

Bits & Bites

By Jacqueline Ramsay



What is the greatest sorrow of the Christmas season?

Not for just me, but for all whose friends have moved and you only have contact with during the holidays. You probably have had some of your mail returned as undeliverable. You assume possibly they have moved and you'll hear from them later, but I got one marked "no longer at this address" and on the back of the envelope "Al-11-18-2000 Helen 10-15-03." I was and am still crushed; sent a letter to a daughter hoping she hasn't moved in the last 15 years.

Then again, you get a card from someone you haven't heard from for four years.

Gee, I've discovered "I've Arrived in Vernonia." I have a following of about 60 ducks (Ho Ho) marching behind me on my walk around the lake. They followed for about a block, when I turned back, they led me back to the car and demanded their ration of cracked corn.

Do you know what I've missed this season in Vernonia? No one painted Seasons Greetings on their store fronts as in the past. It made the town look cold to the season.

This is the season when one has to pick and choose what event they will take part in. With so much going on it's hard to decide but - one must do what one must, so - here's what I did - I missed a lot of you.

#1 City Christmas Dinner and White Elephant exchange.

I lucked out, a box of delicious truffles.

#2 A Christmas Carol at the Grange Hall on Monday night instead of the Council meeting. It was well acted and very well read. You could see, hear and smell the events unfold as the story was read. Bravo to all of you, all local talent.

#3 The Senior Center Christmas Dinner was delicious. Music, games, smoked salmon auction and lots of visiting and

laughing. Kudos to Jamie the Cook, also the pie bakers.

#4 December 20th, a celebration of music. It was more than wonderful, all local talent, string orchestra (chamber music), a band and a choir. I'll listen anytime you perform. Very professional.

#5 Something else you missed, a play written by Pastor Harvey, "One Starry Night." The Christmas theme with a modern lesson for all folks to

ponder. Congratulations to all.

Also, thank you to Mrs. Kayla Valenzuela for her gift of a local phone book I picked up at the Senior Center. Others are still available (each child made one), a good service and they are in larger print.

Gee - You can eat 7,000 calories a day without gaining weight in the Antarctic. That's what it takes you to keep warm without an outside source of heat.

Free EyeCare Program for 2004 and Glaucoma Awareness Month

Nearly three million people have glaucoma, but half do not realize it because there are often no warning symptoms. In honor of Glaucoma Awareness Month, January 2004, EyeCare America, the public service foundation of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, encourages people to take advantage of its year-round, national Glaucoma EyeCare Program. This program offers glaucoma eye exams and care for those at increased risk of glaucoma (see Glaucoma Facts). Eligible callers will receive a referral to one of EyeCare America's 7,500 volunteer ophthalmologists by calling 1-800-391-EYES (3937), 24 hours, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

Those eligible for a referral through the program receive a glaucoma eye exam and the initiation of treatment, if deemed necessary. Patients with insurance will be billed and are responsible for any co-payments and/or the cost of the eye examination. Uninsured patients will receive the above care at no charge.

The Glaucoma EyeCare Program promotes early detection and treatment of glaucoma by raising awareness of glaucoma risk factors, providing educational materials and facilitating access to glaucoma eye examinations.

The program serves U.S. citizens or legal residents, who have not had an eye exam in 12 months or more, and are at increased risk for glaucoma.

Call the toll-free help line at 1-800-391-EYES (3937) to request free eye care information.

EyeCare America provides access to eye care for the medically underserved and those at increased risk for eye disease, through volunteer ophthalmologists who donate their services. More than 90 percent of the care is provided at no cost to the patients. The organization operates programs for seniors, glaucoma, diabetes, and children. Since 1985, EyeCare America's programs have provided services to 347,000 people, and treated more than 180,000 cases of eye disease.

Glaucoma Facts

- Approximately 120,000 Americans are blind from glaucoma, accounting for 9-12 percent of all cases of blindness in the U.S.
- Glaucoma is the second leading cause of blindness in the U.S. and the first cause of preventable blindness.
- High-risk groups include: African-Americans ages 45-65, people over 60, family members of those already diagnosed, diabetics, people who are severely nearsighted.

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