned to Peru for two years. Taking this into consideration, Luther decides that he and Nora will skip Christmas this year and leave on a cruise on Christmas Day instead. They don't shop for presents or buy the fruitcakes and calendars from the firemen and policemen. They don't decorate their house with Frosty as is tradition on their street. They don't have a tree or plan for their annual Christmas Eve party. They forego holiday treats and endure the tanning booth in preparation for the cruise. All the shopkeepers, neighbors, and public servants are mad at them for not buying or keeping traditions, or supporting their charitable causes. Then, on the morning of Christmas Eve day, Blair calls to tell them she has become engaged to a Peruvian doctor. She further tells them that the two of them will be arriving home on a flight at 6:03 p.m. that evening, and that she is excited about showing her new fiancé a traditional holiday at home.

Oh boy!

Something to keep in mind during the holiday break is that the library does have the family pass to The Children's Museum available for library patrons to check out. Located near the zoo in the old OMSI building, the museum is easily accessible from Vernonia and it has more space than it did in the downtown location. The first library patron to make use of the pass reported that even after 3 and 7 hours her children were reluctant to leave. Check on availability and conditions regarding the pass.

The after-school story/activity will be an ongoing project, at least for this school year. This is held each Monday afternoon from 3:30 to 4:30 on afternoons when school is in session. Conducted by Trish Maldonado, this is a fun activity for youngsters and for their parents.

Calvin Coolidge is quoted as saying, "Christmas is not a time or a season, but a state of mind. To cherish peace and goodwill, to be plenteous in mercy, is to have the real spirit of Christmas." That is what the library staff wishes for you—that you have this real spirit of Christmas.

Vernonia Library 701 Weed Avenue
Hours: Mon., Wed., Fri. 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Tues., Thur. 2 p.m.-7 p.m.
Sat. 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Preschool Story Time, Mondays, 10:30 a.m.
Phone: (503) 429-1818

Letters to the Editor

From page 2

vanced-placement Spanish Teacher" at Vernonia High School. First of all, let me say to her that it is obvious she was shoved out the door by her parents at a very early age because she has absolutely no compassion or sensitivity toward humans. Funny how she can judge us, as caring parents, and write that it is a bad thing that we protect our children from society and that we don't wean our young and push them out of the sheltering nest to force them into "shock of survival." Well shame, shame on her for judging the caring and loving parents! If we don't protect our children, who will? I will feed, clean, teach and protect my children until they move on to start their own life. I will always protect my children, even when they are 30 or 40 years old. That is my job.

Ms. Sawyer, let me tell you that these so called "sensitive kids" will go out into our world and be caring, loving and kind. They will not be rude, obnoxious and cold to others as you stated. They will not be late for work, take extended breaks and forget important data. Because they were nurtured and loved and not pushed out of their nest early, they will learn to be responsible young adults.

Sincerely,
Pat Janac
Vernonia

Leadership seeks \$\$ for improvements

To the Editor:

As you may or may not know, the Vernonia High School graduation ceremony is in dire need of improvement! For two years, we have been borrowing risers and walkway carpeting from Clatskanie High School in order to have a presentable graduation ceremony. But, we cannot keep borrowing forever. In previous years, graduates sat on folding chairs on the stage allowing only the first row of students to be seen. In order to make changes, to better this important event, we are asking for a little help.

The Leadership class of Vernonia High School, which is the representative body for the school, is conducting fund-raisers and donation requests throughout our community. Our goal for fundraising is \$4,326. Leadership has contributed

\$1,000 and the class of 2000 contributed \$592.25. This money and any we receive will be used to purchase the needed risers, carpeting and accessories for graduation. With these, we will be able to present graduates with heads held high.

These purchases will benefit more than just graduation! Band, choir, drama and school assemblies will benefit, also, allowing us more professional looking performances. Our goal is to give our students a graduation to look forward to... rather than having a dreary set of chairs scattered on the stage where graduates hope their proud parents can see them.

We are asking for help. If you would like to make a contribution to assist us in reaching our goal, we would be most grateful. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Joe Strand
VHS Leadership Students
Vernonia

Vernonia is still a "good 'ol town"

To the Editor:

I've left the [Vernonia] area and nothing much has changed as far as the general town is concerned. I grew up in the Mist area. I've seen little change in the buildings and the economy. It's still a nice little logging town with the same old-fashioned buildings there that still have stories to tell about themselves and the roles they've played in the history of the town.

I've been all over this country in the course of my job as an OTR truck driver (long-haul), and I can honestly say that there are only a handful of little towns like this in the country. I do think the residents of Vernonia should be proud.

Congratulations and goodbye!

L. Crawford
Panama City, Fla.

Sheriff seeks more Posse volunteers

To the Editor:

Each year, the Columbia County Sheriff's Office advertises for volunteers for the county Sheriff's Posse. This year, we are especially interested in asking citizens who would

Please see page 21