

December 4, 1973

The Lutheran Ambassador



A CHILD'S NATIVITY

This child's view of the Christmas theme was drawn by Leona Martens when she was a fifth grade student in St. Louis.

RNS Photo

MEDITATION MOMENTS

HOME FOR CHRISTMAS

Mary and Joseph were homeward bound—that is, to Bethlehem. Their current domicile was Nazareth, but their natal town would always be home to them. With caution apparently thrown to the wind, they pressed on so as to arrive at the earliest possible moment; the earliest would be none too soon—could even be too late. Legend has it that Mary, for at least the final lap of the journey, rode a “donkey, shaggy and brown;” the Evangelists are reticent on that subject. As the familiar sights of childhood hove into view they kept their eyes peeled for the first glimpse of the town they had loved long since, had lost for a while, but were now to visit again. Would anyone remember them? Were relatives still there, and might they invite the pilgrims from the North to enjoy their hospitality and share a room for a season?

One wonders why they ever left town in the first place. Certainly there were no cultural advantages or religious benefits to be gained in the North; Nazareth hung as a byword on the lips of every true Israelite. It could be that there were occupational advantages in the Galileean town for the moment, such as were not to be found in the southern city—the City of Bread; a building boom for the present created a demand for stone masons. Perhaps kinfolk had preceded them in the northward mi-

gration and had urged them to follow. So they went and established a home up there. Did they plan to come south again? Ties were but loosely knit up there; so when Mary had need of a responsive soul to whom to unburden herself she repaired to Elizabeth—her cousin—in the hill country of Judea. Now they were both on the way home, Joseph and Mary. Perhaps for good!

Matthew gives a cryptic answer to the question of why they had domiciled up North: **Jesus was to be called a Nazarene.** Did Mary know this, she for whom it was as natural as breathing to hide words from God in her heart? Perhaps the prophecy had been too veiled for her to grasp. It was common knowledge among pious folks in Judea that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem; Mary knew it. But how could this be as long as she lived in Nazareth? The answer came quickly through the dictum of the Emperor: Hasten to your natal town and register at the Bureau of Vital Statistics! The pieces of the puzzle began to fall into place for Mary; God made it necessary for her to make an unscheduled trip home in order that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. When God arranges it thus He would surely see to it that there were provisions for maintenance as long as she was there. A stable is to be preferred any time to an as-

signed space on an open campground to take care of overflow guests at the inn.

Christmas is a time of homecoming for us, too. At no other time of the year are so many people returning home as at Christmas. Especially is this so for young people who for the first time in their lives have been away from home for an extended stay. Most of these are likely students who have been away at college or some other school for more than three months. They have been homesick; time has gone fast because the pressure of studies has been intense; but in retrospect it may seem ages since they went off to school. They have almost forgotten what the house looked like. Now they can drop books, papers, schedules and classes for two weeks and bask in the delights of home, Christmas and family again.

Others are heading for home, too, but their stay will be for a few precious days. A kind employer has graciously granted them a few days off to visit home, parents and friends. A new perspective of the home has been gained; for home must be seen at a distance in time and space to be fully appreciated. Thank the Lord again for God's gift of a home to you; thank Him also for a home church, parents, brothers and sisters friends and neighbors.

Iver Olson

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A Message for Laerdal

A Christmas Reminiscence

by Ulrich Kuehn

My name is Olaf Larsen. For thirty years I have been the postmaster in this world-forsaken nest called Laerdal, two hundred miles inland on the Sognefjord. So I ought to know how the people live in this dark place.

Practically everything goes through my hands. Where there is so much loneliness, so much darkness as the winter snows block off all of the highways over the mountains, the telephone line is our main artery. It alone goes out into the big world beyond, and what comes through it makes the hearts beat among the people. All of us live by it and know from it that others are still alive. And if, now and then, the snow or a storm severs the connections, one thinks: Everything is dead.

During this December it hadn't snowed yet, but it was already dark when I went out into the back yard to gather in wood. At this time of year it gets dark for us already in the middle of the day. Our days are only a little sliver of twilight.

I had been poking the fire only a little while when the first telegram came in from the city.

I must stop here to mention that for several days our village had been very ill at ease. The radio and the newspapers had announced that a fire had broken out aboard the Norwegian whaling ship **Haakon VII**, the mother ship of the whaling fleet, in the North Sea. The captain was trying to reach

the harbor at Bergen, but it was certain that several lives would be lost. From Laerdal seven men, mostly young people, were on board.

The sea determines our lives; that's true of nearly all of us now. Most of us are whalers who spend three-fourths of the year toward the South Pole between Tierra del Fuego and the Cape of Good Hope. Mothers, wives, brides wait at home till the men return, their wallets thick with handsome wages. Then our everyday life becomes a period of festivities. Now, would any of them not be coming home? Names hadn't been given out yet, so we were all waiting tensely for word.

No wonder my hand trembled a bit as I now wrote down the telegram from Bergen. But everything seemed to have turned out well. Four men, whose personal details the shipping office had now released, had landed safe and sound and were, as reported, already en route home to their families. Naturally, I inquired at once what had happened to the others. Very soon I got my answer: a second telegram would come soon, but the lines were all overloaded and the complete message for Laerdal unavoidably came in separate installments.

I called my wife. At least she could convey the good news to Ester Halversen, who lives just across the bay. This widow was awaiting Erik, her youngest son. My wife went, since I could hardly leave the telephone until the second telegram had come in.

I sat and waited, just as impatiently as all of the wives and families had

waited these past days. Now, at my apparatus, I was their representative. The mountains outside along the fjord stood like black walls against the heavens, their reflections allowing the light from above to shine but weakly on the waters below.

We're always waiting for something, I thought: for daylight when midnight gets too long, and for darkness when the daylight doesn't disappear for weeks on end. For the happy birth of one, and for the death of another. For the trip away; for the trip home. For tomorrow, or for the day after tomorrow. And we're never satisfied, because nothing stays the same.

It was already half past four. The miserable wire still wasn't moving! Before I knew it my wife had come back, bringing our neighbor with her. Ester Halversen wanted to see her good news in black and white with her own eyes. Laughing, I asked her if she couldn't trust the royal Norwegian post.

"Sure," she said. But just as she was starting to tell us that she had dreamed of the safe return of her boy, now that Christmas was almost upon us, the telephone rang for the second time.

I picked up the receiver and hurriedly wrote down: "Seamen Raider Grøvlen, Thor Rasmussen, both from Laerdal, just rescued safely. Both en route home." But then came a sentence that I had to write down also: "Seaman Gunnar Halversen fatally injured. Sympathy to relatives."

So one of our young men had been

wiped out after all!

Gunnar Halversen was Ester's sister's boy. And the whole village knew that between Ester and her sister's family there had been bad feelings for years. This had come about through circumstances about which we had best remain silent.

Neither the women nor I said a word. Ester's face remained completely impassive. Finally, I got up to take the news out to the mothers of the village—the good news and the bad.

My wife asked Ester if she shouldn't go, too. After all, this concerned her sister. "No!" Ester answered curtly. She still had a lot to get ready for her Erik's homecoming. She told us this as she left the room.

I took my lantern and went on my way alone, thinking: "When her Erik comes...Gunnar, just as young and healthy when he left home, isn't coming back. What could Ester Halversen do about it, that her situation turned out well today and she could get her house ready for a celebration while the other woman, her sister, to whom I was now en route through the darkness, had to be told at long last that she needed to wait no longer?"

Just now the northern lights came out in the sky above. I usually like to see them, but tonight it occurred to me for the first time how really remote those lights were. After all, what good were they to us here below? They were magnificent—green, white, then a deep red like some far-away blaze. But they looked ice-cold; and when I thought of all the people who live here under these lights, I could only shiver in the winter cold. Consolation, love, or whatever else one might think of simply weren't there, I thought tonight. We here have nothing of the sort, and someone who might bring them to us just isn't there.

The people whose son was dead live out of town, where the bay already is full of sharp rocks. I went first to the families for whom I had good news. Their houses lay along my way. Wherever I came, there were naturally jubilation and activity. They all wanted me to stay and celebrate with them, and everyone asked when and where and how their son would

come home. But not one asked about the others, whether they had been saved or whether, like Gunnar Halvorsen, they were now dead. But I couldn't forget that I still had to make my trip out toward the sharp rocks....

Everywhere things were still when I finally knocked at that door.

Agatha Halversen called to me to come in. She sat without any light in her kitchen. It was almost as though she had been expecting me, because she said at once: "Light up your face with your lantern!" When I did so, she continued softly: "It is good. I know." Then we were silent for a long time.

I finally asked her if she had known about all of this, since her sister had seen Erik's safe homecoming in a dream. Then it almost seemed as though Agatha smiled, a bit wanly. "No," she answered. "It stands to reason that I was still hoping. Mothers always hope, you know. Ester speaks a lot of 'dreams,' but dreams are nothing. Only what God sends us, counts for anything. So often that's something other than what we dream."

"I was really anxious about coming here," I said, "but now I admire you."

The woman shook her head. I saw her silhouette against the window.

"Only because it's dark here in the kitchen," she said. "Put your light out so you can't see my tears!"

Then she stood up and went over close to the window.

"Do you know that soon it will be Christmas?" she said. "Gunnar wanted to spend Christmas at home. My mother always said when we used to put the lights in the windows: Even if no one comes any more, One will come. Her husband—our father—also stayed out at sea. I'm thinking about that now."

As she spoke she lit a candle with a match. Now she opened the window, put the candle out, and shut the window again.

"You see how it burns?" she asked me, without turning toward me.

I still could see it as I re-entered the village and stopped, looking back once more at the Halversen home. The light flickered in front of the sharp rocks and over the fjord. It was

puny and small—smaller than all of the lit-up house windows in front of me and the northern lights above me.

Then, that evening yet, happened the thing that makes me tell the whole story now: the decisive point, the turning point of the story.

I had just entered my yard when Karin, my wife, came running out to tell me that a third telegram from Bergen, an urgent one, was on the way. When I asked where it was and why she hadn't written it down, she said that the telegraph office had just finished giving the opening words of the message when the connection had been broken again.

I ran to the phone. I rang it and shouted into the receiver. It was as though possessed amid all the connections and the telegraph offices en route: sometimes everything was deadly still, then thousands of voices whispered and criss-crossed on the wire. Of all times for this to happen, it would be tonight!

I was already bathed in sweat when Bergen at long last came back on the line with the third telegram. I tried to read what I myself had just written, but I could hardly make it out. It was too much to see those cold words:

"Shipping office regrets name transposition in earlier telegram. Gunnar Halversen safe, Erik Halversen unfortunately dead." I reread it, faltering.

You aren't just pencil and paper, nor a mere paid messenger, when you work for the post office. In spite of everything we are a village, in spite of hatred which breaks out again and again between neighbors and kinfolk. Yes, many even bear the same names, because they share the same blood: Rasmussen, Larsen, Halversen. Just because of these common traits, the horrible confusion of names had occurred. Now, was it brighter or darker over Laerdal?

This evening I closed the post office. I only did that once before, during the war when the Germans came. My wife went with me. The visit to Ester Halversen, whose son was now no longer alive, was the hardest—much harder than the one to her sister.

How shall I tell what happened then? At first she shrieked wildly,

[Continued on page 22]

A Finnish Country-Style Christmas in the 1920's

by George Johnson,
Eben Junction, Mich.



Weeks before, during the Advent season, preparations were being made for the holiday season.

The dried lutefisk had to be soaked. The few presents were made, a good pair of socks or mittens, home-knit out of home-woven yarn, or some very practical item to wear or use. There was the special Christmas bread to bake.

The public schools had Christmas programs a few days before which were well attended.

The natural fragrance of a spruce or balsam tree already cut, which was sitting outside on the morning of Christmas Eve, began to announce the holiday arrival.

All these seemed to bring with them a sense of reverence for the Christmas season.

Christmas Eve! such a busy day, especially for the mothers, though every member of the family had certain chores to do. Father, too, would be coming home from a distant logging camp to spend a few days at home with the family.

The tree at the church was set up a few days early. Now the tree at home was put up. What excitement that caused among the younger ones. Most everyone wanted to lend a hand to trim the tree with simple decorations. Stringing popcorn or making paper chains for the tree was always exciting. Some apples were hung to hold some branches down and

add to the color. The wax candles were carefully placed with clip holders on certain branches to minimize the fire hazard.

The presents were brought from a secret hiding place and placed under the tree.

The sauna was warmed in the early afternoon because the evening would be reserved for the Sunday School program at the church and the home get together.

The program at the church was well attended, to capacity usually. The tree with its wax candles flickering, the trimmings, the presents at the base, the candles on the windows, all seemed to brighten the well-presented program. A bag of candy was always a portion of the presents passed out to the children.

Then came the walk home or a ride in the horse-drawn sleigh, for the home get together.

At home now, a well-known song or two was sung and the Christmas message read from the large family Bible in the dim glow of the candles on the tree.

Early on Christmas Day the presents were opened. Eagerly, the wrappings would come off, to unveil some simple, mostly home-made present or toy.

The chores at the farm homes were done up and the Christmas service at the church, the highlight of the season, was to begin at 10

o'clock and last till noon. The Christmas morning walk to church was always something special. There was an almost absolute stillness in the air, as if all of nature was waiting for an announcement. Only the crunching snow underfoot or a tiny tinkling of sleigh bells would break the silence.

The first bell of the church, half an hour before the service, seemed to not only call to worship but, as if to say, "let us rejoice because of the good news—unto you is born a Savior."

Eager listeners filled the church. Many had walked for a mile or more, some came by horse and sleigh, but they came.

The service usually began with the opening hymn "From Heaven Above to Earth I Come." There were liturgies, the message and several songs, all taking up two hours of time.

Then the walk home to the lutefisk dinner with its sauce and cranberries and home-made bread, plus other simple goodies, all delicious.

This was all a part of the Christmas season in the '20's, Finnish country-style.

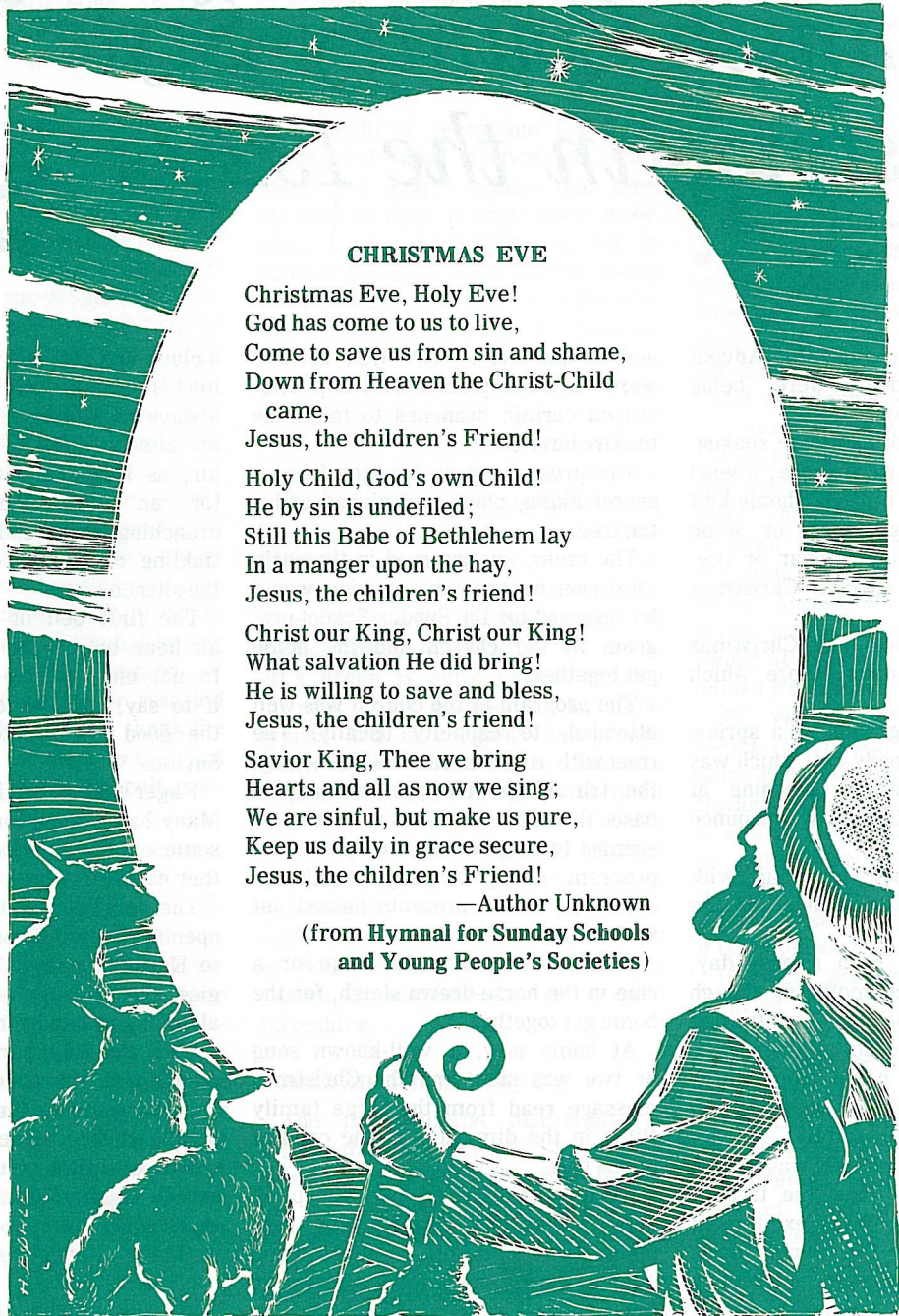
"Many things have changed as years roll by;

The past, with memories so dear, does have a place.

Yet, still the same, the truth so often told

For me—a Savior came."





CHRISTMAS EVE

Christmas Eve, Holy Eve!
God has come to us to live,
Come to save us from sin and shame,
Down from Heaven the Christ-Child
came,
Jesus, the children's Friend!

Holy Child, God's own Child!
He by sin is undefiled;
Still this Babe of Bethlehem lay
In a manger upon the hay,
Jesus, the children's friend!

Christ our King, Christ our King!
What salvation He did bring!
He is willing to save and bless,
Jesus, the children's friend!

Savior King, Thee we bring
Hearts and all as now we sing;
We are sinful, but make us pure,
Keep us daily in grace secure,
Jesus, the children's Friend!

—Author Unknown
(from **Hymnal for Sunday Schools
and Young People's Societies**)

Christmas in Ethiopia

By Bjarne Taranger

As you probably know there is an Orthodox Church in Ethiopia, known as the Coptic Church. She has a very long tradition and has got her many saints, monasteries, monks, etc.

Taking a glance at the Ethiopian calendar we will find many red-coloured days in addition to Sundays and the special church holidays we are used to in Western countries. A story telling that the Cross of Jesus got lost and in a mysterious way was found here in this country is well-known. This is celebrated on the Meskel (cross) day early in the autumn. There is also a special Baptism Day which is regarded to be next to Easter in importance. These or maybe also other holidays come before Christmas in honor. In spite of this, people have their customs concerning Christmas which differ from the other church holidays.

One week before Christmas the priests, the elders and the deacons

enter the church to stay there up to Christmas Day. This week is dedicated to prayer and fasting. Early at dawn Christmas Day people go to church, but only the men have permission to enter. The women stand outside. The priests recite their old ritual in a language called Geez, but now preaching in Amharic has become common. They also sing Christmas songs in Geez. This language has the same function as Latin has had in the Roman Catholic Church, and people cannot understand it any longer.

Christmas Day is also celebrated within the family. Grown-up people who have left their parents take their children and go back home. The grandmother will prepare a special kind of bread which is called "Genna Dabbo," that means Christmas Bread. If there is a married daughter in the family, she will also bake this bread and bring it to her father's house.



At Christmas the priests are very busy. All true Coptics like to invite the priest to their home. In a ceremony, he says something in Geez—a blessing for the bread for the house and for the people living in it. Then he cuts the Genna Dabbo into pieces, takes one piece himself and gives to the others.

Monks, beggars, and other poor people have got a special privilege this day. They walk from house to house with their bags asking for alms. And people give willingly. Who wants to send away a poor creature on such a day? There is a reward for good deeds. One should be grateful to the poor ones for offering the opportunity to obtain that blessing.

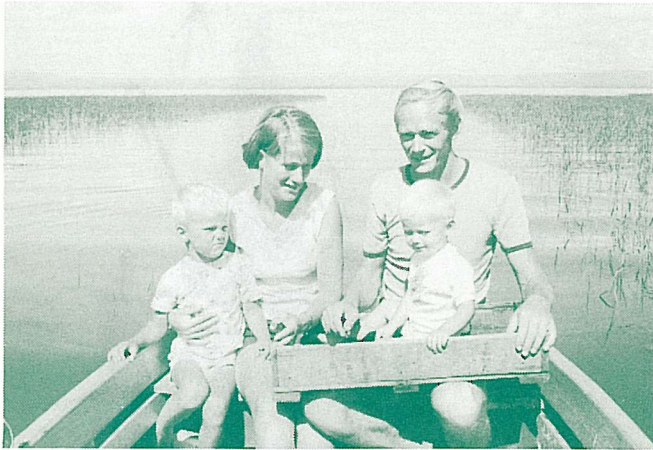
In the afternoon young people like to gather on an open field to play. Very often it is the people from the countryside who make a team and play against a team from the town or the village. The older ones form the audience and try to encourage



Wadera Station



People in the district proclaim their belief in Jesus.



Vacation time in Awasa. Shown here are Magni and Bjarne Taranger in background, with their children, left to right, Bjørn Asle and Helge.



Wadera Station Church

their young boys to do their utmost. The field is divided in two, one part for each team. Then they try to beat a ball made from wood with sticks and push it into the others' field. Rather often this competition results in fighting between the different parties. But no one is allowed to accuse another in court for such a reason on Christmas Day. Dancing and singing are also performed at such gatherings.

At the Lutheran Church where we are working, the tradition is not so strong. In our synod, the South Ethiopia Synod of Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, the work is not more than 25 years old. So customs have not yet found any fixed pattern.

Christmas here is not so much a family feast as it is in Norway. It is rather a congregational feast. The Christians in each parish gather money to buy an ox which they prepare at Christmas Eve. Then after the service the next morning they eat together in the church. In Africa this is a sign of true fellowship.

Christmas is also the time for giving thank offerings to the Lord. Those having borne a child during the past year bring forth a gift in the church. That might well be a goat, a sheep, an ox, a hen, as well as money. The children are gifts from God and it is right to thank Him.

During the night before Christmas Day the elders stay in the church for prayer. Then at 10 o'clock in the morning the congregation gathers for a service. They sing special Christmas songs. Sometimes also dramas from

the Bible stories about the birth of Jesus are performed, and song groups may sing.

On Christmas Day people visit each other in their homes, especially in the afternoon and then they drink tea, and coffee and eat together. The children very often draw flowers for their parents in order to get some money or sweets in return.

Our newly established Church and the Orthodox Church are, however, celebrating Christmas at the same time. As the Ethiopian calendar differs much from ours, with New Year in the middle of September and has now come to 1966, when we write 1973, there is nothing special about the 25th of December, but Christmas Day here is the 7th of January. But only at Christmas are the missionaries not following the Ethiopian calendar. We celebrate Christmas privately in our homes on Dec. 25th. We try, of course, to make it as Norwegian as possible. Most of the families here bring in a Christmas tree and put on lights and the other necessary things. Some missionaries, however, are afraid to make the nationals think they are worshipping a tree, so they leave out this custom.

Those working at the same station are, in fact, one family and they come together on Christmas Eve. As "Norwegian" dishes as possible are put on the table at Christmas. The meat, the cakes and everything is of the best kind. When all have tasted the different dishes and are satisfied, it is time for reading the Good News, "...for to you is born this day in

the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

For the children, the most important thing is the Christmas tree and all the gifts under it. So when the reading and the singing are finished, the great moment for them is reached. For each new package which is opened the children's faces shine as brightly as the lights on the tree.

Walking around the tree is on the program that evening, and the old Christmas hymns once again sound forth from big and small.

Although the Ethiopian time for Christmas differs from ours, the Lord is the same. The customs may differ from country to country, but the message is the same. People have different color and different ways of thinking but the Savior is the same and for all. "Behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all people."



GOD'S GIFT

Christmas is centered about a gift. It is different from other gifts commonly shared at Christmas because it is God's gift to us all.

These are days of crisis. We can name a multitude of them. These crises cause fear and forboding in our hearts. While some would deny it, they are a result of man's sinfulness. If these crises cause fear and regret in our hearts, what must it do to our God? He sees it all much better than we do. He even sees the corruption in human hearts, which is worse than the corruption of society.

Our days are very similar to the days of Noah. Then God, seeing man's wickedness, sent judgment in the form of a flood. Only one family escaped, and that because they used God's method for their salvation. God determined never again to judge mankind in that manner. A way of salvation has been provided for all men. Not all were to receive it, however.

God loves to give. He is a giving God more than a demanding God. He wept over Jerusalem because of the judgment she was to experience. He rejoices over every soul that receives His gift.

God's gift is a gift of love. He loved His Son, His only begotten. He knew what the Son was to suffer. But God loved sinful man, too. He gave His Son to die for man. What a conflict of love this must have been for God. We cannot understand how God could so love this world. God's gift was beyond price. It was a gift of love.

God's gift is not always appreciated or received. How this must hurt Him. The joy of giving is greater than the joy of getting. However, when this gift given is not appreciated, does not cause delight, all joy is

gone. "He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him" (John 1:11). The tragedy belonged to those who did not receive Him. You see, "'The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief cornerstone.' Every one who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust" (Luke 20:17b-18). Is it wrong to say that God weeps as He sees the brokenness and scattering today because His Son is rejected?

Some receive God's gift. What blessedness is theirs. "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12). They become God's children, knowing His fatherly forgiveness, compassion, guidance, and protection. They become new people, with power to know wholeness and strength in a world of brokenness and fragmentation. Even in days like ours they know a peace and confidence because they are God's.

Have you received God's gift, His Son, given for your life and salvation? God asks nothing of you but that you take what He offers. The work is His. You do not even know how to receive Him, do you? God gives you even the grace to receive. Just let God give of His measureless grace to you this Christmas. Confessing your sin and need, whisper your innermost needs unto Him, and He will give you all in Jesus.

May God continue to shower His blessings upon the Association and all her friends this Christmas. May God's best be yours this day and throughout the coming year.

Pastor John P. Strand



CHIME, HAPPY CHRISTMAS BELLS, ONCE MORE

Chime, happy Christmas bells, once more,

The heavenly Guest is at the door,
The blessed words the shepherds thrill,
The joyous tidings, "Peace, good will."

O let us go with quiet mind,
The gentle Babe with shepherds find,
To gaze on Him who gladdens them,
The loveliest flower of Jesse's stem.

The lowly Saviour meekly lies,
Laid off the splendour of the skies;
No crown bedecks His forehead fair,
No pearl, nor gem, nor silk is there.

O Holy Child, Thy manger gleams
Till earth and heav'n glow with its beams,
Till midnight turns to brightest noon,
And Jacob's Star outshines the sun.

Come, Jesus, glorious heavenly Guest,
Keep Thine own Christmas in our breast,
Then David's harp-strings, hushed so long,
Shall swell our jubilee of song.

N. F. S. Grundtvig
(from *The Hymnal*)



ACROSS THE YEARS

Across the years on Christmas Eve,
Across the new fallen snow,
Across the soft and greening grass,
I let my footsteps go.

I see the shepherds on the hill,
I hear the angels sing,
I see the Kings come riding by
With diamonds in their rings.

Above earth's night beckons God's star—

My whole life lies in it.
I pray I never lose that light
Or let the world dim it.

Across the years on Christmas Eve,
Across the new fallen snow,
Across the rough hewn stable floor,
I let my footsteps go.

Marlene Moline



BELLS OF BETHLEHEM

Christmas Bells overlook the Church of the Nativity and Shepherds' Field in Bethlehem, the place of Christ's birth.

RELIGIOUS NEWS SERVICE PHOTO
by Elmo L. Romagosa

SAVED AT THE UTTERMOST

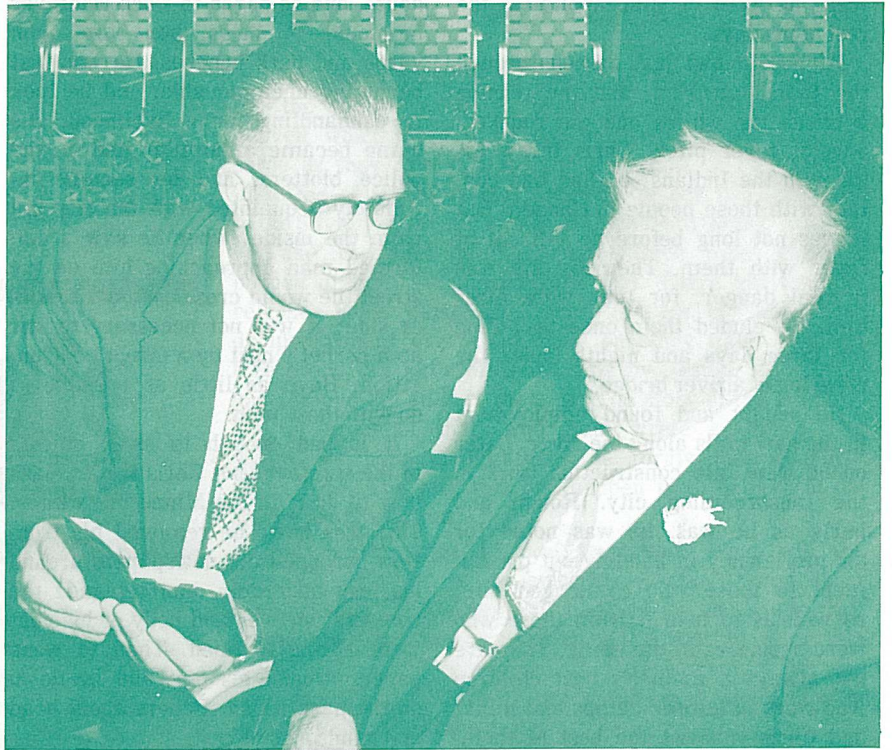
The Miracle of Chris Norby
By Dr. Iver Olson

The writer of these lines saw him only once in his life. It was hard to believe that a creature such as he could be wholly human. The filth alone would have made him die many times over, and the general appearance of the man was a caustic commentary on the text that the way of the transgressor is hard. We do not believe that we are overly squeamish or fastidious in such matters; over the years we have taken part in the skid row mission activity in the Gateway District of Minneapolis, been present at similar activity in the Pacific Garden Mission on State Street in Chicago, and participated in the Salvation Army Slum Mission in Oslo, Norway; we have seen a bit of everything, and are not easily shocked. But Chris Norby could well have been called the King of Skid Row.

Later on we had occasion to read of this man in the public press. Striking bits of information led to a curiosity concerning his past life. Bits of information were picked up here and there to be pieced together into something whole; and his story was on the whole a remarkable one.

Chris Norby was born in Telemark, Norway, in 1849. This was the year of great revolutions in Europe, and it is a matter of conjecture that these had an influence on his development. He was not yet a teenager when he was separated from his parents. A grandfather became responsible for him; but he soon died. Before he did he set up a legacy of 700 crowns for his grandson that was to be given to him when he became of age. When

(The above article is similar to one by the author which appeared in the Norwegian language in *Ved Juletid* published in Norway, in 1972.)



Chris Norby is here 106 years of age. Thor Haugen, superintendent of the Gateway Gospel Mission, is reading Scripture to him. The Mission has now been relocated, and is called New Hope Center.

the grandfather was no more an uncle took charge of both the boy and the legacy. Chris was assigned to live as a parish pauper in homes that kept such waifs for a fee. The incorrigible youngster fled from one such farm after another. His final coup at this stage of his development was to steal his inheritance from the uncle and flee to Stockholm, Sweden.

Norway and Sweden had a joint king at the time. Norway was responsible to provide soldiers for the king's Royal Guard at Stockholm. Chris, a boy who was large for his fourteen years, was impressed by the uniform of the Norwegian soldiers; he lied his age, and joined the King's Guard. Here he was the life of the party—as long as his money lasted. He paid for the food, fun, and liquor. The party was over when his money came to an end. His true age was discovered and he was discharged from the Guard. His severance pay was a loaf of bread and ticket back to Telemark.

What to do now? He had a relative in America; perhaps—? America has received many an immigrant of such caliber. The local pastor in the home parish headed a committee to raise

funds with which to buy a ticket to send the recalcitrant 15-year-old to America. He was placed on the boat for England and America; the committee with the pastor at its head gave a sigh of relief when they saw the ship disappear below the horizon. On the boat Chris made the acquaintance of another boy of similar age and disposition. Their immediate destination in America was New York; but the ship docked first at Quebec. Here the two boys jumped ship and barnstormed westward through Quebec and Ontario. They worked in lumber camps and holed up with the Indians. In time they stood on the north shore of Lake Superior. Here they stole a row boat and rowed across the lake at its widest. Knowledgeable lake-sailors of the day maintained that such was impossible; but the boys did it—or lied well enough to make people believe it. They came to Duluth, which he said had only four houses; and in 1865 Chris had come to the budding city on the banks of the Mississippi—which he claimed had a population of less than four hundred. The state of Minnesota was then seven years old, and Chris was six-

teen; he lived in Minneapolis for the rest of his days.

Minnesota had just passed through the Indian uprising, and the tension between the whites and the redskins was at fever pitch. Chris threw his lot with the Indians; he had had contact with those people in Canada. But it was not long before he fell out of favor with them. Then his life was in real danger, for they were after him. He eluded them once by hiding for three days and nights under the planking of a river bridge.

He sought and found employment in the saw mills along the river. Later on he went into construction work in the mushrooming city. Rough and burly as he was, he was noted for his proficiency in handing out punishment to those who challenged him, as well as to take it from those who were superiors in the game. They are not always a mother's best children who work in lumber camps and mills; and Chris was not the best of them. A liking for liquor got the best of him. He could build houses, but not a life or character. In time most of his money went to the saloons. He learned to brew his own liquors; that made it less expensive—with the result that he simply consumed more.

He married, and had five children; but the family had to shift for themselves mostly. His wife became a Christian and felt it her duty to be kind to him. Many an evening he lay on the kitchen floor in a drunken stupor; unable to carry him to his bed, she brought pillows and blankets to make it as comfortable as possible where he lay. As soon as the children were old enough to make their own way, they left home—one by one. Then his wife died, and he really got on the skids.

There was something good about the man, too; he was fond of horses, and could not tolerate that any one abused or misused them. He drove a horse-drawn dump wagon when the excavations were made for the Dayton store. If he saw a man strike a horse, the culprit would have to settle with Chris; and when Chris struck a man to the ground he had little courage to rise again until Chris was at a respectable distance. Himself he could not discipline.

After his wife was gone, he lost his

house, and he began to sleep wherever he could—in sheds, box cars, junk yards and park benches. He was fast becoming unemployable, and he took to panhandling for a livelihood. His name became a familiar one on the police blotters, and he became intimately acquainted with the city jail from the inside. When he saw a uniformed man approaching him on the street, he would cross over to the other side; it was not necessary to stir up a hornet's nest by a direct confrontation. Have as little as possible to do with those men.

It is bad enough to sleep outside in the summer; but Chris had to learn how to do it in the Minnesota winter. This was how: he removed his trousers, wrapped old newspapers around his legs and torso, and replaced the trousers; sleeves and body of his coat were similarly lined. Then to wrap papers around his feet and lie down on the park bench. Papers about head and hands also helped.

He had no pension; he was already eighty-seven years old when the Social Security System was initiated. He did get a pittance in the form of Old Age Assistance. It went mostly for liquor; he begged for bread.

One beautiful summer morning he came from his couch in the park to beg. (Perhaps this was the very morning I met him.) He had to pass the Gateway Gospel Mission at 111 Nicollet Avenue. Magnus Hansen stood in the doorway of the Mission. Magnus had spent years in sin on skid row, and knew Chris well. But Magnus had been converted, and some years later became superintendent of the Mission.

"Good morning, Chris," he greeted. "Don't you think it is time you were converted now?"

"I am far too great a sinner ever to be saved," replied Chris. "Besides, have you ever heard of a person being saved at the age of ninety-eight years?"

No, that Magnus had not. "But I know one thing for certain; you will never be saved any earlier. I also know that the Master I now serve is a past master at saving big sinners. No one is too big—or too old." Magnus paused; then continued, "You look like a cup of coffee might warm you up. It is not impossible that I have something to bite into also. Come on

in and let's see."

Chris did. And stayed for the rest of the forenoon. The two skid row veterans talked about sin. No theoretic discussion there, or second hand knowledge. They knew what they were talking about. They knew only too well that the wages of sin is death and that a life in sin is full of misery. But one was a saved sinner. Before noon that day Chris had been saved, too.

One might wonder if there ever is much to be saved in such a sinner at such an age. Can there be any transformation in such a life when senility has set in. It would take a miracle to make any change here; and a miracle it was. His sinful habits disappeared as feathers from a molting bird. Christian virtues replaced them. He lost his craving for liquor. His speech, which had formerly been lewdly licentious and peppered with profanity, now became clear as a running brook. He had always been a burly and brusquely belligerent man all his life; he became kind and considerate. He rented a room in the home of a Christian couple, and for the first time in years began to live like a civilized person. He would lie awake long hours in the night praying for the men on skid row that he knew—keeping his hosts awake; he was partly deaf himself now. The Gateway Mission was his Church. He was regular in attendance, and diligent in helping with the work. Now it was the Irish Catholic constable who crossed the street in the middle of the block when he saw Chris coming; he didn't want to be reminded again of the necessity of being saved. But something must have happened to the fellow, Chris—he muttered.

Chris lived on. He became one hundred and seven years of age. Those who knew him said he became two years younger in appearance for every one he lived after his conversion. He had now saved enough out of his Old Age Assistance allotment that he could buy a lot in the cemetery and a casket. One never knows, and it was best to be prepared; he did not want to be a burden to anyone after he was gone. By paying in advance he was granted a handsome discount on the deal.

[Continued on page 22]

editorials

FEAR NOT!

What a fantastic age we live in! It is very easy for those of us beyond the twenties to talk about the changes that have occurred even in our lifetimes. In fact, one need be only a little over 13 years old to have had the space age begin since he was born. And now several men have walked on the moon and the United States presently has three men in orbit who will break all records for the length of time spent in space during one mission, if all goes well.

What an evil age we live in! Uneasy peace prevails in the several world tinder boxes among the nations. Brother fights brother in the tragic civil conflict in Northern Ireland. Violence erupts in Greece.

Slavery is all but eradicated in the world, but in personal relationships men steal from one another, they cheat and hate and slander. For filthy lucre the strong (?) prey upon the weak in drugs and liquor and sex. Man reaches for the planets while incredible problems remain on earth.

But now it is Christmas once more and this blessed season has a message for our kind of world, scientific, sophisticated and sinful though it is. The world at the birth of Jesus had its problems, too, and the message of the angel to the Bethlehem shepherds must have sounded just as glorious to them as it does to us today as we hear it repeated.

What is the message? Fear not! ("Be not afraid," RSV.) And why not fear? "I have good news for you!" (NEB). What a difference there is when news is good, whether it comes from the doctor, the teacher or the employer. And the good news we speak of now is that a Savior has come, Jesus Christ the Lord.

In the receiving of Christmas presents, we appreciate gifts that have value for us and meaning to us. God has given us just what we needed, a Savior. Sometimes Jesus is spoken of as the Light of the world. We know the value

of light in darkness. Sin is darkness. Jesus came to bring Light.

The angels said, "Fear not!", because it was natural for the shepherds to be afraid at the visitation from heaven which they were receiving. We would feel the same as they. But can we not also think of those words in terms of the fears and concerns of our lives and that in the Savior, Jesus, we can be set free from them?

Take the fear of yesterday. Some folks carry a burden of guilt for unconfessed sins. There has been no release. Even Christians carry a sense of shame and disappointment over their sins, but they have been set free from the **guilt** of those sins by Jesus. The Savior can remove the guilt of the past. The story of the Prodigal Son is proof of that. And Paul wrote of Jesus, "In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:14). The way this can happen is to believe in the saving work of Christ.

Consider also the fear of tomorrow. What will the morrow bring? It is an unknown quantity. Some react dramatically to this fear. Through drink and drugs they anesthetize themselves against the future to a certain degree. Some withdraw from the mainstream of life and attempt to let the world pass by through avoiding normal responsibilities to society.

Whether one is optimistic about man's future on this earth or pessimistic, it is possible to be unafraid. The One who came on Christmas night is not only Savior but Lord. He is God, the Creator. In Him one cannot lose. Someone has said, "Yesterday is past; tomorrow is in His hands; today He is with me." This is the Christian assurance.

There are other fears, too. The fear of being alone, of being in crowds, of adversaries, of being incapacitated, of unworthiness, of death, fear of fear itself. But through Jesus Christ the message comes, "Fear not!" God is on our side. Then we must be on God's side, through faith in the Jesus who came to this earth. This is to truly know the power of Christmas.

The Lutheran Ambassador takes this opportunity to wish all our readers a most blessed Christmas season. May it be one in which you experience many good things among family, friends and in the congregation. May this Christmas be one in which the dramatic words of the angel, "Fear not!", not only call attention to the good news of the historical advent of the Savior, but take on new meaning as you let Jesus Christ remove the individual and personal fears that may beset your life, through His gracious work.

OTTO SAUKERSON

He passed away in November after some months of incapacity following a stroke. In all that time he couldn't speak but was aware of those around him and received with gladness the Word of God. Death came as a blessed release to him.

Otto Saukerson served as a lay pastor in the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations for most of the years of its existence, filling in where he was needed, aided by his faithful wife Myrtle. Occasionally he preached

at evangelistic services. Always he was ready to testify to God's saving work in his life.

Otto Saukerson was a hard-drinking man in the early manhood of his life. Things were not easy for his family or him under those circumstances. Then in 1940 at a district meeting which he attended in his home parish, the invitation to come to Christ was once more given. A pastor sitting beside him, the late Rev. E. S. Vik of Waubay, urged him to respond and Otto did. That was the start of new life for him.

Over the years he was engaged in various occupations for a livelihood. The lay pastoral work came in his retirement years. In other Christian work he conducted

many Christian services for Indian folk both near Chamberlain and further away. He was active in the work of the Gideon Society for many years. He did substitute preaching in his home congregations, St. Olaf, in Pukwana Lutheran, and in other area churches.

I first met Otto and Myrtle Saukerson in 1959 while on a district Luther League visitation to Chamberlain. Later I was an overnight guest in their home on one or two occasions. Whatever his failings, Otto Saukerson was a warm-hearted man, a living witness to the power of Christ to save and a staunch friend of the AFLC.

Blessed be his memory.

Raynard Huglen



CHRISTMAS IN NEW YORK

NEW YORK—A choir sings carols in front of the huge Christmas tree in New York's Rockefeller Center.
RELIGIOUS NEWS SERVICE PHOTO



Christmas - God's Great Love

by Rev. G. H. Spletstoesser,
Pine River, Minn.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

God's Gift of Love to Man

Again we cross the threshold of Christmas, a day which brings forth a fresh outburst of merrymaking and holy joy. The day comes to us again as a reminder of the world's debt to Incarnation. To the Christ Child, born that first Christmas Day, we owe all that is best in life and of hope. For in that Child, found by the Wise Men at His mother's side, the streams of all prophecy converge, and from that Child radiate the glowing lines of all history.

With the Gift of that Child to the world came the world's greatest blessing. Angelic hosts, over the hills of Bethlehem, found in that gift inspiration for their advent song. Humble shepherds were charmed away from their midnight watch among their silent flocks to see in the face of a Babe the sunrise of the hope of the race. The Wise Men, led by a star, were conducted to the place where divine Wisdom is always given in exchange for the gold and frankincense and myrrh of the heart's devotion. And today the source of joy and affection and strength for the Christian soul is the manger where the Christ Child lay.

Let us again journey to Bethlehem with the Wise Men and find there the Incarnate One in whom God Himself revealed the depths of His Love. The heart of the Christmas Message is one of simple tidings, a King was born that the world through Him might have salvation and thus be reconciled to God. Personal acquaintance with Jesus Christ is true joy, pure, abiding, unspeakable and eternal.

As we commemorate the day and cherish anew the Gift of God's Love, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit will be speaking to our hearts reminding us of the opportunity to make our Savior known at a time when hearts are so receptive, in our churches, Bible School, Seminary, and we hope and pray, soon, in our Association nursing home.

Man's Love To God

God loves us. However, our love, ministering and faith can be very discouraging at times for us. Indeed, if the spirit of Jesus Christ is at work in us as it should be, then the faith which we have must discourage us and often. Here we have placed before us the Light of the world, the Flame of very perfection, to try to follow. Here, before us, we have His explicit command: "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." We try, and we fail. How earnestly, then, we echo the words of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, when he wrote:

"Feeble at best is my endeavor!
I see but cannot reach the height
That lies forever in the Light;
And yet forever and forever,
When seeming just within my grasp,
I feel my feeble hands unclasp,
And sink discouraged into night."

We try to follow Jesus and we fail. And the unbelieving world, seeing our failures, laughs us to scorn or seeks to use them to belittle our faith. No matter, we try, we fail—then turn again unto the Perfect Light, to begin again in Jesus Christ! For we know, as Longfellow knew,

"For Thine own purpose Thou hast sent
The strife and the discouragement."

That is the message that the Advent Light holds for us, that is what the Christmas Light holds for us. Jesus did not expect us to be perfect—only to keep striving. As we do, we find that we draw ever closer to its holy glow, and we hold firmly within our hearts the sure hope that one day we shall at last find the eternal Light within our reach forever.

God's Love Draws Us

A coin has two sides. We Christians have two sides. One side is that we are born in sin, our whole nature, our whole being is sinful. On the other side, we are born again, we are new

creatures in Christ. Now the old sinful side brings forth immorality, impurity, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, envy, drunkenness, and a hundred other sins. On the other side, with Christ's Spirit in us, we find love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, self-control, etc.

When we look at our own life, we will find "the good I would like to do, I just don't do, and the bad things I do not want to do, I find myself doing." For example, we are bothered with anger. Some small thing happens and we find the anger starting to boil up in us. Take envy, we cannot stand to have someone get more praise than we. What can we do about it? With Paul, who had the same experiences, we cry out, "Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death?" The answer for Paul is the same as for us. Christ delivers us.

God's Love Has Redeemed Us:

This is the other side of our life. We have been redeemed by Christ. His birth at Christmas was the beginning of His great work of saving us poor, wretched sinners. In Him and in Him alone we have the forgiveness of sins. Do we really believe that? Do we want our sins forgiven? If they are forgiven, then there is nothing that can separate us from our Heavenly Father. Now we can talk to Him day or night. We are always welcome. We call this having peace with God. This is our greatest joy—that we are now back home and have the most wonderful fellowship with our dear Father, not a discouraged Christianity and faith.

Then why do we allow all kinds of little earthly presents to rob us of the Present of all presents, namely, Christ, the Gift our dear Father sent down from heaven? There should be nothing else in our life that would come anywhere near the joy and gladness that is ours now in Christ.

Are we going to have this forgiveness of sins first when we die or when we are in heaven? No! No! It is ours now. This is the result of the great Christmas Gift, God's love to us. Can the folks that we live with, work with, do business with, spend much time with, see and feel this joy of ours?

Does it awaken in them a longing that they might share our joy in the Lord? Do our faces indicate the great joy we have? By putting our faith and trust in Christ, we have all the other gifts, the resurrection, new heavens and earth. This is all ours if we have the first down payment, the forgiveness of sins.

Paul said, "Rejoice in the Lord!", but Paul knew that this is hard for us to do, so he said, "Again I say rejoice!" May the year 1974 find us working harder than ever, but also being happier and rejoicing in our great God more and more. God loved us, God sent His Son to us. We cannot permit ourselves to be discouraged with our Christianity and faith, but we continue to strive toward that goal, seek the forgiveness of our sins, continue to work while it is day, ere the night come and man works no more. We are redeemed creatures. Christmas has done all that—Christmas—God's Great Love.

In Memoriam

Key: The name of the town is the address of the deceased. Following that is listed the name of the deceased, age, date of death and the church in which he or she held membership.

MINNESOTA

Minneapolis

Mr. Maurice Hanka

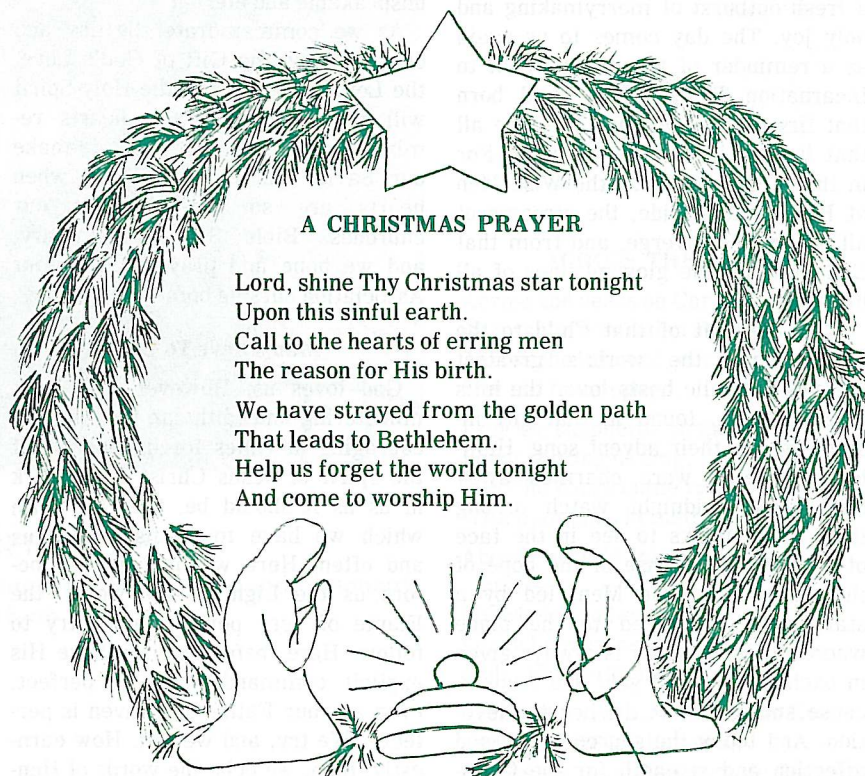
85, Nov. 11, Morgan Avenue

(A tribute to Mr. Hanka will appear in a later issue of the **Ambassador**.)

PROVISIONAL PERMISSION TO GO AHEAD WITH DORM CONSTRUCTION RECEIVED

Permission was received from Plymouth (Minn.) Village authorities on Nov. 28 to begin preparations for construction of the boys' dormitory at

[Continued on page 24]



A CHRISTMAS PRAYER

Lord, shine Thy Christmas star tonight
Upon this sinful earth.
Call to the hearts of erring men
The reason for His birth.

We have strayed from the golden path
That leads to Bethlehem.
Help us forget the world tonight
And come to worship Him.

Poem and illustration
by Marlene Moline

Another Mother, Another Christmas

by Mrs. Kent Quanbeck,
McVie, N. Dak.



The stars twinkled so brightly above the white countryside. The air was crisp and cold, I knew, beyond our large living room window. Here within the walls of our home it was cozy and warm. The room, lit only by the colorful lights of the Christmas tree, was peaceful and still. Here in my arms was another answer to prayer, our little baby son. He was content now, the steady rhythm of the rocker lulling him to a peaceful sleep. I hesitated to move, to leave this quiet, restful setting.

Holding the babe in my arms and seeing the tremendous beauty of God's world out there beyond our window I couldn't help but think of another mother so many Christmases ago, holding her Son in her arms. Her heart must have glowed with the warmth of her love for this Child even as mothers' hearts have warmed with love for their own down through the ages. Mary's place of dwelling perhaps was the most peaceful in all of Bethlehem. The smell of hay, so soothing to the nostrils; the quiet movement of the cattle as they peacefully chewed their cud; a mouse scurrying behind a partition; a place of gentleness, quiet and peace; lowly, yet majestic, for God was there. I'm sure Mary felt the strong presence of her Lord and Master, a peace beyond comprehension filling her and causing her to almost sing with the joy of being of service to God. An awesomeness for all that had befallen her and an overwhelming conviction of her own unworthiness

must have filled her with unbounded gratitude that God should choose her to care for His Son.

Since early childhood, had not Mary looked out at these very same heavens and prayed to the God she knew heard her prayers? In quiet confidence she must have felt she had always known Him, and to know Him is to love Him. She must have rejoiced as people have in ages ever after that God came to call sinners such as she was, as we all are, to walk and talk with Him, to fellowship with Him, to obey Him. What a joy to serve such a loving, compassionate God!

When the shepherds came and told of the angel who spoke to them of Jesus' birth and how a multitude of heavenly hosts praising God had appeared to them, Scripture records, "But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:19). In her own private meditation she silently thought on these things. Were the people of Bethlehem not to take notice of the birth of this Child, yet an angel of God and His heavenly hosts had noticed and honored Him! Here in the quietness of this place God must have ministered unto her, filling her with a love and compassion beyond her own human emotions. He must have instilled understanding, wisdom and strength in this young mother away from home, in a stable.

It is the thoughtful, not the unthinking, whom God will guide. When we have that peace in our hearts of which

the heavenly host proclaimed, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14), then will we be open and ready for God's guidance in our lives. When we are composed and quiet, as Mary was, God will commune with us, we will feel God's gentle, yet persuasive guidance. "Be still and know that I am God," it is stated in the 46th Psalm. Can we but walk in awe and reverence in His presence?

If, as was proclaimed, we would have "good will toward men," would not each of our lives reach many more souls for God? Is there indeed **good will toward men**? Do we love our neighbors as ourselves?

Would that we, each one, be as faithful and obedient to God as Mary, that we might be humble, that we might be used of God, that we might be weak, that He, the Almighty, might be strong.

(Author's Note: A new baby son at Christmas time brought our family number to seven that Christmas of '69. Three children were below school age, one in first grade and one a freshman in high school. My husband had back trouble, with severe pain that gave him rest neither night nor day. The work was overwhelming, the burdens many, the tasks endless that winter, but God chose to bless me by ministering unto me in the quietness of a still, cold, winter night when I felt God's presence so near. To me it was a special Christmas.)

O SWEETEST DAWN

O sweetest dawn! O dawn of peace!
Let all life's war and suffering cease.
"God's Son is born," the angels sing;
Give laud and honor to our King.

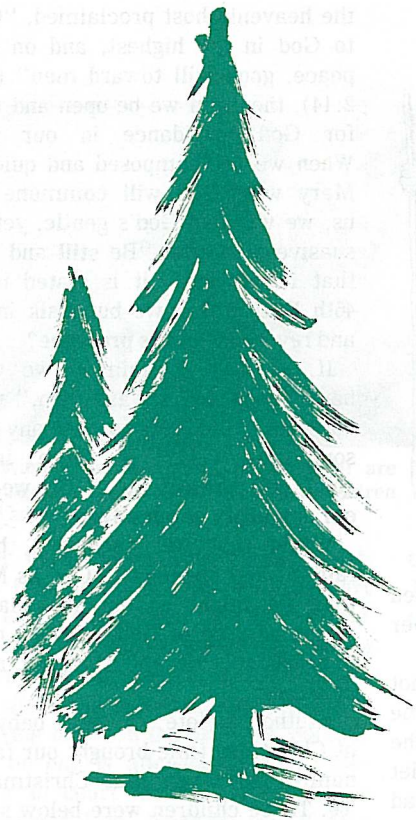
The night was dark and filled with
woe,

Yet God sent light so life we'd know.
His star shines out to show the path,
And joy has come to earth at last.

His haloed head shall know no crown
But the earth's cruelly woven thorn.
His pierced hand no scepter hold,
His pierced foot no shoe of gold.

Poor is His bed, poor was He born,
Yet He has changed the night to morn.
To hopeless hearts all full of sin
The Christ has come to enter in.

Marlene Moline



The Meaning of the Christmas Tree

by Mrs. Arnold McCarlson
Eagle Butte, S. Dak.

"Esther, come here a minute, please," called Mother. Esther looked around as she answered, "Coming, Mother, but where are you?" Just then she heard the stamping of feet in the back entrance and felt a cold gust of wind as she opened the door.

"Oh, there you are! Ah! A Christmas tree! How fresh and green it looks!" The two admired the tree and decided to leave it there until it would be brought in to be decorated. They carried in the other packages. "Mother," said Esther, who at nine was always asking questions, "How did the fir tree become a symbol of Christmas?"

Mother, who was now busy preparing supper, said, "Well, there probably is a real story but as for me an evergreen is the only green tree in winter, it's pretty, and it serves the purpose." "Now, run along and play with your dolls."

A week later, Esther was helping her mother with the dishes. She had been unusually quiet all week, but

through it all her sweet face was all aglow and bursting with pride. Mother, who had been "caught in the Christmas rush," looked at her and sensed the difference.

"Well, Esther, did you find out the story of the Christmas tree?" "Oh, not really, Mother, but I've asked all my friends and classmates and we even talked it over in Sunday School and we found out so many things!

"We decided that a tree is the nearest thing to human life. It starts with a seed, has to be nurtured like a baby and cannot grow unless the soil is good. Don't you see? Mother, God's hand is over a tree just as His hand protects me. As it grows it furnishes shade, fruit and material things. If it becomes diseased it dies.

"We, too, let our lives help others by letting our branches grow. Jesus said, 'I am the vine, you are the branches...' One needs the other."

Mother stopped washing dishes. She looked at her nine-year-old daughter in amazement. "You are so right, Esther." Then she told Esther how Christ was born in a wooden manger, was a carpenter by trade, and

He even died on a tree! So a Christian is proud and erect as a tree until he is cut down, burnt or corrupted. Then Mother said, "Why, just today, I was listening to the radio and heard a lady missionary telling about the palm tree. It had to be broken into two before it was dead. She liked to think of herself as a palm tree, the outer core was hard enough to preserve her inner light, hope and faith in Jesus Christ. Only when her life was broken by sin would the spirit die."

"And," said Esther, "As Jesus entered Jerusalem, palms were carried and it was known as Palm Sunday." By now Esther and her mother had finished the dishes.

They went into the living room to admire the now-decorated tree. A warm glow of peace and admiration was felt. This tree was not only a symbol of Christmas but a living witness of a happy, growing Christian, whose branches were vested in true and living faith in Jesus Christ, whose birthday was being celebrated. The tree, figuratively speaking, had fulfilled its mission.

My Thirty Years in Washington, D.C.

by Emil Fossan

The City As a Place to Live

To a Midwesterner, Washington is no longer the far-off city that it was two generations ago, when an older sister of mine was attending Gallaudet College. Since then Washington itself has also changed. With the rapid growth of the Federal government has come a big influx of "outsiders" from all over the country. Many of them, like myself, probably intended to return to their home states after a few years in Washington, but never did. The years slip by so quickly that before long one receives an award for 20 years of service and shortly thereafter another award for 30 years of service.

By then it is time to start thinking about retirement. Some choose to remain in Washington. A few decide to settle abroad—in Spain or Switzerland, for example. Others return to their home States.

I myself never wanted to sever my ties with the Middle West—especially not my old church ties. So, while I don't look forward to Minnesota winters, they will not deter me from returning there.

This is not to say that I've been unhappy in Washington. The District of Columbia is not paradise—unlike California, if you are to believe what you sometimes hear. But Washington is a beautiful and interesting city. While living conditions are not ideal, they are not bad either. Anyone from Minneapolis will wonder why a mere two or three inches of snow can cause such terrific traffic jams. But snow doesn't fall very often. For persons who need something to complain about, there are always the hot summer days. But with air-conditioning both in apartments and in offices, they do not pose any real threat to survival.

More important in my opinion than

city and weather is a person's job. One can hear a great deal of complaining around government offices about low salaries, slow promotions, unadmired and unloved supervisors, etc. Sometimes such complaints are no doubt justified. Often they are not. I myself am grateful for the opportunity I've had to do what I think I'm best qualified for, at a salary I can't complain about. And being a small wheel instead of a big wheel, I have not had to worry about job security with every change of administration.

My Work Is Translation

The work I've been doing for about 30 years is translating. Most of that work has been done in the Language Services Division of the State Department. Translators are often asked how many languages they speak. Actually, they don't have to **speak** any language. **Speaking** is the province of interpreters. Some linguists, of course, perform competently in both capacities.

Nor does a person whose native language is English normally translate **into** any foreign language although he may translate **from** several of them. The reason for this is obvious. Unless a person has exceptional talent or an exceptional background, it is virtually impossible for him to do high-level translations into a non-native language. For instance, if some of the many Minnesotans of Norwegian descent who can read Norwegian without difficulty were to undertake translations **into** that language, their work would not be highly regarded in Oslo.

Normally translators work only in one group of languages. The reason for this, too, is obvious. The languages of the Slavic group, for example, though different enough to

require separate study, are similar enough so that knowledge of one greatly facilitates the learning of another. This is easily seen in the Scandinavian languages, with the exception of Icelandic and Faroese. Knowledge of Dutch, to take another example, makes it easy to learn Afrikaans.

My work has been mainly in the Germanic languages. Partly by accident and partly for practical reasons I have also taken up some other languages: Russian—because an officer in my army unit in England offered to teach a course for anyone who was interested; Romanian—because there is little coverage in this least known of the main Romance languages; Indonesian — because Dutch was replaced by that language in Indonesia when it won its independence.

Then there is Esperanto—a delightfully simple and regular language, in contrast to other languages with their numerous conjugations and declensions. The Apollo moon flights elicited a number of letters from Esperantists in Eastern Europe, who thought these flights offered a golden opportunity to put in a plug for this universal language. Dr. Zamenhof, the Russian Jew who created it, was largely motivated by the conviction that a universal language would promote understanding and peace. Before he died, however, he saw his hopes for international understanding rudely shattered by World War I.

The Types of Work

How well does a translator have to know a foreign language? That varies greatly depending on the type of document to be translated. A legible birth certificate is easy to do. On the other hand, a semi-literate letter written in a semi-legible scrawl

can be very frustrating and time-consuming.

Diplomatic activity involves not only translation of diplomatic notes but also comparison of the English and foreign-languages texts of treaties. Since the two texts are equally authentic, any substantive discrepancies that may appear in the initial drafts must be eliminated before a treaty is ratified.

All foreign-language letters addressed to the White House come to the Division of Language Services for screening. Some of them are then translated in full or summarized. At the end of World War II most of the letters from the war-devastated areas of Europe were requests for help in the form of food parcels and used clothing. In view of the desperate plight of the people at that time, they cannot reasonably be criticized for such modest appeals. However, some of the letter writers were plainly endowed with a good measure of what a Free Church minister once called *uforskammethetens naadegave* (the charisma of brazenness). A few others, again, were not motivated by any self-interest whatever. Instead of asking for \$10,000 and other assorted items they merely wrote to thank the American people for the help they had given to Europe in the difficult post-war period.

Many letters come from a certain type which is probably well-known on all six continents of the globe. There are people who, even though they may not have been conspicuously successful in managing their own lives, have unbounded confidence in their knowledge of how certain national and international problems should be solved. They are ever-ready to offer heads of government the benefit of their insights. If they seem to detect some new initiative or slight change of direction, they may come right back with a second letter to the President saying how pleased they are to note that their advice has been heeded.

Children, too, sometimes write. I well remember a charming letter from an eight-year-old Dutch boy, written during the experimental stage flight, when animals were used

instead of human beings. This boy was a great animal-lover. When he saw the picture of the sad-looking monkey that had been placed in the space capsule, he felt so sorry for him. The President must never do such a thing again! If an animal had to be used, he might take a rat. That wouldn't be so bad.

Prayer Groups

A couple of years ago I had the unexpected good fortune to learn about two prayer groups that meet for half an hour at noon every week. One, a women's group, is led by Sandra Sheskin, an attractive young Jewish girl, who told me once that she had been baptized in Minneapolis. The other group is led by Lorren Hackett, a young black member of the local Christian Businessmen's Committee, who recently resigned his position in the State Department to enroll at the Washington Bible College and later go into full-time Christian work. A daughter of his is now enrolled at Wheaton College after taking her freshman year at Vassar. The composition of Mr. Hackett's group is quite varied, ranging in rank from ex-colonels to clerks and typists and in religious background from Greek Orthodox to Southern Baptist. But there is a unity of spirit that would have warmed the hearts of old Free Church pietists. Having observed so much coolness—not to say hostility—toward the unsophisticated evangelical faith that I know so well from my own home and church, I, too find this spirit quite refreshing.

Tourist Attractions in My City

The main tourist attractions of Washington are probably the Presidential Memorials, the White House, and the Capitol. All are highly visible and easily accessible either by guided tours or by private cars. The White House is open only on certain days. The Capitol is open for visitors every day of the week.

When visiting the Capitol tourists should not overlook several other well-known attractions immediately to the east of it. The most conspicuous of these is the Library of Congress,

with its Annex and another huge unit now under construction and due for completion in 1975. The Reading Room Gallery is open to the public and affords a good view of the beautiful interior of the cupola. Next to the Annex is the Folger Shakespeare Library, and across the street from that library, incidentally, is the Lutheran Church of the Reformation, where several well-known Augsburg College alumni have been members and some probably still are. Between the church and the Capitol is the beautiful Supreme Court Building.

Along the Mall, not far to the west of the Capitol, are the famous National Art Gallery and the Smithsonian museums. In the Art Gallery, by the way, visitors will find an excellent cafeteria.

Not impressive architecturally, but of great interest to admirers of Abraham Lincoln, is Ford's Theatre and the Lincoln Museum in its basement. The theatre has now been fully restored to its original condition at the time of Lincoln's assassination there. Across the street is the red brick house where Lincoln died—owned at that time by a Swedish tailor named Peterson.

TV viewers probably remember seeing the funeral services for President Eisenhower conducted at the National (Episcopal) Cathedral. This is a large Gothic-style church located on rather high ground several miles west of the Capitol. Although it was started around the turn of the century, it is not yet entirely completed.

It would probably be pointless to mention the many other tourist attractions in Washington. Resourceful tourists will be able to obtain the information they need. They should remember that Mount Vernon is only 15 miles down the Potomac from Washington. Those who don't have cars of their own can easily go there on daily bus tours.

Finally, a word of advice to prospective visitors. Normally, the best time to see Washington is in late spring or early fall. In July or August there may be spells of pleasant weather, but there are also likely to be spells of oppressively hot weather that would greatly detract from the pleasure of sightseeing.

MRS. MORRIS EGGEN

Mrs. Ella Eggen, widow of the late Pastor Morris Eggen, passed away on Oct. 28, at Roseau Area Hospital, Roseau, Minn., at the age of 79.

Funeral services were held on Thurs., Nov. 1, at the Helgeson Chapel in Roseau, with Rev. Erling Huglen officiating, and at Green Lake Lutheran Church, Spicer, Minn., on Friday, Nov. 2, at 1:30 p.m., with Rev. Leslie Galland in charge. A greeting was brought at the latter service by Rev. John P. Strand, president of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, the church on whose clergy roster her husband had held membership. Interment was in the Green Lake church cemetery.

Ella Josephine Satre was born on Jan. 26, 1894, at Dell Rapids, S. Dak. Later the family moved to Roberts County, South Dakota. She taught school for four years. On June 6, 1917, she was united in marriage to Morris Eggen of the same county. He later entered the ministry of the Lutheran Free Church and they served at Redelm and Faith, S. Dak., Hampden, N. Dak., Wannaska, Minn., Medicine Lake, Mont., Shevlin, Granite Falls and Willmar, Minn. For three years they lived in Warren, Minn., where Mr. Eggen served as dean of North Star Bible School and travelled as an evangelist. He passed away in 1970 and Mrs. Eggen had continued to live in their retirement home in Spicer until recently when she went to live at Wannaska.

Surviving Mrs. Eggen are three sons, Morris, Jr., Crescent City, Calif.; and Carsten and Kenneth of Wannaska; four daughters, Ardyce, Mrs. Merle Knutson, Lakefield, Minn.; Elaine, Mrs. Norman Rehbein, Los Altos, Calif.; Ida Marie, Mrs. Robert Benson, Wanamingo, Minn.; and Audrey, Mrs. John Graham, Alexandria, Minn.; two brothers, Clarence, Los Angeles, Calif.; and Roy, Veblen, S. Dak.; four sisters, Effie Youngberg, Rosholt, S. Dak.; Leeda Rudolph, Sisseton, S. Dak.; Avis Honl, Roseau; and Ione Jackson, Seattle, Wash.; 26 grandchildren and three great grandchildren. In addition to her husband, she was preceded in

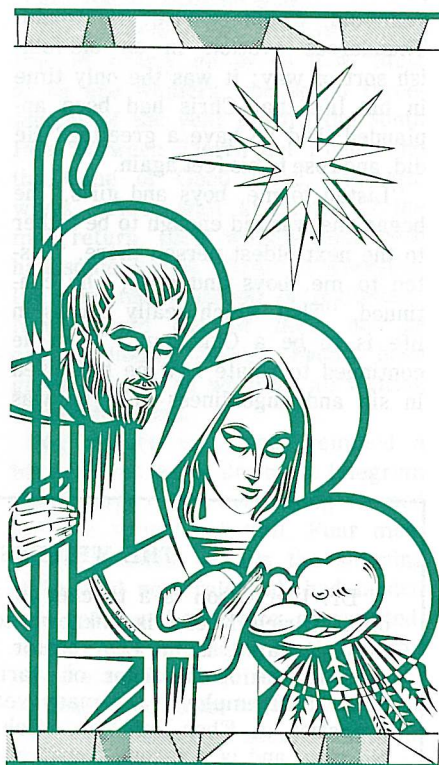
death by three brothers and one sister.

Blessed be her memory.

(Ed. Note: Mrs. Eggen was a good helpmeet to her pastor husband, taking an active part in the work of the congregations served. Wherever she lived she left many friends.)

PERSONALITIES

Lay Pastor and Mrs. Sidney Swenson have moved to St. Paul, Minn., from Fergus Falls, Minn. Their address now is 1511 W. Larpenteur Ave., Apt. No. 4, Zip Code 55113.



MESSIAH IN A MANGER

Advent prepares the world for Jesus' birth.

Prophets of old foretell God's trip to earth.

Why would God let His only Son come down...

Leaving the golden streets for Beth'lem town?

Jesus came down, was a little baby.

Wise men thought that maybe He would rule the world with love, compassion, understanding, happiness and peace for ever more.

Frost filled the air. Angelic melodies. Look now, young Joseph holds Christ on his knees.

Jesus' small hand gives father's beard a tug.

The laughing Joseph gives his Son a hug.

Mary watches. Overflowing gladness!

Gone are birth pangs, sadness.

Every evil vanishes. Tonight she has a man child.

Happiness and peace for ever more.

High on the hills there is a small campfire.

Suddenly shepherds hear an angel choir!

Bright lights at night give shepherds chills and fear.

"Be not afraid, because Emmanuel's here!"

Shepherds running down the hills together.

Who cares if the weather's freezing cold?

The Lord is born! Messiah in a manger!

Happiness and peace for ever more.

Shepherds gone... The Virgin lies asleeping.

Joseph softly weeping. Tears of joy fall down and kiss the infant Jesus' fingers.

Happiness and peace for ever more.

Happiness for you! Peace! Ever more!

Dale Stone

Minneapolis, Minn.

(Written shortly after the death of the author's wife Barbra in 1972 and in her memory.)



"But when the time had fully come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons." Gal. 4:4, 5.

like some animal. Again and again she screamed: "No! No!" as though as could wipe out this new development by sheer will power or impulse. Then she sank and whimpered without letup. Finally, when we were desperately uncertain what we should do for this despairing bundle of humanity, with the nearest doctor living hours away across the fjord, the miracle of the evening occurred.

Suddenly, she was completely still. My wife and I had said nothing. Ester Halversen sat up and said: "Does my sister know already?" I said she didn't.

"Well, does she know that I didn't want to come to her earlier?" Again I shook my head no.

Ester stood up, straightened out her dress, combed her hair and said very quietly: "Thank you, Larsen. It's time that I go with you now. If you'll allow me, I'll tell her that her boy is coming home instead of mine."

Ester Halversen came with us, pressing us to hurry along. When we tried to protect her along the rocky path, she motioned us away. It was as though, in delivering this message, she was as hard now upon herself as she formerly had been on others.

And with that my story, which I myself experienced, really comes to its close. I really don't know if it is truly a Christmas story. Perhaps I should excuse myself for telling it. All I remember besides is that last leg of the evening's journey.

The northern lights were no longer in the sky. But, as we turned the corner around the last house along the harbor, we saw from afar the candle once again—the candle that Agatha Halversen had placed in her window.

The above article was published in *Wort und Weg*, West Germany, and then in *Kirchliches Monatsblatt*, Philadelphia, Pa. It was translated into English by Rev. Edward A. Johnson, Ohio, Nebr., for use in *The Lutheran Ambassador*.



He still lived on, and his casket was collecting dust at the mortuary. He became one hundred and nine years old in 1958. Minnesota was then observing its one hundredth anniversary as a state. Chris Norby was then her oldest resident, and one of the few who had lived there continuously for ninety-three years. Governor Orville Freeman decided to give a complimentary breakfast to every resident over eighty years of age who would come to St. Paul. Chris was one of those who came. Tables had been set up in the rotunda of the State Capitol, and the place was filled with octogenarians. The governor himself presided and said grace. After the meal it was mentioned that there was one man present who was one hundred and nine-years-old. Would he rise? He would. Thunderous ovation—in an old-folkish sort of way; it was the only time in his life that Chris had been applauded. Did he have a greeting? He did, and rose to his feet again.

"Listen to me, boys and girls," he began; he was old enough to be father to the next oldest person there. "Listen to me, boys and girls," he continued. "That which really counts in life is to be a Christian." Then he continued to relate how he had lived in sin and ungodliness until he was

98 years old. It was a life of misery. After Christ came to save him life had become one sweet song. He would not trade a single day of the last eleven years for all the ninety-eight he had lived before. "Now if God could save a sinner like me at my age, He can save you at yours. Seek Him when He may be found, and call upon Him when He is near."

Chris sat down. No ovation now. Yet no one objected to the turn the program had taken. Many were visibly—though silently—moved. Eyes were moistened; even the Governor's, it was said. It was as though a long-departed father was speaking sober words of admonition to them. Perhaps it was the last call of God to many of them. By now they have possibly all passed on.

Three weeks later Chris Norby died.

The writer hereof attended the funeral service. The late Ingolf Marthinussen officiated and sang. What we saw in the casket was a man in his seventies. One daughter survived him; she was eighty and bedridden in a home for the aged on the West Coast. Of the six pall bearers one was a successful business man of the city; the other five were former skid row derelicts who had been saved at the Gateway Gospel Mission. One who did not know them could not tell which was which.

THE WRITERS IN THIS ISSUE

Dr. Iver Olson is a teacher at the Association Schools in Minneapolis...Ulrich Kuehn is unknown to us but Rev. Edward A. Johnson, the translator, is an LCA pastor at Ohio, Nebr., and has contributed to the *Ambassador* on various occasions...George Johnson, a paper mill employee for many years, is a member of the AFLC congregation at Eben Junction, Mich...Bjarne Taranger is from Huglo, Norway, and is a second cousin of the Editor...Rev. G. H. Spletstoesser is the manager of a rest home at Pine River, Minn., and is an AFLC pastor...Mrs. Kent (Mabel) Quanbeck is a farmer's wife at McVillie, N. Dak...Emil Fossan is from Sarpsborg Lutheran Church in our Dalton, Minn., parish...Marlene Moline of Lansing, Ia., is a frequent contributor of poems to our magazine, illustrating some of them...Dale Stone now lives in the Twin Cities and is assisting his pastor father at Redeemer Lutheran. He formerly was associated with Jesus to the Communist World...Mrs. Arnold McC Carlson is a housewife and teacher in Eagle Butte, S. Dak...The Connely Dyruds are missionaries to Brazil, presently home on furlough...Our sincere thanks to all of them for what they have done to make this Christmas *Ambassador* possible.

BRAZIL STILL CALLING YOU!

The AFLC tour to Brazil, to the mission field, should be one of the most memorable times in your life, both spiritually and educationally. Beautiful brochures are being sent to all pastors and interested people who would like more information. If you would like information or have any questions, write: Pol Travel Service, Inc. Professional Center, Suite 522, Roseville, Minn. 55113. Telephone: 612-633-1130

The brochure will detail for you what we consider to be an excellent tour value. Naturally, few persons would want to travel as far as Brazil without having the opportunity to see some of the highlights of that vast land. We have therefore made arrangements for you to spend three full days in beautiful Rio de Janeiro, with a full sightseeing program. You will then fly to Sao Paulo and on to Iguacu Falls, one of the world's largest and most beautiful waterfalls. From Iguacu you will travel by bus through the back country to our own Campo Mourao. You will spend three full days there with every opportunity to learn about our work first hand by getting to know your missionaries and talking with the native Christians about our ministry. We will be able to share one Sunday together there before returning to Iguacu on Monday, February 11. There the group will divide into two parts, one group, with more time available, going on to visit Paraguay (briefly), La Paz, Bolivia and Lima, Peru, while the other group returns to Sao Paulo and flies home on February 11.

Tour Cost

Every effort has been made to keep the cost of this tour at the lowest level consistent with providing a memorable and enjoyable experience. Recognizing that different persons have different budgets and different amounts of time available, this tour is offered in two versions.

Option 1—the 16-day version—February 2-17 @ \$785 from New York

Option 2—the 11-day version—February 2-12 @ \$685 from New York

A review of the itinerary will show the difference between the two versions.

The prices are shown from New York, since that is the international fare basing point and some persons may wish to join the tour there.

Persons originating in the Twin Cities must add \$116.22 to the price shown, to cover round trip air transportation to New York.

Children under the age of 12, traveling with their parents, are entitled to a 50% reduction in the international air fare. Please contact Pol Travel Service for a precise quotation.

All prices are based on tariffs in effect as of November 1, 1973, and are subject to change in the event of currency revaluations or increases in costs.

There has been some talk that the tour had been canceled. This has never been so. The reason for lack of publicity is because of the time involved in getting confirmation on prices, schedules, etc., from Brazil. This can be very time consuming, and we did not want to send out more information than we had to until we got all the required information. We are now happy to send out confirmed data. I want to thank the Pol Travel Service for their steady, patient task of getting all this material and making the brochures.

I also regret to say that the price that I listed for you last Spring has been changed for those who live in the Midwest. This is due to inflation. I'm sorry, but that was one of the reasons we did not want to send out more information until confirmation of it.

Remember, we have to have 25 or more who will make this tour in order to get the above tour rate.

Thank you so much for your patience. We're waiting to see many of you, our brethren, in Brazil, February, 1974. "Ate Lago" (until soon).

Joy in His Service,
The Connely Dyruds

**WHAT STAR IS THIS,
WITH BEAMS SO BRIGHT**

What star is this, with beams so bright,
More lovely than the noonday light?
'Tis sent to announce a newborn King,
Glad tidings of our God to bring.

'Tis now fulfilled what God decreed,
"From Jacob shall a star proceed";
And lo! the eastern sages stand,
To read in heaven the Lord's
command.

O Jesus, while the star of grace
Impels us on to seek Thy face,
Let not our slothful hearts refuse
The guidance of Thy light to use.

To God the Father, heavenly Light,
To Christ, revealed in earthly night,

To God the Holy Ghost we raise
An endless song of thankful praise!

Charles Coffin
(from *Pilgrim Hymnal*)

[Continued from page 16]

Association Free Lutheran Bible
School. Actual reception of the build-
ing permit was expected soon. On or
near Dec. 3, digging of the basement
for the new structure should have
commenced.

"And the Word became flesh and
dwelt among us, full of grace and
truth" Jn. 1:14.

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