

Emmitsburg NEWS-JOURNAL

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Town prepares for "Evening of Christmas Spirit"

Emmitsburg's Christmas festivities - "An Evening of Christmas Spirit" - will go on unhampered this month regardless of the general state of the economy, but with a "new" twist.

This year's festivities mark the 23rd year that the community holiday event has been formally held.

Mayor Don Briggs announced earlier this month that the community Christmas tree lighting ceremony, which will be held December 5, will be moved back to the Town Square.

The Town Square served as the traditional location for many years for the tree lighting ceremony until the event was moved several years ago to the county Community center property.

The move from the Town Square was apparently done out of safety concerns due to its proximity to Main Street traffic. However, one of recently-elected Mayor Briggs' campaign promises was to try and breathe new life back into the square.

"The formal (tree) lighting will

be at the Town Square at 6 p.m.," Briggs stated. The tree will be set up at its formerly traditional location in front of the old four-story, 2 East Main Street, Emmitsburg Hotel. The public is invited to sing along with Christmas carols that will be performed there as well.

Town Manager David Haller noted that, "Three or four parking spaces in front of the hotel have historically been blocked-off for people to gather," and those spaces will be closed-off once again for the public to gather for the ceremony.

The Carriage House Inn will continue to hold its holiday festivities in conjunction with "An Evening of Christmas Spirit," which will follow the tree lighting ceremony at the square.

Inn co-owner Bob Hanse said the events at the restaurant are being sponsored this year by the inn, the Emmitsburg Business and Professional Association (BPA), and the Town of Emmitsburg.

Santa Clause will arrive at the Carriage House to partake in the festivities at 6:30 p.m. The inn



Members of the Incarnation United Church of Christ decorate the Christmas tree that will adorn their church this Christmas season. See related story on page 39

will be offering free hot dogs, cookies and hot chocolate to the revelers, and will be featuring a live Nativity, entertainment, including choirs and vocalists (in the inn's Joann's Ballroom), and hayrides.

Hanse said, "We will be teaming more this year with the EBPA and the town" to hold the event. "A few changes have been made (such as moving the tree-lighting to the

Town Square) and we're excited to have more people involved and get more people to this town event."

"It has grown passed me (in magnitude)," he said. "It's grown to be a town event...really exciting."

For a more exhaustive rundown of all the areas Christmas related events, see the Arts article on page 37 or visit the Upcoming Events section of Emmitsburg.net.

Republicans sweep Adams County

Two Republicans were elected out of three available seats on the Adams County Board of Commissioners, while maintaining or gaining control of virtually every other available seat in the county government, according to election results.

Commissioner Republican candidates Randy Phiel and Jim Martin easily captured two of three seats on the county Board of Commissioners, with Democrat Marty Qually.

Losing in his bid was Democrat and Freedom Township Board of Supervisors member Paul Kellett.

Phiel gained an early lead and maintained it throughout the day of the election, garnering a final vote count of 8,125. Likewise, Martin placed second early on and maintained that position throughout the evening with a final vote of 7,921.

Qually established an unwavering third place throughout, finishing with 5,757, while Kellett remained not far behind with 5,455.

Regarding the Republican sweep of all of the available county positions, Phiel stated, "We did carry the day."

"Nationally," the newly-elected commissioner said, "there is significant frustration," adding that one of his objectives is to help "restore confidence in government overall" by managing the affairs of the county responsibly.

"Obviously the (county election) results are gratifying," Phiel stated. "It was a campaign for Adams County Commissioner like Adams County had never seen before. Ten candidates came out (and through) ten forums and debates" the field was ultimately narrowed to four final candidates of which three were elected.

"The process did help produce some stronger candidates when you have to put yourself out there (with all these public appearances). They had to go through a (media-intensive) process," he noted.

"The intensity and enthusiasm of this year's campaign exceeded what anyone could have anticipated," Phiel stated. "People are frustrated with government at every level," adding that the county election was fueled by economic and reassessment issues, which he described as being like "throwing fuel on the fire. It was a significant campaign."



Marty Qually shouts with joy as his proud parents inform him of his election

Regarding the newly-elected board, Phiel said, "You'll see this board getting out of the courthouse more," including establishing better communication with all parts of the county, and lobby-

ing legislators for financial aid. "That will probably be the mentality of this board. We need to do better job of reaching out and touching all areas of the county."

continued on page 4

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NEWS

Town drafts architectural guidelines to preserve Historical District

As part of an effort by the town staff of Emmitsburg to prepare architectural guidelines to help preserve historic structures, a local architect has compiled a list of classic historic homes in the community.

Town Planner Susan Cipperly and Architect Keith Suerdieck, also an alternate member of the town Planning Commission, began to showcase the staff's ongoing work at last month's council meeting.

Cipperly told the council the reasoning behind having architectural guidelines is to "protect what you have," especially regarding Emmitsburg because "so much of the town is still intact from when it was built."

Generally, the town is divided into two historic quarters, with west-end structures three blocks from the square dating back the town's founding in 1786, and east-end structures dating from the time of the 1863 fire that destroyed most of the original buildings east of the Town Square.

The planner noted that "an exterior change (in the two historic areas) to any structure will have a visual impact on the streetscape."

Thus, she said, the architectural guidelines will "provide for guidance for new development who can make things (proposals) fit in" with the historic theme of Main Street.

Suerdieck told the council that he



and the town staff have made "a lot of progress" in creating the developing guidelines "regarding preserving the architecture of the historic district of Emmitsburg."

"Emmitsburg is very fortunate when you look at Main Street and Seton Avenue and see how many buildings that have been here a very long time," the architect stated, noting that those buildings have "established a character in Emmitsburg that no other town has."

"More than 200 properties" in Emmitsburg, he stated, "were deemed appropriate" 20 years ago to be listed on the National Register. That's something we should all be proud of."

Some of the classic forms of architecture reflected in local buildings include those demonstrating styles

predominant during the Georgian Period, the Federal Period (1780 to 1830), the Greek Revival Period (1830s to 1860s), the Italianate Period (1860s to 1880s), and the Queen Ann Period (1880s to about 1910).

In addition, he said, there are also homes representing the American Foursquare style, which was prevalent between 1900 and 1910.

"Certainly not every home in Emmitsburg is one of these styles," Suerdieck stated. "There are homes that don't have any of these elements," which he called "vernacular."

However he stated, "Everything blends to give a character (to the town) that we want to find a way to make them attractive for years to come."

Cipperly stated that the next step

Emmitsburg water infiltration peaks worsen

The Emmitsburg Board of Commissioners directed town staff at their November 21 meeting to compile a list of suspect portions of the wastewater collection system to try and get a handle on continuing storm water infiltration.

Commission President Christopher V. Staiger expressed concern over the urgency of nailing down trouble areas in the system in light of the fact that the new wastewater treatment plant is due to go online

in 2014.

Staiger said that the amount of storm water getting into the system could adversely impact the cost of operating the new facility, given that the plant will be treating incoming wastewater to higher standards than that currently applicable.

For decades, the town wastewater collection system degraded as the result of negligent maintenance, resulting in storm water and snow melt water working their way

into the collection system through breaks and cracks in the pipelines.

In spite of nearly \$4 million spent on improving the collection system since 2000, Town Manager David Haller told the commission at their November 21 meeting that peaks in the amount of wastewater treated have actually increased since all of the work to date has been completed.

"Our biggest peaks are bigger than they were before (the improve-

ments)," he stated.

However, he said these peaks could be the result of the improvements made. While water continues to get into the system, the chances of it also escaping has been cut-off by new sections of pipeline that had been installed.

"Now that we're catching it, we're funneling it" to the plant since some of the water could no longer escape through some of the now-eliminated breaks further down the system,

he said. This, he believes, is causing the unprecedented peaks in the volume of wastewater being processed.

Haller stated that one suspect, problematic section lies along Flat Run where he believes a section of Creamery Road shifted and caused the buried wastewater collection system pipes to misalign. "This could be a million gallon (infiltration point) under the right circumstances."

In October, the current treatment plant exceeded its design capacity on ten different days, with a 4,000 gallon spill of untreated wastewater reported on October 17.

Council considers sewer increase

The Emmitsburg Board of Commissioners voted 4-1 at their November 7 meeting to impose an anticipated sewer service rate increase on residents and businesses in two phases to help pay for the necessity of having to construct a new wastewater treatment plant.

Commissioner Patrick Joy voted against implementing the looming increase in two phases, stating he preferred to spread the increase in sewer rates over three phases "to reduce the shock value" experienced by local customers.

Commissioner Tim O'Donnell stated he was in favor of pursuing an "aggressive way" to deal with the debt incurred by the proposed facility. "I think the two step (phase) is the better choice," he said. "I think we need to be more aggressive with the debt

(than spreading implantation of a rate increase over three phases)."

Rates will likely increase for residents and businesses by more than 50 percent by 2014 when the new wastewater treatment plant is scheduled to go on-line. The first increase in rates for system customers will likely take place during the first of 2012. "I don't think we have the time between now and January 1 to come up with a rate structure," Town manager David Haller stated.

System users using less than 10,000 gallons per quarter would likely see a 53 percent increase in the sewer bill by 2014, while a customer using 20,000 gallons per quarter would likely see as much as a 70 percent increase in their bill.

Then creation of a new treatment plant was required by the state in or-

der for the town to meet federal Department of Environmental Protection standards, Haller told the commission, all the result of efforts that environmental agencies claim will help clean up the Chesapeake Bay.

The new facility, which will be located in the area of the current treatment plant east of Route 15 on Creamery Road, will cost around \$20 million, and about "\$50,000 more per quarter to operate than the existing plant," Haller told the Emmitsburg News-Journal.

Of the anticipated \$20 million price tag, \$14.5 million will be provided to the town via grant money from the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and the federal Department of Agriculture (DOA). In addition, DOA will be

providing the town with a \$5.5 million loan bearing a 2.4 percent interest rate payable over 40 years.

The new facility is expected to be on-line in "late summer of 2014," with construction slated to begin in 2012. "We would like to start mid-summer," Haller said, noting that the engineering is done and the facility plans are drawn. "We started on this thing, working with MDE, back in 2007."

The new facility will have the same permitted 750,000 gallons per day capacity of the existing plant, but will process wastewater at a higher standard. The old plant will be dismantled, although the exiting lagoons will remain for wastewater storage use.

The rate and the amount that will be required in each of the two phases remain to be assessed by the board of commissioners.

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in the process of developing architectural guidelines is to "decide how to protect" significant properties, determine what options are doable now, and present the draft guidelines to the

council for review.

"We need to move forward," she said, before any further development does. "We need to have a (guidelines) ordinance on the books."

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Carroll Valley proposes a 2.45 mill tax

The Carroll Valley Borough Council approved at their November 15 meeting the advertisement of an anticipated real estate tax hike of .707 over the current rate to support the proposed 2012 general fund budget.

The rate proposed for 2012 is 2.45 mills, or 24.5 cents on each dollar of assessed real estate value.

Only Councilman Dan Patton voted against the tax increase stating that the budget generating the tax should have been further evaluated for additional cutting of proposed expenditures.

Borough Councilman Bill Reinke, also a member of the borough Finance Committee, predicted at the October 11 meeting that a tax hike

for 2012 may be unavoidable. "We are looking at a tax increase unless someone can win the lottery and donate the money to the borough. We're almost certainly looking at a tax increase," he stated.

Reinke, who was absent from the November 15 council meeting, cited declining revenues as the primary reason for the apparent need for the potential tax increase. Specifically, he said the shortfall is due in a large part to decreased income and real estate money.

A previous tax rate of eight mills was set in 2008, effective for the 2009 budget, and was subsequently adjusted to 1.746 mills in 2009 for the 2010 budget as the result of the county-wide reassessment.

2012 budget faces adoption

The Carroll Valley Borough Council also approved at their November 15 meeting the advertisement of an anticipated 2012 budget.

The new budget has been proposed in the amount of \$1,753,807.

Councilman Dan Patton voted against advertising the budget, stating that there were areas of "unessential" spending that should have been looked at for further cuts. Several of his suggested reductions were cut (in committee) following his comments.

Patton said following the council meeting that areas of concern where additional cuts should be sought included solicitor fees, continuing education, conference and training costs, membership fees, trav-

el expenses, recreational program support, clothing and uniform expenses, Lake Kay treatment costs, postage outlays, staff cost of living increases, and cable television fees.

After receiving his comments during a budget workshop prior to the council meeting, the borough Finance Committee did cut anticipated solicitor expenses from \$18,000 to \$14,000, and cut Lake Kay money from \$5,000 to \$2,500.

"I don't believe we should burden the tax payer with non-essential spending," he said following his vote against advertising the proposed budget.

Council sets fire/EMS comp rate

The Carroll Valley Borough Council approved a resolution at their Novem-

ber 15 meeting establishing the workers' compensation reimbursement rate for Fairfield Fire & EMS for 2012 through 2014.

The fire end of the Fairfield Fire & EMS services were set at 31.60 percent of the amount shared with Fairfield Borough and Franklin, Freedom, Hamiltonban, Highland and Liberty townships.

The percentage represents a \$1,964 reimbursement.

The ambulance and medical services end of the Fairfield Fire & EMS will receive a 40.40 percent reimbursement from Carroll Valley, representing a contribution of \$631.

The percentages each municipality contributes towards Fairfield Fire & EMS's workers' compensation reimbursement rate is based on call-volume experienced in each of the participating municipalities.

Iron Springs Plaza progresses

A proposal to construct a shopping center in Hamiltonban Township advanced November 3 when the township supervisors conditionally approved the project's preliminary plan and waivers.

Realtor and developer David Sites, David L. Sites Realty Leasing & Management, Gettysburg, is proposing to construct the Iron Springs Plaza shopping center on a 17-acre tract located at the intersection of Iron Springs and Fairfield (Route 116) roads.

The project consists of subdividing

the land into five lots, one of which will contain a 35,000 square foot grocery store, as the plaza anchor business, and a 7,200 square foot retail business.

Sites said Kennie's Markets may be the operators of the new grocery store when the building is complete and available.

Food Lion had been considered as the anchor store in an earlier effort to create an Iron Springs shopping center, but the deal ultimately went awry and the overall plans for that project were withdrawn in April 2009.

One of the five lots will be used strictly for storm water management and will not be developed.

The remaining three, circa two acre, lots will be available, but do not presently have prospective clients committed to acquiring any of them as yet.

The township Planning Commission recommended that the board of supervisors grant conditional approval to the project's subdivision and land development plan, as well as to grant a waiver regarding proposed planting requirements, according to commis-

sion Secretary Doreen Premo.

Peter J. Martin, of the land surveying and design firm of Sharrah Design Group, Gettysburg, stated the plans call for the reconfiguration of Iron Springs Road at its intersection with Fairfield Road, and that the unwanted portion of Iron Springs will be "milled and removed."

Accompanying the reconfiguration would be the addition of a stop light and the newly created intersection, which would be installed and maintained by the developer, although it would become property of the township.

A sidewalk will also be installed along Fairfield from the high school to the new intersection where crosswalks will be added.

The board of supervisors unanimously approved the project's subdivision and land development plan and planting waiver, as well as a waiver regarding the size of a ditch-like storm water basin.

Conditions placed on the development approval included township attorney sign-offs on any easement and right-of-way agreements, receipt of county and local permits or approvals, and the completion of an accepted traffic study.

Fairfield tackles signage

The Fairfield Borough Planning Commission directed county planning services to review borough sign requirements, particularly those applicable to the historic district, and residence and business street addresses.

Over the past number of years, non-conforming signs that do not meet the borough's existing sign requirements have cropped up along Main Street.

Borough Zoning Officer Francis Cool, also member of the planning commission, noted at the commission's November 14 meeting that he counted 14 business signs in the borough that did not meet signage requirements.

Of those, he said, eight predated the rules, while the remaining six got through the system without conforming with the strict letter of the law, apparently the product of lax enforcement or the regulations not being properly applied, especially regarding signage in the historic district.

To ensure that future signage in the historic district (or village core) meet

historically acceptable standards, the planning commission directed county Planner Rob Thaeler at their meeting to review the array of existing signs and develop some new guidelines.

Regarding the half dozen that slipped through the cracks, borough Councilman Carroll Smith, also a member of the planning commission, suggested those owners be notified that the requirements will be enforced if the non-conforming signs are ever altered or if the businesses change ownership.

Additionally, planning commission Chairman Dave Metz suggested that standards relating to house and business address numbering also be evaluated.

Back of the Alley to move

A flower and craft business located at 202 East Main Street, Fairfield Borough, may soon be moving to a new facility.

According to Borough Zoning Officer and planning commission member Francis Cool, Back the Alley, a business operated by Joe Bolin, may

be moving to 119 West Main Street, a building which has previously served as a residence.

Bolin was expected to close on the property by the end of November.

Cool stated at the November 14 meeting of the Fairfield Borough Planning Commission that Bolin will need to apply for a change-of-use permit once the former residence is acquired for business use.

Fairfield county runoff changes adopted

County Planner Rob Thaeler informed the Fairfield Borough Planning Commission at their November 14 meeting that the majority of comments made by the commission regarding proposed rules to govern county storm water management were adopted by the county.

Thaeler stated at the October 10 borough Planning Commission meeting that the county is seeking to reduce the impact the Monocacy Plan rules were having on small property owners and developers as the result of excessive, Monocacy Plan-driven engineering requirements.

The main difference between the existing Monocacy Plan rules, and that which the county has proposed, primarily changes the permitting pro-

cess to ease engineering expenses, especially on small property owners looking to build a simple structure, such as a garage.



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NEWS

Republicans sweep Adams County Continued from page 1

The new commissioner said, "There are a lot of issues (before the county), the most important issue is maintaining our rural quality of life and balancing that with the significant need for economic development."

"How we balance those two, that will be the challenge we face," Phiel stated. "That will be the legacy we leave our children."

Martin previously said, "There's much to do" regarding trimming county budgets. He also noted that available state and federal money is dwindling for even state and federally-mandated programs and services. He agreed with other candidates that expensive consulting services need to be examined and eliminated where possible.

Regarding the election, Qually said, "The result of the election is still sinking in. There was a great weight lifted inasmuch as many people worked on my campaign and I'm glad to have not let them down."

The first item Qually listed on his priority list upon assuming office was economic development which, he stated, "is the key to bringing in new tax base and jobs, so that we can keep current taxes stable, and more Adams county residents working here."

The three seats are four-year positions, with the "changing of the guard" representing the first time in 50 years that county voters have elected a completely new board of commissioners. The three newly-elected board members will be seated on January 2.

Other county seats in which Republicans were re-elected or newly-elected included judge of Superior Court, judge of the Commonwealth Court, prothonotary, register and recorder, district attorney, coroner, controller. The two magisterial judgeships were won by cross-filers.

Harney VFW honors Veterans

More than 100 individuals attending the Harney Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) observance were greeted by near-perfect Fall weather as members of the military past and present were honored for their services.

Veterans representing virtually every military engagement since World War II were represented among those attending the November 12 ceremonies.

Also attending were representatives of the Patriot Guard and Rolling Thunder, two organizations who work with families of fallen veterans, as well as wounded warriors and their families. The Patriot Guard Riders of Maryland are a chapter of the national organization who shield families of fallen soldiers from protesters while one of the primary objectives of Rolling Thunder "is to publicize the POW-MIA issue."

Harney VFW Post 6918-07 Commander Albert Angell said, "The more we support our service-

men, the better off we're going to be. We honor our departed comrades as well as anyone (currently) in the services."

Ladies' Auxiliary President Marie Wolfe stated, "Today is a day of reflection....(and when) we remember the men and women whose fate has not been determined (those who remain missing in action)."

"More than 83,000 Americans are missing from World War II, the Korean War, the Cold War, the Vietnam War and the 1991 Gulf War," according to the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO).

Men's Auxiliary President Douglas Gross said, "Each of our veterans give up a part of their lives or has given up their lives to protect and defend our country from communism and fascism. We owe a debt to our veterans that can never be paid."

Len Fromel, commander of the Carlisle American Legion, stated, "9-11 served as America's wake-up call. The veterans are our sword against the darkness."



Harney VFW Post 6918-07 Ladies' Auxiliary President Marie Wolfe, Commander Albert Angell, and Men's Auxiliary President Douglas Gross lay wreaths at the VFW memorial November 12 during the Post's Veterans Day ceremonies.

Following the indoor ceremonies, Angell, Wolfe, and Gross placed wreaths on the VFW's veterans' memorial with the accompaniment of a 21-gun salute provided by the post's honor guard.

A array of U.S. military armament and equipment was displayed during the event courtesy of the 82nd Airborne Division (also known as the 325th Glider Infantry Regiment during World War II).

Fitzgerald's has radio-controlled vehicles

Whether a hobbyist is looking for a radio-controlled helicopter with a built-in camera or a youngster seeking an inexpensive power board, Emmitsburg has a shop that has it all, or can at least get it.

Fitzgerald's Auto & Cycle, located at 17037 North Seton Avenue, owned by Pete Fitzgerald, recently added the line of models to the company's already-established vehicle and equipment repair and restoration business.

Interest in offering radio-controlled vehicles came about as a result of Fitzgerald's interest in owning and operating his own models.

"I personally got into them around five years ago," Fitzgerald said, noting that he has been involved in radio-controlled models professionally for about six months.

The radio-controlled enthusiast said, when he began acquiring the models, "I started joining different clubs and paying for different memberships."

Today, his shop offers "tons and tons" of helicopters, airplanes, vehicles and boats, with prices ranging from

"toys" prices at \$9.99 to "hobby class" models topping out at \$269.99.

"We stock about 100 items and everything else is just a phone call and three days away," Fitzgerald stated. Although not in the store, he can order radio-controlled models running as much as \$1,300 for the ultra-serious hobbyist.

As far as what is immediately available for over-the-counter sales, Fitzgerald said, "One of our most popular and the coolest models we have right now are these two and a half foot, twin engine helicopters" featuring space age, plastic Kevlar blades, gyroscopes, and digital navigational.

Except for size AA batteries, the set comes with everything necessary to fly it, including the lithium battery and a charger. The model costs \$129.95.

Fitzgerald's Auto & Cycle has been in business since 1999. Fitzgerald said, in addition to maintaining the repair and restoration shop, and expanding the offering of radio-controlled models, he is also planning on expanding into other areas as time moves on.

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December 1

Rocky Ridge Telephone Company

Mr. Charles Hiteshow, agent for the Chesapeake & Potomac Telephone Company, the latter part of last week formed the Frederick and Rocky Ridge Telephone Company, which has for its purpose the extension of the line of the company he represents to six subscribers in the vicinity of Rocky Ridge who at present do not have phone connections. It is expected that the company will be able to install the service by the first of the year.

Waynesboro Horse Dies On Road

Early Sunday morning Mr. John O'Connor, who lives on a mountain road between Emmitsburg at Mount St. Mary's found a horse in the road in front of his house. He noticed the animal was sick and started to lead it to the stable from which he had come, but he had gone only a short distance when the horse fell over and died. The horse was a property of the Waynesboro livery and have been driven to Emmitsburg on Saturday.

Complaints of Neighbors

Offense seems to be taken when I set at my window with my eyes on the outside. I wish these kind neighbors who object to this luxurious privilege, to know that what I wish to see if that is a snowdrop I see, or drop of rain, or a thousand other things-it is no neighbor's d--- business. Nor is it my business to know, or care to know what is going on there. These windows are to look out, as well as to let in blessed sunshine and light. So far as looking out a window goes, our eyes are not prisoners. Signed: Very Disgusting

Death of George Ovelman

Mr. Ovelman, 73, was born near Emmitsburg and for many years conduct of the farm just south of Motter's Station. In 1883 he moved to town and for two years had charge of the warehouse at the railroad station. He built the house now owned by Eugene Rowe, Esq. His business ventures having proved unsuccessful, he went west and was among the first party of white men to cross the border when the Oklahoma Territory was thrown open to

settlers. The better part of his life since then was spent in the West until the past three years, when he went to make his home with his daughter in Birmingham Alabama.

December 8

Death of George Gillelan

After lingering illness Mr. George Gillelan died at his home on W. Main St. on Monday morning, at the age of 69 years. At the age of 19 enlisted and Cole's Cavalry and serve through the Civil War until September 1864. After the war he was engaged in farming until he was appointed to the Internal Revenue Service. He also served on the Board of Charities and Corrections in this county. He then retired from active business life and took up his residence in town where he lived until his death.

December 15

Rapid Growth of Telephone Service

Mr. R. W. Stake, the general and efficient local manager of the Frederick office of the Chesapeake and Potomac telephone company, said that a great deal of interest is being manifested in telephone connections throughout the Emmitsburg district, and he thinks that the people will admit that the C&P company is meeting them more than halfway in their demands for such service. For instant, the rate to Gettysburg was formally almost prohibitive whereas now the toll is only \$.10 a minute. This ought to have a tendency to increase the use of the telephone between these important centers.

Fifteen contracts have been entered into with the Emmitsburg Pioneer Company, who has lines running into Liberty Township and the Hampton Valley Company which will allow these mutual companies to access to the C&P network for five dollars a year. Applications have been received for connections with Harney, Four Points and Harbaugh's Valley, and these lines will be run this winter. This will give Emmitsburg unusually good telephone connections with many outlying towns.

A franchise will be given the Lib-



At the time of the December 29th, 1911 robbery, the Emmitsburg Post Office was located adjacent to what is now the Ott House Inn.

erty Independent Telephone Company to erect poles and string wires within the town limits. This action will be taken at the next meeting of the town commissioners.

December 22

More Telephone News

There'll be a telephone meeting at Mr. Joseph Felix's store in Fairplay, next Wednesday to discuss a line between Emmitsburg and Fairplay; and on the same day a meeting will be held at Mr. Rowe Ohler's on the Harney Road, for the line between Emmitsburg and Harney. At these meetings arrangements will be made for the respective lines, both of which will be built in the very near future. The Emmitsburg Pioneer telephone company, voted in two new subscribers this weekend, Messrs J. W. Winegardner and Charles Ecker.

Rocky Ridge Church Rededicated

Last Sunday morning the Mt. Tabor Church of the reformed and Lutheran congregations at Rocky Ridge was rededicated with an impressive ceremony.

The church has recently undergone extensive improvements. A handsome metal picket fence has been completed around the ceme-

tery, with three driveways and three gateways. Messrs James Kerrigan and Son, of Emmitsburg, have finished frescoing and painting the interior of the church. Their work is much admired by all who have seen it and it speaks well for the artisans. An all-wool carpet will cover the entire flooring, new shades will replace the old ones, and a new large 14 light chandelier has been ordered. The cost of the recent improvements amounted to \$874, while the amount subscribed was \$975, leaving a surplus of almost \$100, which will be used toward the purchase of modern pews.

December 29

Post Office Robbed

Early yesterday morning, presumably between two and three o'clock, a robbery was committed at the local post office. Cracksmen entered the building and having blown the safe made away with everything they wanted. The burglary was not discovered until Mr. John Horner, the postmaster, open the office at the usual hour. Mr. Horner saw the door of the safe was blown off and upon investigation discovered all the money, stamps, registered mail and private papers have been taken. The plunder was thrown into a mail sack and carried off. Six hundred

one-cent stamps an equal number of twos were found lying on the floor, and a number of stamp books were left undisturbed in the safe.

The following items were taken: stamps, \$946; stamp cash, \$233; money order cash, \$71; private funds, \$17; Red Cross Seal funds, \$5; box rents, \$4. Total amount stole: \$1,296.

That the robbers were professionals is evident from the cleverness with which they went about their work. They entered the room by the front door and the bright glare of the gasoline light above the fountain. They forced the door with a crowbar. Nitroglycerin was used to dislodge the door the safe.

Several persons living in the vicinity the post office remember hearing of dull report between two and three o'clock, but no one thought to investigate, assuming that it was but the discharge of a revolver by some holiday revelers.

Christmas Festivities

Observing the usual custom a company of about 10 ladies and gentlemen sang Christmas carols on the street of Emmitsburg at midnight on Christmas Eve. On Tuesday night, the principal social event of the Christmas season was a most attractive dance held at the Emerald Hall.



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GOVERNMENT—SOUTH OF THE MASON-DIXON LINE

From the Desk of Town Council President Chris Staiger

I hope everyone has had a safe and happy Thanksgiving Holiday! The Christmas Season is now upon us! The town Christmas tree and tree lighting ceremony will now be on the square next to PNC Bank. Please join us on Monday, December 5 at 6pm when we light the tree, do some caroling, and continue our traditional holiday activities just down South Seton Avenue at the Carriage House Inn. I hope to see you there – Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Town business in November focused on two main areas: 1) recommendations to county government as they begin their review of development related zoning changes made by the previous County Board of Commissioners, and, 2) how the town will meet the increased revenue requirements of the new wastewater treatment plant required by updates to federal and state legislation. These are both important issues - defining our relationship with county government and conducting our single biggest business activity as a water and sewer system provider.

Two officials from the county's Planning Office attended the mid-month town meeting to discuss the overall county zoning review effort as well as specifics concerning applications in (or adjacent to) the 'Emmitsburg Growth Area.' This area represents the town's current expectations of our potential growth and development over the next twenty years – both within and beyond our current borders. As part of the town's 2009 Comprehensive Plan, we dramatically reduced this growth area from the previous 1996 plan. That being said, there are still significant parcels adjacent to the current town boundaries which could yield commercial or residential development.

The previous County Board of Commissioners established agricultural zoning on many of these neighboring properties (as well as on similar properties all throughout the county). The current County Board of Commissioners promised to review requests to reverse many of the previous board's actions. As part of the process, the county has asked for input from the municipalities. We

have made a number of recommendations.

First, we have asked that the county adjust their growth boundary for the town to match our growth boundary. Second, we have asked that the county maintain the current zoning. Agricultural zoning will limit the opportunity for unplanned growth UNLESS there is annexation of the property into the town. Lastly, we have asked that the county adjust their "land use designations" to match the town's land use designations. In our Comprehensive Plan, the town has already designated what land outside of town we feel is suitable for various types of growth. If the county designations match the town's designations this should allow for growth opportunities through municipal annexation – instead of promoting a patchwork of haphazard development outside of town demanding our resources while not paying to provide them.

The other major initiative in November involved revising future sewer collection rates. This charge is billed based on the volume of water

you use. You are charged one set of rates to deliver the water and a second set of rates to take it away. In the past, these rates have been the same. A substantial increase is now required in the set of rates charged to take water away through the sewer system - primarily related to the construction of a new wastewater treatment plant.

Town staff and the elected officials have made substantial progress defining the requirements and developing an implementation plan. First, there are increased costs related to financing the project. The town has taken a \$5.5 million loan to finance our portion of the project costs. (The remaining \$14.5 million is covered by grants.) We have been paying financing costs on this borrowed money since the loan was issued. Next, there will be increased costs to operate the new plant. Instead of the largely passive lagoon system, a more active treatment process requiring increased power consumption and chemical treatment is necessary to meet new environmental standards. These costs will not

start until the new plant comes on line in early 2014.

Finally, we have already been collecting less money than required to meet our 'sewer system depreciation costs.' We are not currently collecting sufficient additional funds to cover costs associated with replacing our existing sewer infrastructure - when that time eventually comes. This specific situation has worsened due to millions of dollars spent replacing sewer lines throughout town over the last ten years - as well as the upcoming new plant itself. More money is supposed to be set aside to replace new, high dollar infrastructure than the old, dilapidated infrastructure.

Costs are now being calculated and finalized. Implementation will be based on when we realize the costs. Some fee increase can be expected early next year to cover current costs while additional fees will wait until the new plant actually comes on line. As always, I encourage your participation and feedback to your elected officials! Sincerely, Chris Staiger

From the Desk of Emmitsburg Mayor Don Briggs

Writing on this Thanksgiving eve, I have much to be thankful for and so many people to be thankful to. Here are but a few.

- To Dave and Stephanie Weigelt for again putting together the third annual Emmitsburg Wattle Waddle run on Thanksgiving Day morning. Beginning in the town park behind the community center. The choice is yours for either a scenic 5-mile run at 8 am or a 1-mile walk at 9:30. All proceeds going to the benefit Hope Alive.
- To Bob Rosensteel for again putting out and maintaining the

food bank "Change for Food" collection boxes in town.

- To the town office and field staff for all they did this year dealing with record snow and water issues (and putting up the tree on the Square!).
- To all the churches, the Daughters of Charity and the food bank for what they give back to the community in these economically challenging times.
- To Vigilante Hose, the Ambulance Company and the Sheriff's Department for the protection and peace of mind they provide.

- To Mount St. Mary's for its support and the gift to the town that will go immediately to the Square for furnishings.
- To our friends at FEMA and the Fire Academy for what they bring to our lives here in the town.

I know Mark Twain once mused that it was a shame that youth was wasted on the young, but not in Emmitsburg. Not on our watch. Over 200 youth are now using the community center gym for a variety of winter sports and off season training. Thank you David McCarthy, Tim O'Donnell and others for your persistence and to

Jeff Little for again "gluing" together the baseball seasons every year. More other season sports activity is coming our way.

Mark your calendar:

One Dec 5th, at 6 pm, the tradition of a Christmas tree lighting on the Square will return this year. Parking spaces in front of the bank and old hotel will be blocked off to accommodate the celebration. Parking will be available in the vacant lot one block south of square. Official lighting will be accompanied this year the Mother Seton choir and the Incarnation

United Church of Christ, than it's down to the Carriage House to greet Santa, hay rides, free cider, hotdogs and entertainment

On Dec 13th 10am A Welcome Center task force will be set in motion at the town office 10 am headed by Tourism Council board member Bob Black. The purpose of this Task Force will be to facilitate the re-opening of the Welcome Center

Lastly, please join us at the town office on Dec. 28th, from 1 to 4 pm, for Holiday Cheer. All town residents and those employed here are welcomed.

Makin' your list, & checkin' it twice!



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There will be no tree lighting ceremony, but dine & watch Cozy come to light & visit with Santa from 6pm-7:30pm

We've got Christmas for all ages!

Short on time? Don't forget Cozy holiday foods to go!

GOVERNMENT—SOUTH OF THE MASON-DIXON LINE

From the Desk of County Commissioner Blaine Young

It never ceases to amaze me how supporters of people with tired ideas in Frederick County cling to old stereotypes and campaign slogans long after an election and most of us have moved on.

I am speaking of the people who continue to blame property owners and real estate developers for every problem in society, even though that strategy backfired and they got swamped in the last election.

The most recent issue that brings all this to light is the action by the Board of County Commissioners last week to reduce the construction excise tax from 75¢ per square foot to zero. You will note that it was reduced to zero; it was not eliminated. In the event it is ever proven that it would be wise public policy to reinstate the tax, the framework is there and all the county commissioners would have to do is hold a public hearing on the new tax rate.

Of course, what we hear coming from the same apparently very bored people is that this is a "handout" to developers, or a payback to certain "friends" of

the commissioners elected last year.

When neighboring counties cut construction-related taxes or fees (like Montgomery and Washington counties have recently done), it is hailed in the media as a tough but necessary choice to spur the economy during dark economic times. While seven other counties and Baltimore City have no construction-related excise taxes or fees whatsoever, we do not see the integrity of their leaders called into question for doing favors for their so-called "friends."

In these other jurisdictions public policy debates on the appropriate amount of money a government should extract from those trying to create jobs is treated as just that: A policy debate. In Frederick County, in certain circles, it is treated as an opportunity for those whose ideas have been soundly rejected by the voters to continue to demonize certain segments of our economy and society, for their own personal gain and ego gratification.

I think some facts about the excise tax should be brought forward.

First, the excise tax can only be used for the expansion of new transportation infrastructure. It cannot be used for fixing potholes, repaving or other basic and ongoing road maintenance and repairs.

When the excise tax was first implemented in Frederick County in February 2002, the economy was thriving and it was thought to be a new source of revenue to speed up much needed expansion of road infrastructure. Since then, though, the State of Maryland has raided the Transportation Trust Fund to the tune of almost a billion dollars, and is now considering raising the gas tax by another 15¢ per gallon during the upcoming legislative session.

Rather than make the tough choices to cut government spending, the governor and the legislature stole money from the Transportation Trust Fund, which we paid into it through the current gas tax, and which we had been told would be set aside for transportation projects. We were lied to, and it looks like all we are going to get from our leaders in An-

napolis is more lies and another 15¢ per gallon on gasoline.

The truth of the matter is that right now we should be doing everything we can to get some economic development. Although the old, worn-out, no-growth crowd doesn't want to hear it; economic development means once in a while building something new on a piece of land.

We are on pace in Frederick County for another near record low number of building permits for 2011. The once thriving office and warehouse construction industry in this county is essentially on hold, with the only new significant projects on the drawing board seeming to be government projects.

And for those who think that the excise tax only hit the "fat cat" developers and builders, here's what actually brought this issue to the forefront, at least in my mind.

Earlier this year the owner of the Walkersville Feed Store on Pennsylvania Avenue in Walkersville applied for a permit to put up a pole barn to add some storage capacity and some extra space

for his business. Frederick County required him to write a check for \$4,500 for the privilege of taking out this permit to build this pole barn for the storage of animal feed. This pole barn did not add one more vehicle to the streets, and I certainly haven't heard about any traffic jams in Walkersville because of this new pole barn. Does anyone think it was fair to ask a struggling small businessman to pay \$4,500 in excise tax to erect a pole barn? I certainly do not. Or, how about the \$74,000 thousand dollars in excise tax that St. John's Catholic Prep was charged. Since they have not received their permit it will be refunded to help a private school that reduces the burden on the Frederick County Public School system.

The commissioners decided to take a modest step in an attempt to spur some construction and thereby some economic growth. We don't need any more taxes, as our legislature is about to jam down our throats. We need a few more taxpayers. Tax and spend liberals do never seem to understand this.

From the Desk of County Commissioner David Gray

Slow down - listen

As children we were often instructed by parents, teachers, and others to slow down and listen. Those who had experience knew this was the way to avoid many of life's pitfalls.

These lessons of slowing down and listening are valid at any stage of our life and in any family or community.

The Board of County Commissioners is no exception. To be effective and mature they must SLOW DOWN AND LISTEN.

The following actions have already occurred under this new inexperienced board in its first year with little or no notification, little or no public input, little or no discussion and little or no real interest of the impact on people and their lives.

Short term cost savings for a select few with long-term cost shifted to the taxpayer:

- School Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance weakened dramatically by Mitigation

Fee text amendment. This was passed despite unanimous opposition by BOE, allowing developers to continue to build homes when schools are up to 120 % overcrowded and eventually could overcrowd up to 140 %.

- Future cost of needed new schools eventually shifted to future taxpayers through additional property and income taxes
- Permitting and application fees reduced without significant public input. Development costs shifted to taxpayers.

- Allowing developers to self-inspect their work rather than use county inspectors. Overlooked flaws could surface years later.

- County Forest Resource ordinance reduced to absolute minimum levels. Less tree cover required.

- Road Adequate Public Facilities ordinance amended to reduce developer contribution to road impacts of the development. More traffic congestion. Less revenue. Cost shifted to taxpayers. More pressure on taxes.

- Building excise taxes reduced to zero for new development eliminating \$1 million from revenue. \$1 million more for taxpayers to pay with their property and income taxes.

- Negative or unknown results due to lack of in-depth study:
- Major reorganization of county departments. Virtually no public discussion.

- Head Start defunded by 50% with 2 days' notice. Over 60 instructors fired and children's classes stopped in mid-year. Not necessary to balance budget. County had \$13 million surplus for fiscal 2012.

- Privatization report received. Over 500 people testify in opposition. Report supposedly "tabled". Privatization continues behind the scenes with no intention to "table".

The county is losing its talented people in droves – approximately 300 so far – twice the usual turnover. Employees fear unpredictable firings – productivity and morale at lowest level ever.

If this board doesn't begin slowing down and listening, there will be even more negative consequences. The credibility of this board has already deteriorated dramatically and will get only worse if the BOCC majority continues doing business as they have this past year.

The board of County Commissioners is meant to serve as an instrument of its people, not the reverse.



Merry Christmas
from Dave, Jane, Jeremiah, Jerrica, & the staff!



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GOVERNMENT—NORTH OF THE MASON-DIXON LINE

From the Desk of Commissioner Glenn Snyder

It was a pleasure and honor to serve the residents of Adams County for 34 years as a township official and the past 8 years as your Adams County Commissioner. You may ask why would you want to do this job? Well, I wanted to serve my community and most of all do my part to preserve and protect Adams County for future generations.

When I look back 30 years, many changes occurred. The township supervisor's main function was to maintain the road systems, but as development occurred and the rural areas became more urban there was a need for regulations to address the development pressure.

The local officials had to develop land development and zoning ordinances and municipal official's duties have become very complex today.

Now, lets talk about the role of a County Commissioner. Well, what have they accomplished over the past 8 years. In 2004 the county just completed two building projects, a new prison and Emergency Services Center, and with any new construction project challenges had to be dealt with, Capital Reserves and operating fund balances were depleted.

With the over-all financial conditional of the county deteriorating and bond rating down-grad-

ed that became the priority issue. This board of commissioners was successful in improving the financial condition of the county.

In 2005 the county borrowed \$7 million until the real estate taxes were received and each year thereafter that amount was decrease until 2011 when there was no need to borrow money for operating expenses. The county will end this year with over a \$2 million operating surplus and a \$ 5 million capital reserve.

Moody's Investors Service recently upgraded Adams County's bond rating from Abb to A1 rating and removed the negative outlook that had been assigned over the last few years to the county's

finances. This board of commissioners tackled many unfinished projects, the Gettysburg North Trail and the Belmont Bridge. The trail as been completed and the Belmont Bridge will be going out for bid by the year's end. Both projects have been ongoing since the early to mid-90's.

The unpopular task of a re-assessment was completed. The last re-assessment was in 1990. The operation and sale of the county nursing home was transferred to a private vendor. There is continuing evaluation of operations to become more efficient, including the purchase of adjoining properties for future expansion and to reduce rent obligations.

The next board of commissioners will continue to deal with some of the same issues plus new projects like the upgrade of the county communication system.

This board had many accomplishments. It has been a pleasure to serve the resident of Adams County with fellow commissioners George Weikert and Lisa Moreno-Woodward.

I would like to congratulate the new board and would hope the residents of Adams County continue to support them in the future.

Again thanks to all for giving me the opportunity to serve as your County Commissioner.

From the Desk of Carroll Valley Mayor Ron Harris

On Tuesday, November 15th, the Borough Council met and approved the advertisement of the proposed 2012 Budget. This action made the proposed 2012 Budget available for residents review prior to its final adoption at the December 13th meeting. The 2012 Budget is the end-product of a four step review process over a three month period. The first review is performed by the Borough Manager when analyzing the Borough Department submissions. The second review is performed by the Finance Committee. The third and fourth reviews are performed by the Borough Council during their two Budget Workshops.

At the November meeting, the public is given the opportunity to review the proposed budget. This budget predicts total revenues of \$1,753,807 and an expenditure of \$1,745,846 leaving a balance of

\$7,961 in the black. The tentative budget is based on a millage rate of 2.45 mills that is 24.5 cents on each one hundred dollars of assessed valuation. The current 2011 millage rate is 1.7436 mills. A paper copy of the preliminary budget can be reviewed at the Borough office. I have been told that an online version will be available by going to the Carroll Valley Borough website at www.carrollvalley.org.

It was been over a year since I attended the funeral for Pennsylvania Wildlife Conservation Officer David Grove. He was killed on November 11, 2010 in the line of duty while investigating a poaching incident in Freedom Township. It reminded me that all those who serve us in uniform do so at the risk of their own life. They belong to a brotherhood that shares the ideals of professionalism, honor and pride. I want to thank all those in uniform

who serve us here and overseas.

On November 10, 2011, the Pennsylvania Game Commission announced that a scholarship fund has been created in the name of Officer Grove to benefit future wildlife management leaders. The scholarship is being administered by the Conservation Officers of Pennsylvania Association and the Fraternal Order of Police, Conservation Police Officers Lodge #114. To be eligible for the scholarship, an individual must be a full-time undergraduate student who is a junior, and majoring in Wildlife and Fisheries Science in the College of Agricultural Sciences, or to a student with a senior academic standing majoring in Wildlife Technology at Penn State University DuBois campus.

Around this time of year, the question always comes up whether someone can hunt in Carroll Valley. To clarify the rules, Carroll Val-

ley cannot by law change state law regarding hunting; however, current state rules make legal hunting in Carroll Valley difficult. Pennsylvania has what are called "Safety Zones". In a safety zone, it is unlawful to hunt for, shoot at, trap, take, chase or disturb wildlife within 150 yards of any occupied residence, camp, industrial or commercial building, farm house or farm building, or school or playground without the permission of the occupants. It is unlawful to shoot into a safety zone, even if you are outside of the zone. Driving game, even without a firearm or bow, within a safety zone without permission is unlawful. For comparison, think of a safety zone as about one and a half football fields. Hunting on hospital and institutional grounds, and in cemeteries, is also prohibited. It is unlawful to discharge a firearm within 150 yards of a Game Com-

mission vehicle whose occupants are releasing pheasants.

The safety zone for archery hunters statewide, including those using crossbows, is 50 yards. Archery hunters carrying muzzleloaders during any muzzleloader season must abide by the 150-yard safety zone regulation. Around playgrounds, schools, nursery schools or day-care centers, the safety zone remains 150 yards. For further information, refer to www.pgc.state.pa.us. As Carroll Valley has grown over the years, it is more and more difficult to find a location outside these safety zones. Should you think someone is hunting too close to a residence, you can call the Pennsylvania Game Commission's Dispatch Center in Huntingdon at (814) 643-1831 and an officer will check for violations. If you see persons hunting from vehicles or after dark, call County Dispatch at 717-334-8101 or 9-1-1 to get the quickest response."

Borough meetings to be held in December are: Planning Commission (Dec 5th), Public Safety Committee (Dec 12th), Council Borough (Dec 15th), and Parks/ Recreation (Dec 28th). The Borough Office will be closed December 23rd and Dec 26th. The Carroll Valley Citizens Association (CVCA) is inviting everyone to come to the "Tree Lighting" on Dec 2nd at 6:00 pm at the Carroll Valley Commons. St. Mary's Christmas Bake Sale will be held on Dec 3rd from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm at 256 Tract Road, Fairfield. Be sure to bring the kids to the Fairfield Fire House to attend the CVCA event "Breakfast with Santa" on December 10th from 8:00 am to 11:00 am. I believe Santa is scheduled to arrive at 9:00 am.

Please reduce your speed and make sure you, your loved ones, your friends and neighbors will be able to enjoy the holiday season. If you have any questions call me at (301) 606-2021 or email me at mayor@carrollvalley.org. Happy New Year!



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DECEMBER ENTERTAINMENT

<p>Dec. 2 - DJ</p> <p>Dec. 3 - Love Hate Thing (Rock Band)</p> <p>Dec. 9 - DJ</p> <p>Dec. 10 - Sevin (Modern Rock)</p> <p>Dec. 16 - DJ</p> <p>Dec. 17 - Cash Town (Classic Rock)</p> <p>Dec. 30 - DJ</p>	<div style="border: 2px solid black; padding: 10px; transform: rotate(-5deg); font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;"> Dec. 31st NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTY! Live Fireworks & Champagne Toast! </div>
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GOVERNMENT—NORTH OF THE MASON-DIXON LINE

From the Desk of Commissioner George Weikert

As my elected term as your Adams County Commissioner comes to an end, I wish to thank all the residents of Adams County for your support over the past four years. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve you.

I am very pleased with the forward progress the County has achieved. The general fund budget has been balanced the last three years with no tax increase and no interruption to the services which many of our residents need and expect. A county manager is in place,

helping make county government more professional, efficient and business friendly. The County bond rating has improved to an A1 rating with a positive outlook. A capital reserve fund has been established to ensure that 10% of the general fund budget is available for capital projects and or emergency needs.

The nursing home has been transitioned to a private vendor, removing the financial burden of operations from the taxpayer while providing improved skilled nursing health care services to all the residents of Adams County

who have the need. The North Gettysburg Bike and Walking Trail is all but complete and will be open to the public very soon. The Belmont Road Bridge is on track for a spring 2012 start. The County Agriculture Preservation Program has preserved more than 20,000 acres of farmland which will forever be available for future generations to grow food and continue our rural and historic heritage.

The county wide real property reevaluation was completed in 2009 and 2010. Although challenged by a few, the project met the standards of

the International Association of Assessing Officers and has established a new base line for tax assessment in Adams County for many years to come. For those tax payers who saw their values reduced I hope you find justice in the process. For those of us who saw our values increase we need to realize we were not paying our fair share. To those few who challenged the integrity of the project and who placed doubt and additional costs on us all in defense of the majority, "SHAME SHAME" on you.

I leave county government with

mixed emotion. I know I served the vast majority of you very well yet I am saddened by those who misrepresented the facts, who misled you with falsehoods and who tried unsuccessfully to dishonor those who so humbly step forward to serve.

In hindsight, I have enjoyed the challenges and opportunities afforded me as your elected Adams County Commissioner and I shall remain a proud and loyal citizen of your community.

Farewell and Best Regards,
George Weikert

From the Desk of Commissioner Candidate Paul Kellett

The recent election's outcome was not as I had hoped. I could point fingers and offer excuses. I would rather take this opportunity to thank the thousands of folks who voted for me and my friends and family that were there for me throughout. Thank you one and all.

In January, my six-year term as a township supervisor ends and so I will be leaving elected office. It has been my pleasure to serve. The challenges local governments face continues to grow. The ability to meet those challenges is harder because of

the tough economic times we live in. The ability to balance the needs of our society while being restricted (by the state) in the manner in which we are to tax presents a huge problem. In many ways I feel relieved not to be tasked with answering these questions. I sincerely wish those who have accepted this responsibility both luck and wisdom.

Six years ago, I ran for office because I was concerned about a proposed huge development and how it would provide water to its future residents. I naively felt at that time the other issues

facing the township were easy to solve and would require little to no effort. As it turned out, the reality of the real estate market dealt with the development, and the reality of needing to do the job I agreed to do made "everything else" a huge responsibility. I have learned a lot in the past six years- about zoning, land use, tax assessment, fire and police protection, water - the list goes on. Certainly a bright spot for me was the recent election results in Freedom Township, the folks who I have had the privilege of serving gave me more votes than any other candidate. For that, I am thankful and proud.

As I leave public office, I wish to say that my

involvement will continue. I will continue to be involved in water issues in Adams County as well as issues involving our youth. I have been deeply involved in the Southwest Joint Comprehensive Plan, and if the Freedom Supervisors see fit, I will continue on.

The comment has been made to me that the recent county commissioner election had more debates, forums and discussed more issues than previous similar elections. If this is true, and if I in any way was responsible for this, then I am very proud. A democracy flourishes when issues and ideas dominate over slogans. I hope that this is the start of a trend and that honest and open discussions of the problems

facing us becomes the norm. I will continue to advocate for these discussions, as my title of "citizen" not only allows me to do so, but to live up to that title requires me to do so. Thanks!

The road to Adams County Commissioner involved much campaign activity, including the opportunity to have my position articles published in the Emmitsburg News Journal. Thank you, Mike Hillman, for making that possible.

To the voters of Adams County, it was a great honor and humbling to have received your support of trust in electing me to the Board of Commissioners. Also, a well-deserved thank you must go to my campaign workers, whose unselfish efforts were the key to success. Thank you everyone.

Jim Martin
Commissioner Elect

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COMMENTARY

Words from Winterbilt

Common sense or nonsense

Shannon Bohrer

Some of you may remember that I was writing a book entitled, *The Habits of Unsuccessful People*, a book about people who have risen beyond their abilities. If you recall, and I feel confident that many of you will, one chapter in the book was titled, "I would do that for half the money." The idea being that many high paying positions are filled with incompetent people. It's not that they fail; we are all capable of failing and at a minimum making mistakes. However, when some people fail they are rewarded and are often promoted and sometimes - they receive bonuses. If one thinks real hard, some long term politicians and investment bankers could fit this description.

I was recently reminded of my book (which is not completed yet) while watching television, a professional sports person was being interviewed about his performance. This individual who shall remain nameless, (he was previously arrested for dog fighting) was complaining that he was being hit more than others in his position. Now this individual makes millions of dollars, his performance was bad and he is complaining about being hit. I turned to my lovely wife and said I could do his job for half the money and I would not complain. For just

half of what this individual earns I could lose games, take the hits and not complain. Of course I would want a lot of pads, as many as I could wear. The individual's remarks were widely repeated in the sports news and none of the experts stated the obvious; that maybe the people hitting him like dogs. It annoys me a little when an individual who has been blessed with physical skills and makes millions of dollars - complains. If, and that's a big if, he had any common sense, he would be quiet, smile a lot and keep depositing his pay checks before he loses his skills, or gets arrested again.

In many ways his behavior, along with others, defies common sense. We all understand common sense; it is something we all believe in and we know what it is - well maybe and maybe not. When Thomas Paine wrote his famous book *Common Sense* in 1776, the book greatly helped the American cause for revolution. Paine made very good arguments about men, freedom, governments and why Kings were not good rulers. He said something about the King was just a descendant of a thug that beat up the previous king. Also, why would the King's children, who were sometimes not all there, automatically be the next in succession? Until the book came out, the support for independence was a little tep-

id. His book changed the national mood in the direction of fighting for independence and also encouraged the Declaration of Independence. Of course if we had lost the war, common sense today could have a meaning of treason, instead of common sense - if that makes sense.

Maybe we could use another Thomas Paine to remind us what common sense is. Sometimes what we see and hear we take for granted, even though it does not make sense. A good example of this is how we treat communist countries, at least from my perspective. When I was growing up, China was a communist country and the communists were our enemy. Of course China is still a communist country, but today they are our largest trading partner and they must be our friend since they loan us money. Why? I don't know. Cuba is a communist county and we don't trade with them, why? Cuba is close, only 90 miles, but they are so small I don't think they could be a threat to us. We even have a military base on Cuba so if they do become a threat we don't have far to go to fight. I wonder if China would allow us to build a military base in China. Since Cuba is so close and so poor, maybe we could do better having the Chinese products manufactured in Cuba. The labor would be cheap, just like China, but the freight cost would be extremely low. Another benefit is

that if Cuba sold us tainted dog food, lead painted toys, dry wall that degrades, along with other inferior products - because of their physical location they would be much closer to investigate. It does not make sense that we do not trade with Cuba - while trading with China.

Another thing, and this is a big one, that does not make sense is our gross domestic product, or GDP. Every day GDP is in the news and we are told that the higher the GDP the better the economy, at least that's what they tell us. It has been widely reported that 70 percent of GDP is consumer spending. I thought that strange so I looked up GDP on the internet and found a formula for it. The formula is $GDP = C + G + I + NX$, which is just what I thought. C is all consumer spending, G is all government spending, I is business spending on capital and NX is total export, minus total imports. The first three groups are spending: private consumer, government and business investment. In law enforcement we called that a clue, do you see a pattern? The last group is NX, total exports minus imports, which is why we always have a trade deficit (meaning we import more than we export).

Personal consumption, which is consumer spending, is not 70 percent as is often reported, it's only two thirds; or 66 percent. That makes me feel better. I guess that products we make are counted in

the spending, which also includes all of the products made someplace else. What is missing is what we save, what we don't spend and how we balance our money earned to how much we spend. Think of it like this; when you purchase something from Mart (Mart being an acronym for large stores that purchase products from other countries and then sell them here), the sales numbers add to our GDP. So if you purchase stuff made someplace else, you're helping our GDP - does that make sense?

According to the experts, GDP is supposed to measure the economic health of our economy, but from my perspective it only measures what we spend - along with our exports minus our imports. If that is logical then we should all go out and spend money. If we don't have any money we should borrow so we can spend - and our government should also borrow and spend. If we all do this then our GDP will go up and we will end the recession - right! Oh, of course that's why we are in a recession - we spent more than we made.

As Will Rogers once said: Don't Gamble; take all your savings and buy some good stock and hold it till it goes up, then sell it. If it don't go up, don't buy it." From my perspective one could make a good argument that Will Rogers makes more sense than GDP being a measure of our economy...

Next month is part 2 of Common Sense and Nonsense.

To read past Words from Winterbilt, visit the Authors section of Emmitsburg.net.

View from the Track

Kip Hamilton

Reminder: If you have any children who would like to have Breakfast with Santa, he will be at the Fairfield Fire Hall starting at 8 AM, Saturday, Dec 10th. Please come by for a hot, home-cooked breakfast and a chance for the young ones to chat with Santa about their all-important wish lists!

Moving on... Is it the job of the federal government to remove all risk from the lives of its citizens?

I think there are many who would say this is true. The government has plenty of money and lots of smart people and it says somewhere that they are responsible for the general welfare of the people, right?

It seems like over the years, the vast numbers of health and safety regulations imposed by our central government have been meant to remove all risk from our lives. This being patently impossible, the rules have succeeded instead in removing all sense of personal responsibility from both adults and children. This is especially dangerous in our schools where the foundations of the young lives are laid. Lives run 100% according to a rulebook have no room for personal decisions. This quashes independence of spir-

it, curiosity, grit, independence of thought: precisely those qualities which proper schooling should promote

This sheep-like attitude is so pervasive now that it has seeped into every corner of our society. One need look no farther than the city of New Orleans in the days surrounding the landfall of hurricane Katrina. We heard on the weather forecasts for a full five days prior to the strike of the storm that it was going to be a direct hit on New Orleans and that it was going to be an epic storm, capable of horrific damage.

Yet, what did a great percentage of the population do? Nothing. That is, nothing on their own. They dutifully did what they were told and descended by the thousands to the stadium to be inadequately, incompetently and unsafely warehoused for the duration. They had been so conditioned by the powers that controlled them that they completely abdicated their personal responsibility for their own individual survival and that of their loved ones. They waited, tragically in many cases, for someone else to tell them what to do. They traded their individual liberty for the false promise that "someone" would protect them from the risks the historic

storm posed.

We should bear in mind that we are all at risk all the time, whatever we do, even if we stay at home. As the sovereign individuals that our forefathers intended, we are free to accept risks when we consider that by doing so, something worthwhile is achieved. We go rock-climbing or sailing or smoke because we consider the pleasure worth the risk. We take jobs as airline pilots or soldiers, or become missionaries in faraway places, because we consider the pay, or the interest of the job, or the benefit it brings others, makes the risk worthwhile.

By accepting the risks, we enable ourselves and others to lead a fuller life. But, the other side of that coin is along with the accepting of the risks comes the weight of having to also accept the responsibility for the decision. If it goes well, you benefit. If not, it's your fault. You learn from your mistake and try to not to do it again.

It is for this very reason that it is imperative that the government should not interfere with the risk-taking that businesses must do to be successful. If a business is based on a mediocre model, it must be allowed to fail. If a business is successful, then those who had the vi-

sion and took the risks should be rewarded. If for no other reason so that others with similar visions will have the confidence and inspiration to also risk everything for their dream. Every great advancement in our history was the result of an uncertainty that was evaluated and overcome. Risk is not inherently a bad thing. It makes us learn what we do not know; to see beyond what we can see. Overcoming risk is the very essence of being free.

In a letter from the Pennsylvania General Assembly to the Governor of Pennsylvania dated November 11, 1755, the assemblymen conveyed exactly this thought, "Those who would give up Essential Liberty to purchase a little Temporary Safety, deserve neither Liberty nor Safety." Ben Franklin was known to repeat this concept, as well.

Our country's founders had fought and struggled so single-mindedly to be free from the oppression of the British monarch that they appreciated how precious and fragile their new-found liberty was. They had fought for their freedom and realized that they might have to again at some point to retain it.

The patriot Samuel Adams (prior to lending his name to the brewery) wisely cautioned us,

"In a state of tranquility,

wealth, and luxury, our descendants would forget the arts of war and the noble activity and zeal which made their ancestors invincible. Every art of corruption would be employed to loosen the bond of union which renders our resistance formidable. When the spirit of liberty, which now animates our hearts and gives success to our arms, is extinct, our numbers will accelerate our ruin and render us easier victims to tyranny."

How insightful was this? Over 200 years ago, the inspired Mr. Adams envisioned what we are struggling with today. He realized that there might come a time when corrupt and deceitful tactics would be used to pit one citizen against another in an attempt to destroy the union which makes us so strong and that is was the "spirit of liberty" alive and vibrant in the hearts of its patriots which would keep us from tyranny.

We must always be ready to boldly follow Sam Adams' counsel and not be afraid to take whatever risks are necessary to defend and preserve our liberty.

To read past editions of View from the Track visit the Authors section of Emmitsburg.net.

Pure Onsense

China and foreign aid

Scott Zuke

As of the end of November there have been a dizzying eleven GOP debates. Taken together, they form a nice pool of empirical data to show that our political debate format is poorly suited to convey thoughtful, nuanced arguments (not that we haven't known this for a long time). It is a medium suited best to soundbites, entertaining gaffes, and occasional heated exchanges over important policy disagreements. And while we can't fault candidates for oversimplifying their platforms when limited to 30 second rebuttals, it's important that they actually have a platform buried under all of the rehearsed talking points and platitudes.

Two issues that have received particularly unsatisfactory treatment from most of the GOP field so far are foreign aid and China. One-time front-runner, Gov. Rick Perry, drew applause by promising to reduce US foreign aid to zero from the start of his administration, and require recipient countries to reapply for funds by explaining their worthiness. Intended to appeal both to the sense of fiscal responsibility and toughness on the international scene, such a policy would have the opposite impact if ever actually implemented. First of all, countries aren't receiving US aid for no reason. It is always intended to support US objectives, either directly through diplomatic

arrangement, or indirectly through supporting democratic trends and movements in autocratic countries, etc. Second, it's a cost-efficient means for promoting our interests abroad when compared to the alternatives, namely the use of coercive force. Third, we don't even spend that much money on aid, so its impact on the budget is minuscule.

I assume the candidates are well aware of this last point, but also of the fact that the US public has a severely skewed perception of the foreign aid budget. A widely circulated poll by World Public Opinion reported in 2010 that, "Asked to estimate how much of the federal budget goes to foreign aid the median estimate is 25 percent. Asked how much they thought would be an 'appropriate' percentage the median response is 10 percent. In fact just 1 percent of the federal budget goes to foreign aid." That makes aid appear to be a much juicier budget cut than it would be in reality, and it would of course also ignore the damage that would be done to America's influence and reputation overseas.

China is another topic where the candidates have vastly oversimplified or distorted the complexity of US policy. Considering the consistent 1-2% polling of Jon Huntsman, the one candidate with true expertise on the subject, the Republican party doesn't appear to be too interested in con-



fronting China in more than cursory fashion. Perennial front-runner Mitt Romney has pandered to the public's fears of China's rise by promising to "get tough" on its currency manipulation and unfair trade practices. Michelle Bachmann has argued that US borrowing is funding China's military, and most of the candidates have at one time or another voiced dire concerns over China's growing military capability as a threat to American security.

This is by no means a baseless discussion--there are serious security issues in the Pacific that are complicated by China's rise, particularly with regard to US allies in the region that are feeling its shadow over them grow ever larger. And China's economic policies have put an unfair burden on other economies--not just our own, but also those of developing nations that lack the political or economic muscle to pressure China for needed reform. But this is exactly why we need more than posturing and rhetoric from our leaders. The US is no longer strong enough to achieve its objectives strictly through coercive

force. Presidents know this well; candidates either don't, or won't admit to it. I assume the latter, and blame the media and viewing public for rewarding debaters for giving snappy, snarky soundbite responses to vastly complex questions.

Here's something, for example, that we probably won't hear in any of the debates this election cycle: China spends a huge amount of money on foreign aid and development in Africa, and increasingly in South America, and has been doing so quietly for decades. According to the Financial Times, in 2009 and 2010, it lent more money to developing nations than the World Bank. China has profited immensely from its investments, expanding its export markets while taking loan repayments in the form of natural resources (oil and minerals). It has also benefitted politically: its policy of strictly refusing to interfere in recipient countries' internal political affairs, or to attach conditionalities to aid, has earned it popular support from African nations that have become frustrated with the

aid approach of Western donors.

The Chinese approach to aid has not been without its faults. Some infrastructure projects have suffered from shoddy workmanship, and the relationships between Chinese management and the indigenous workforces have not always been smooth, but these issues aren't unknown to the World Bank or the US Agency for International Development. On the other hand, it has found innovative approaches to avoiding some of the best-known pitfalls of Western aid programs, such as the problem of disbursing funds to corrupt governments that pocket the cash before it ever reaches the citizens. Rather than loaning funds directly to governments, China works closely with them to agree to infrastructural development plans, the construction of which are then awarded to Chinese construction firms. The result, while not perfect in some respects, is nevertheless beneficial to both parties, and helps to avoid the most harmful effects of corruption in the development process.

Unfortunately this isn't a discussion that fits nicely into the GOP's talking points or debate format. Congressman Ron Paul has recently used government corruption in developing nations as an argument for eliminating foreign aid expenditure all together. A more nuanced discussion of foreign aid and China policy could help us to avoid such shortsightedness.

To read past editions of *Pure Onsense* visit the Authors section of Emmitsburg.net.

Down Under

Time for deeds, time for celebration

Lindsay Cocker

Christian, n. One who believes that the New Testament is a divinely inspired book admirably suited to the spiritual needs of his neighbours. One who follows the teachings of Christ in so far as they are not inconsistent with a life of sin. (Ambrose Bierce, 'The Devil's dictionary').

If there's any one event in the Christian world that is held above any other it is that of Christmas.

It matters not a bit that the date is incorrect, the manger story is just a story, or that many of the events surrounding the day have been drawn from other cultures and histories. What matters to Christians is that the babe that was born that day means more to them than any other, that the words that have come down to us through many filters and selections hold a message of timeless hope, goodwill and comfort.

Many nations across the

world are called Christian. The schisms and divisions within the kaleidoscope of interpretations and practices that have evolved over two thousand years have not altered the heritage of that birth in Bethlehem. The heritage that has brought us a message of love, of charity, of goodwill, forgiveness and tolerance, of service, humility and morality, and of peace, harmony and joy.

Yet what has come down to us is far more than that - and some of it is decidedly difficult, if not impossible, for us to embrace. But, as I understand things, to be a Christian is to accept the words attributed to Jesus as divine - and if we ignore the words and teachings that don't suit, while embracing those that do, it is at least sacrilegious, and very probably heretical.

So is it possible to parade one's Christianity and ignore things like, 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.'? There are so many laws (and lawyers) because we do not practice this bit

of one of the most revered recitations of all time, The Lord's Prayer.

Can a nation be called Christian if it not only ignores this, but flouts it as a matter of course? Even if this prayer is repeated daily in schools, parliaments and churches? Reciting words does not make beliefs, beliefs do not make rules, and rules do not make the deeds we do.

How about, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself'? (Matt. 22 v 38) Really? How many Christians practice this? Jesus might forgive us our sins, but surely not if his words are flouted. This, strangely, is the nub of the story:

Christians keep Christ's laws, right? Well, no, not really. The teachings that come down to us, ascribed to him and forming the basis of Christianity, have been in fact been selectively excised. Only the bits that suit the current mores are used, the rest quietly hidden away because they are no longer acceptable. To this has been added an enormous number of rules, the so-called 'received wisdom' of the scholars down the ages, with such ideas often being adhered to more rigidly than the reported words of Jesus and his disciples. What has resulted is a

manifesto of bigotry, a self-serving litany of obfuscation, tradition, status quo - and a marvelous paean of praise to human nature.

For that is what religion is truly about: Human nature. Mankind has grown up needing to believe in something, and the idea that this had to be outside ourselves took hold very early in our development. Rocks, animals, birds, stars, the sun, Olympus, ancestors - all these and more have been worshipped reverently and with fierce and bloody loyalty through the ages, only to have them supplanted by other beliefs with better firepower or more colourful stories to tell.

Mankind has a yen for the unknowable, a craving for the sublime, a hope for something beyond ourselves, and gods and Gods have been the answer for all of our existence. Man-made rules, ascribed to the gods, have been the usual way of giving the populace's neck, but Jesus' message is the only one with love at its core - and this is its real strength. Real love is absent from all other religions, including that espoused in the Old Testament. I do not mean 'Thou shalt love the lord thy god with all thy heart and soul,' for that

is something that it is impossible in any real sense, and far removed from that most wonderful of human traits, the melding of two human minds and hearts.

So the Christmas story is wonderful, as it appeals to the way we are - humans who love babies, who normally hate oppression, mayhem and death, who respect the law, and are willing to help the helpless and comfort the sick and dying - which is surely the Christmas part of God's message. But the rest? Love your enemies, turn the other cheek, give all your possessions to the poor, and so on? Forget it. We're just not made that way. Christianity, in that picture, could not be our way of life, and thus we should not brag about our holiness or call ourselves Christian. Our neighbours can do that, as Ambrose Bierce, quoted above, pertinently and slyly puts it.

For, in the end, it is by our deeds we are known - not our words, professions of faith, or church attendance. Rejoice and be glad in the Christ Child, and have a wonderful, human, loving Christmas.

To read past edition of *Down Under*, visit the Authors section of Emmitsburg.net.

THE BOOK OF DAYS

Christmas Day

Born: *Jesus Christ, Saviour of the world; Sir Isaac Newton, natural philosopher, 1642, Woolsthorpe, near Grantham; Johann Jacob Reiske, oriental scholar, 1716, Zorbig, Saxony; William Collins, poet, 1720, Chichester; Richard Person, Greek scholar, 1759, East Ruston, Norfolk.*

Died: *Persius, satiric poet, 62 A.D.; Pope Adrian I, 795; Emperor Leo V, the Armenian, slain at Constantinople, 820; Sir Matthew Hale, eminent judge, 1676; Rev. James Hervey, author of the Meditations, 1758, Weston Favell, Northamptonshire; Mrs. Chappone, moral writer, 1801, Hadley, Middlesex; Colonel John Gurwood, editor of Wellington's Dispatches, 1854, Brighton.*

The festival of Christmas is regarded as the greatest celebration throughout the ecclesiastical year, and so important and joyous a solemnity is it deemed, that a special exception is made in its favour, whereby, in the event of the anniversary falling on a Friday, that day of the week, under all other circumstances a fast, is transformed to a festival.

That the birth of Jesus Christ, the deliverer of the human race, and the mysterious link connecting the transcendent and incomprehensible attributes of Deity with human sympathies and affections, should be considered as the most glorious event that ever happened, and the most worthy of being reverently and joyously commemorated, is a proposition which must commend itself to the heart and reason of every one of His followers, who aspires to walk in His footsteps, and share in the ineffable benefits which His death has secured to mankind. And so though at one period denounced by the Puritans as superstitious, and to the present day disregarded by Calvinistic Protestants, as unwarranted by Scripture, there are few who will seriously dispute the propriety of observing the anniversary of Christ's birth by a religious service.

A question, however, which has been long and eagerly agitated, is here brought forward. Is the 25th of December really the day on which our Saviour first shewed himself in human form in the manger at Bethlehem? The evidence which we possess regarding the date is not only traditional, but likewise conflicting and confused.

In the earliest periods at which we have any record of the observance of Christmas, we find that some communities of Christians celebrated the festival on the 1st or 6th of January; others on the 29th of March, the time of the Jewish Passover; while others, it is said, observed it on the 29th of September, or Feast of Tabernacles. There can be no doubt, however, that long before the reign of

Constantine, in the fourth century, the season of the New Year had been adopted as the period for celebrating the Nativity, though a difference in this respect existed in the practice of the Eastern and Western Churches, the former observing the 6th of January, and the latter the 25th of December. The custom of the Western Church at last prevailed, and both of the ecclesiastical bodies agreed to hold the anniversary on the same day. The fixing of the date appears to have been the act of Julius I, who presided as pope or bishop of Rome, from 337 to 352 A.D. The circumstance is doubted by Mosheim, but is confirmed by St. Chrysostom, who died in the beginning of the fifth century.

This celebrated father of the church informs us, in one of his epistles, that Julius, on the solicitation of St. Cyril of Jerusalem, caused strict inquiries to be made on the subject, and thereafter, following what seemed to be the best authenticated tradition, settled authoritatively the 25th of December as the anniversary of Christ's birth, the 'Festorum omnium metropolis,' as it is styled by Chrysostom. It is true, indeed, that some have represented this fixing of the day to have been accomplished by St. Telesphorus, who was bishop of Rome 128-139 A. D., but the authority for the assertion is very doubtful.

Towards the close of the second century, we find a notice of the observance of Christmas in the reign of the Emperor Commodus; and about a hundred years afterwards, in the time of Dioclesian an atrocious act of cruelty is recorded of the last named emperor, who caused a church in Nicomedia, where the Christians were celebrating the Nativity, to be set on fire, and by barring every means of egress from the building, made all the worshippers perish in



the flames. Since the end of the fourth century at least, the 25th of December has been uniformly observed as the anniversary of the Nativity by all the nations of Christendom.

Thus far for ancient usage, but it will be readily comprehended that insurmountable difficulties yet exist with respect to the real date of the momentous event under notice. Sir Isaac Newton, indeed, remarks in his Commentary on the Prophecies of Daniel, that the feast of the Nativity, and most of the other ecclesiastical anniversaries, were originally fixed at cardinal points of the year, without any reference to the dates of the incidents which they commemorated, dates which, by the lapse of time, had become impossible to be ascertained.

Thus the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary was placed on the

25th of March, or about the time of the vernal equinox; the feast of St. Michael on the 29th of September, or near the autumnal equinox; and the birth of Christ and other festivals at the time of the winter-solstice. Many of the apostles' days—such as St. Paul, St. Matthias, and others—were determined by the days when the sun entered the respective signs of the ecliptic, and the pagan festivals had also a considerable share in the adjustment of the Christian year.

To this last we shall shortly have occasion to advert more particularly, but at present we shall content ourselves by remarking that the views of the great astronomer just indicated, present at least a specious explanation of the original construction of the ecclesiastical calendar.

As regards the observance of

Easter indeed, and its accessory celebrations, there is good ground for maintaining that they mark tolerably accurately the anniversaries of the Passion and Resurrection of our Lord, seeing that we know that the events themselves took place at the period of the Jewish Passover. But no such precision of date can be adduced as regards Christmas, respecting which the generally received view now is, that it does not correspond with the actual date of the nativity of our Saviour. One objection, in particular, has been made, that the incident recorded in Scripture, of shepherds keeping watch by night on the plains of Bethlehem, could not have taken place in the month of December, a period generally of great inclemency in the region of Judea.

Though Christian nations have thus, from an early period in the



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THE BOOK OF DAYS

history of the church, celebrated Christmas about the period of the winter-solstice or the shortest day, it is well known that many, and, indeed, the greater number of the popular festive observances by which it is characterized, are referable to a much more ancient origin.

Amid all the pagan nations of antiquity, there seems to have been a universal tendency to worship the sun as the giver of life and light, and the visible manifestation of the Deity. Various as were the names bestowed by different peoples on this object of their worship, he was still the same divinity. Thus, at Rome, he appears to have been worshipped under one of the characters attributed to Saturn, the father of the gods; among the Scandinavian nations he was known under the epithet of Odin or Woden, the father of Thor, and with the Phoenicians or Carthaginians it was Baal or Bel, an epithet familiar to all students of the Bible.

Concurring thus as regards the object of worship, there was a no less remarkable uniformity in the period of the year at which these different nations celebrated a grand festival in his honour. The time chosen appears to have been universally the season of the New Year, or, rather, the winter-solstice, from which the new year was frequently reckoned. This unanimity in the celebration of the festival in question, is to be ascribed to the general feeling of joy which all of us experience when the gradual shortening of the day reaches its utmost limit on the 21st of December, and the sun, recommencing his upward course, announces that mid-winter is past, and spring and summer are approaching. On similar grounds, and with similar demonstrations, the ancient pagan nations observed a festival at mid-summer, or the summer-solstice, when the sun arrives at the culminating point of his ascent on the 21st of June, or longest day.

By the Romans, this anniversary was celebrated under the title of Saturnalia, or the festival of Saturn, and was marked by the prevalence of a universal license and merry-making. The slaves were permitted to enjoy for a time a thorough freedom in speech and behavior, and it is even said that their masters waited on them as servants. Every one feasted and rejoiced, work and business were for a season entirely suspended, the houses were decked with laurels and evergreens, presents were made by parents and friends, and all sorts of games and amusements were indulged in by the citizens.

In the bleak north, the same rejoicings had place, but in a ruder and more barbarous form. Fires were extensively kindled, both in and out of doors, blocks of wood blazed in honour of Odin and Thor, the sacred mistletoe was gathered by the Druids, and sacrifices, both of men and cattle, were made to the savage divinities. Fires are said, also, to have been kindled at this period of the year by the ancient Persians, between whom and the Druids of Western Europe a relationship is supposed to have existed.

In the early ages of Christianity, its ministers frequently experienced the utmost difficulty in inducing the converts to refrain from indulging in the popular amusements which were so largely participated in by their pagan countrymen. Among others, the revelry and license which characterized the Saturnalia called for special animadversion. But at last, convinced partly of the inefficacy of such denunciations, and partly influenced by the idea that the spread of Christianity might thereby be advanced, the church endeavored to amalgamate, as it were, the old and new religious, and sought, by transferring the heathen ceremonies to the solemnities of the Christian festivals, to make them subservient to the cause of religion and piety. A compromise was thus effected between clergy and laity, though it must be admitted that it proved anything but a harmonious one, as we find a constant, though ineffectual, proscription by the ecclesiastical authorities of the favorite amusements of the people, including among others the sports and revelries at Christmas.

Ingrafted thus on the Romani Saturnalia, the Christmas festivities received in Britain further changes and modifications, by having superadded to them, first, the Druidical rites and superstitions, and then, after the arrival of the Saxons, the various ceremonies practiced by the ancient Germans and Scandinavians. The result has been the strange medley of Christian and pagan rites which contribute to make up the festivities of the modern Christmas. Of these, the burning of the Yule log, and the superstitions connected with the mistletoe.

The name given by the ancient Goths and Saxons to the festival of the winter-solstice was Jul or Yule, the latter term forming, to the present day, the designation in the Scottish dialect of Christmas, and preserved also in the phrase of the 'Yule log.' The Yule festival received its name from its being the turning-point of the year, or the period at which the fiery orb of day made a revolution in his annual circuit, and entered on his northern journey. A confirmation of this view is afforded by the circumstance that in the old clog almanacs, a wheel is the device employed for marking the season of Yule-tide.

Throughout the middle ages, and down to the period of the Reformation, the festival of Christmas, ingrafted on the pagan rites of Yule, continued throughout Christendom to be universally celebrated with every mark of rejoicing. On the adoption of a new system of faith by most of the northern nations of Europe in the sixteenth century, the Lutheran and Anglican churches retained the celebration of Christmas and other festivals, which Calvinists rejected absolutely, denouncing the observance of all such days, except Sunday, as superstitious and unscriptural.

In consequence of the Presbyterian form of church-government, as constituted by John Knox and his coad-



jutors on the model of the ecclesiastical polity of Calvin, having taken such firm root in Scotland, the festival of Christmas, with other commemorative celebrations retained from the Romish calendar by the Anglicans and Lutherans, is comparatively unknown in that country, at least in the Lowlands. The tendency to mirth and jollity at the close of the year, which seems almost inherent in human nature, has been, for the most part, transferred from Christmas and Christmas Eve to New-year's Day and the preceding evening, known by the appellation of Hogmenay.

It was considered peculiarly lucky when Christmas-day fell on a Sunday, and the reverse when it occurred on a Saturday. The intermediate days are, for the most part, characterized by a happy uniformity of propitious augury. It is the belief in Devonshire that if the sun shines bright at noon on Christmas-day, a plentiful crop of apples may be expected in the following year.

At present, Christmas-day, if somewhat shorn of its ancient glories, and unmarked by that boisterous jollity and exuberance of animal spirits which distinguished it in the time of our ancestors, is, nevertheless, still the holiday in which of all others throughout the year, all classes of English

society most generally participate. Partaking of a religious character, the forenoon of the day is usually passed in church, and in the evening the re-united members of the family assemble round the joyous Christmas-board.

Separated as many of these are during the rest of the year, they all make an effort to meet together round the Christmas-hearth.

The hallowed feelings of domestic love and attachment, the pleasing remembrance of the past, and the joyous anticipation of the fu-

ture, all cluster round these family-gatherings, and in the sacred associations with which they are intertwined, and the active deeds of kindness and benevolence which they tend to call forth, a realization may almost be found of the angelic message to the shepherds of Bethlehem—'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.'

To read other selections from Robert Chambers' *The Book of Days* visit www.thebookofdays.com.

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The economy of nature and the ecology of man

Bill Meredith

*"The hopes and fears of all the years are met in Thee tonight."
—Phillips Brooks, 1868.*

It is a strange feeling to realize that international politics are controlling your life, but that is what happened to me in 1960. Three years earlier, Russia had launched Sputnik, the first artificial satellite, and our government realized that the country was not producing enough scientists and engineers. The National Science Foundation started giving grants to college teachers to improve and update their education, and I received one of those grants to attend a six-week program at the University of Colorado. There were field trips and intensive lectures by nationally known ecologists, but the most influential thing for me was the opportunity to get together and talk to these people informally each evening. I did not realize it at the time, but that was to become the first step toward my doctoral studies.

Some of the lecturers were formal in personality, even to the point of being stuffy; others were so informal they could have been mistake-



en for tourists who had wandered in by accident. One of the oddest was Marston Bates, who taught the unit on Human Ecology. He had the unusual background of both a Master of Arts and a Ph. D in Zoology from Harvard. He had made his reputation studying the mosquitoes that transmit yellow fever in Columbia, where he had lived among the natives for many years, and he looked like he might have just arrived from there that morning. His usual garb con-

sisted of a t-shirt, shorts and sandals; the frame of his glasses was mended with adhesive tape, and combing his hair was not high on his list of priorities. If it had been a decade later, he would have been called a hippie, but back then we thought of him as eccentric. He had just published a book called *The Forest and the Sea: the Economy of Nature and the Ecology of Man*, which became an influential force in the ecology movement of the '60s. His lectures were some-

what rambling, but each evening he would sit with the group and talk for hours about applying ecological principles to practical problems. It was those sessions, more than anything else, that made me aware that we humans are subject to the same laws of nature as all other organisms.

Dr. Bates was concerned with the growth of the human population in the ecosystem, which he compared to the growth of malignant tumor cells in an organism. Man, he wrote, is acting like a cancer on the biosphere: "The multiplication of human numbers certainly seems wild and uncontrolled... four million a month - the equivalent of the population of Chicago. We seem to be doing all right at the moment; but if you could ask cancer cells, I suspect they would think they were doing fine too. But when the organism dies, so do they; and for our own, selfish, practical, utilitarian reasons, I think we should be careful about how we influence the rest of the ecosystem."

"The moment" Bates referred to was 1960, and the world's population then was about 3 billion. Today, in 2011, the U. N. population agency estimates that there are about three births each second, which comes to nearly 8 million a month. It is estimated that the total passed 7 billion on October 31. Each time another billion is added, the U. N. calls attention to the event by designating a child born wherever the Secretary General happened to be on that day as the honorary next-billionth person. This year it was a girl, Danica Camacho, born in the Philippines.

At first glance it seems arbitrary, even a bit silly, to designate someone as Number Seven-Billion; nobody can really comprehend a number that large. But it does give the matter a human dimension, for everyone who has held a newborn baby has had the sensation of being present at a miracle. Each time I held a new grandchild, that line from the Christmas carol about hopes and fears ran through my mind. Whether it was sleeping or crying at the top of its lungs, I could imagine it growing up strong and healthy and doing great things; but simultaneously, I was aware of all the things that could go wrong if just one of its 30,000 genes didn't work. I know an obstetrician who wrote a poem about delivering a beautiful baby with one nose, one mouth, two eyes, two ears, ten fingers, ten toes... and no kidneys, and he had to tell the mother her perfect child was going to die.

Counting people has always been important to governments; they need to know how many citizens are available to pay taxes, build pyramids, serve in armies, and, more recently, to demand benefits. The reason Christ was born in that stable in Bethlehem instead of in Mary's bed in their own house was that the Roman Emperor required each man to be present



in the town of his birth for a census. No one really knows what the world's population was at that time, but estimates suggest that if the United Nations had existed then, Christ might have been the honorary 300 millionth person. Over the next 1300 years, the population grew slowly; birth rates were high, but deaths from famine, war and disease kept it in check. It is estimated that in 1350, after the Black Death epidemic, the population was only 370 million. Then a growth spurt began, which I can grasp only by putting myself in the picture. The population reached one billion around 1800, the year my great-great grandfather, William Meredith, came to America from Wales. It passed two billion in 1927, five years before my birth. I saw it reach 3 billion in 1960, four billion in 1975, five billion in 1987, and six billion in 1999 (a year after my retirement). And then Danica Camacho arrived this year. So after taking the whole span of human history to reach two billion, the world's population has more than tripled in my lifetime.

Little Danica made the front page of the *Washington Post*, and journalists wrote about the significance of her birth for a few days; but then our attention returned to unemployment numbers, political debates, the failure of the supercommittee, the national debt, the economy of Greece, the revolution in Syria, famine in Africa, floods in Bangladesh, the emergence of China, ... and on and on. These are all important matters, but somehow the politicians and policy makers are unable to see that the root cause of all of them is the Ecology of Man. There are already more people than the earth's ecosystem can support, and another billion will be here before my 90th birthday.

It is a cruel dilemma, and again it appears most clearly in personal terms. To achieve a stable population, each couple should have two children. I have three, and instead of the ideal projection of four grandchildren, I have six. I understand the mathematical consequences, but which child and which two grandchildren would I give up in order to achieve a stable population? I can answer in less than a millisecond: none of them. So I have framed a question that I cannot answer. Meanwhile, it is December; another year is almost gone, and that holiday based on the birth of a child is approaching. As Pogo said, "The gentle journey wanders on." Maybe if I concentrate on that child for the next few weeks, an answer will come. Merry Christmas.

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IN THE COUNTRY

The vulture who stole Christmas

Ranger Jen Miller
Cunningham Falls State Park

*You're a mean one, Mr. Grinch.
You really are a heel.
You're as cuddly as a cactus,
You're as charming as an eel.
Mr. Grinch.
~ Dr. Seuss*

For the past two years, a Christmas present has come to me from an unlikely source – a vulture. This vulture happens to reside in our Aviary at Cunningham Falls State Park. He is an imprinted Black vulture, part of the family of New World vultures that include California condors. Rescued as a chick from a burning building by Baltimore City firefighters, he has relatively little fear of people. The lack of healthy fear makes him a bit of a menace to people – most of all me! Vultures are incredibly intelligent and when imprinted on human beings tend to be very particular about who they will tolerate and who shall be reviled. The Black vulture has placed me in the latter category, except on Christmas Eve. For the past two years, he has allowed me to enter his enclosure on this blessed day and pick up his jesses (leg straps), and place him on my gloved arm. He even permits me to reward him for good behavior with a tug on his beak. But the rest of the year it's game on.

Black vultures are more closely related to storks and cranes than other birds of prey like hawks. The similarities are evident in their physical appearance and behavior. Vulture feet are ineffectual unlike the lethal talons of raptors. The feet are used mainly to kick away competition from carrion and to hold a food item down while the lengthy, sharp beak twists and tears. Black vulture legs are long and whitewashed with their own excrement. The poor potty skills actually benefit the vulture by inhibiting parasite infestation from rotting carcasses and aid in cooling the bird on hot days as the ammonia from the urine evaporates.

The vulture's head is mostly featherless and this allows it to stay neat and parasite free when it feeds inside the cavity of large dead animals such as a deer. Black vultures raise young, roost, and hunt or scavenge communally. A group of vultures, also known as a venue, is often made up of family members. Sandhill cranes and Black vultures express aggression in comparative ways often by turning their backs to a perceived threat and then begin to manipulate or organize sticks or stones found on the ground nearby. This behavior has been observed in our captive vultures and implies self-assuredness usually only seen in prize fighters and the truly insane. Vultures do



have a back up plan if a scuffle does not go according to plan. They vomit. Their vomit is as acidic as battery acid and will dissuade any further pursuit by a potential threat. The act of vomiting also allows the vulture to be lighter and escape more easily if necessary.

Vultures are truly fascinating and an essential part of the ecosystem. They are Nature's recyclers. Without Vultures, rotting carcasses would linger in the environment for a longer period of time. Deadly diseases

would be much more prevalent as well. The stomach acid of vultures is so strong that it actually destroys bacteria and viruses like botulism and rabies! So while their features and behaviors may not be cute and cuddly, they do serve a valuable purpose. I try to remember this every time our Black vulture charges and attacks my reflection on his enclosure door. There's will always be Christmas Eve.

To read other articles by Ranger Jen Miller visit the Authors section of Emmitsburg.net.

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IN THE COUNTRY

Strawberry Hill nature preserve

Kay Deardorff
Strawberry Hill Nature
Preserve Naturalist

Who is Strawberry Hill? What do you do? Where is the preserve? Where did Strawberry Hill come from? Can you hike on the preserve? Can anyone use the property? These are just a few of the common questions people ask about Strawberry Hill Nature Preserve.

Strawberry Hill Foundation was created, as a nonprofit organization, in 1986 by Frances Morton Froelicher to provide the community of Adams County with awareness, appreciation, and understanding of our natural environmental and cultural heritage through programs provided by the organization that now operates as Strawberry Hill Nature Preserve and Environmental Education Center.

Mrs. Froelicher began the foundation to support her husband, Hans Froelicher, and his efforts to clean-up and protect the Swamp Creek Watershed. In the early 1960's, the Froelichers began purchasing properties in Hamiltonban Township, stitching together various tracts of land to create the original 519 acre core of Strawberry Hill. After her husband's passing in 1976 and after ten years of failed efforts to find a new owner, who would

commit to providing environmental education, Mrs. Froelicher created the foundation to establish an environmental education center on the property.

As the founder and executive director of the Citizens Planning and Housing Association of Baltimore, MD from 1945-69, Mrs. Froelicher believed that work done with a small professional staff, a large number of volunteers and a great deal of enthusiasm, that Strawberry Hill could establish itself as valuable asset to the Adams County community.

Mrs. Froelicher managed the land and worked towards establishing an environmental center until her death on December 31, 1994. In her passing she gave Strawberry Hill to the community of Mount Hope, and provided a small endowment to create an environmental education center.

Since 1994, Strawberry Hill has expanded the preserve to include 609 acres. Our supporters have grown to 360 individuals and families from the surrounding community and the Educational Center serves over 5,000 students annually.

Strawberry Hill Nature Preserve's ongoing mission is to protect the Swamp Creek Watershed while connecting our surrounding community with the natural world by teaching,

inspiring, and promoting stewardship of the environment. The Preserve is a non-profit education center and conservation organization surrounding 609 acres of Swamp Creek, a high quality cold-water stream found in Hamiltonban Township, 3 miles north of Fairfield, PA.

Today, Strawberry Hill protects numerous wetlands, vernal pools, and two high quality stream corridors, and the cultural heritage of Swamp Creek, Middle Creek, and Mount Hope. The Preserve provides recreational opportunities to Adams County residents through a variety of cultural and environmental programs and by maintaining ten miles of trails that are open to the public for hiking.

The Preserve protects the Swamp Creek Watershed. Swamp Creek is one of the few high quality cold-water streams still found in Pennsylvania. This creek feeds the Middle Creek watershed, which is one of the primary sources of drinking water for Hamiltonban Township and Fairfield Borough Municipal Authority. Ultimately these headwaters flow into the Potomac River leading to the Chesapeake Bay.

The Preserve provides access to the watershed through ten miles of walking trails. These trails are open daily to the public from dawn to dusk, providing natural space and recreation opportunities for all people including hikers, bird watchers, and families. Nature enthusiasts alike participate in week-long activities that are nature based, educational, and recreational. Strawberry Hill also offers public programming three to four times per month for adult individuals and families to connect with nature.

In addition to working with the local school districts, Strawberry Hill has partnered with organizations such as Abraxas Youth and Family Services out of South Mountain Restoration Center and Lincoln Intermediate Unit providing commu-



nity service projects for adjudicated kids, at-risk youth, and children with special needs. These organizations have helped to maintain and improve Strawberry Hill's facilities throughout the years.

Strawberry Hill is an active partner of the Watershed Alliance of Adams County, Gettysburg Visitor's Bureau, the PA Highlands Coalition, the South Mountain Partnership, and the Pennsylvania Association of Environmental Educators, Pennsylvania Park and Recreation Society, and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. Strawberry Hill staff serves on committees for the Gettysburg and Adams County Chamber of Commerce, the Adams County Office of Planning and Development, and our community townships and boroughs.

As Adams County's only nonprofit environmental education center, Strawberry Hill Nature Preserve's operations and its presence in the community survive, solely on funds derived from the Foundation's endowment, membership and program fees, donations from supporters, and a mixture of state, federal, and private grants, in addition to valuable services donated by community businesses and our volunteers.

The site of Strawberry Hill Nature Preserve & Environmental Center has a long history of human activity. Native American traveled and hunted in these woods. Remnants of arrowheads and other tools have been found throughout the area.

European settlers, who arrived in the 1700s, cut the forest for fuel and cleared the land for cultivation. Many charcoal mounds can still be found on the Preserve. The people of Mount Hope made their living by working the land. They cleared forests, farmed, planted orchards; they even mined for copper and other minerals.

D. Daniel Boone, a botanist from the Maryland Natural History Heritage Program, visited Strawberry Hill in 1985 and reported sighting some 37 species of birds, including warblers, gold finches, owls, tanagers, orioles and pileated woodpeckers. Interesting plants abound; mushrooms, 20 or more different kinds of ferns, gentians, Cardinal flowers, Lady Slippers and nodding trillium. Trees on the 500 acre tree farm are varied in size and type. Animals are numerous: turkey, deer and fox are in residence. Different kinds of fish, particularly trout and blue gills, are in the pond and streams.

The Pink Cabin: Built in 1798 by Scots-Irish pioneers who settled the frontier areas of Mount Hope, the cabin was constructed with native stone and timber, such as rhyolite and chestnut. The cabin was designated an official Civil War building as it is believed that the house was used by Confederate troops while retreating west over South Mountain from the Battle of Gettysburg. The house was painted its trademark pink and restored in the 1960's by our founders, the Froelichers. The building now serves as a classroom for thousands of students every year and as a unique attraction for Strawberry Hill.

So come check us out! Come hike our trails and check out the new children and adult programs that we offer. There are nature programs scheduled for every second Sunday, story book time, adult naturalist programs, trail runs, dog hikes, a Halloween trail walk, Christmas photos with Santa, Maple Sugaring Festival, and much, much more planned. Visit our website www.StrawberryHill.org to stay informed about our upcoming events.

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VILLAGE IDIOT

The tiller won't till

Jack Deatherage, Jr.

Wanda's planting garlic cloves in Bed Two while I fire up the newer rototiller to recharn Bed One. As she straddles a 30 foot row and bends to poke the cloves 2 inches deep into the soil I wince in sympathy. My back aches from having bent to scratch a series of 18-inch rows across the long row as guides for where I sprinkle the bulb fertilizer, which Wanda uses as a guide to plant. I'll follow with the rake, covering everything. Bed Two will hold over 600 cloves.

I goose the tiller's throttle to "rabbit" (since few people read English these days the manufacturer uses pictures to show us where we are) and engage the tines. The tiller hesitates, not a good sign. Into the bed we go and stop. Crap! The thing must have a drive belt slipping, or the cable that tells the tiller I want to till is stretched and I don't have tools to adjust it.

Wanda looks up at my not doing anything, wondering what excuse I have for goofing off this time.

"Tiller won't till." I yell.

"Go home and get the old one." She yells back.

I mutter some vulgar words, drag the "new" tiller out of the bed and shut it off. Fortunately, we're at my cousin's farm, only a mile from home. It doesn't take me long to "get the old one". I load the tiller into the van by myself, gasping at the pain in my lower back, and return to the garlic beds. The tiller unloads easily as I don't have to lift it, but it doesn't fire on the first ten pulls of the starter cord, or the next five. Just as I'm about to engage in some serious cursing it coughs to life. The old tiller has the words "fast", "slow" and "stop" written on it so I guess I'm lucky to have learned to read a bit of English?

Bed One was churned a few days earlier. Retilling it fluffs the soil enough to make the row raising easier. I finish quickly, tilling a row, then raking. By the end of the third row I'm shaking, arms from raking and legs from holding the tiller in the row, rocks cause it to bounce about. As I have no chest pain things are going well.

Wanda straightens up from a row. My back hurts watching her bend so low as she moves slowly along. "I need a marker and more garlic."

I hand her the two sticks we mark the end of a cultivar planting with and tell her we don't have any more garlic.

"Well, go home and get some."

Sighing, I hobble back to the van and drive to Emmitsburg to fetch the double bed D'ed garlic. My fingers ache at the sight of the little mesh bags hanging from their rack. Each clove reminds me of having "popped" it from its bulb. Not a big deal when I need a couple or three cloves, but a growing pain as I've finished the 600th clove

and have 800 more to go! And that isn't counting all the small cloves I cull from the collection. Those I have to peel and cut up for the dehydrator. I am not comforted by the thought that we're only planting 1,400 cloves this year and Marda's had her boys plant 28,000!

Back at Bed Two, Wanda is eyeing Bed One. I hand her the garlic.

"Let's plant Bed One while we're at it."

I look around for the sun and thank the gods it's low on the mountain. I take up my little row scratching stick and begin marking the planting rows three or four inches apart. As I finish the last row, gasping with pain and muttering curses between gasps, I straighten and nearly fall down.

"Oh darn. I don't have enough light to see what I'm doing." Wanda stands there as if she doesn't have a back to feel pain with! She does mention how bad her knees hurt so I'm not suffering alone over this planting. My gardening books tell me garlic sprang from the first of the Devil's footprints when it followed Adam and Eve from Eden. Onion, supposedly, sprang from its second step. Judeo-Xian mythology is interesting, occasionally. I could add the Devil stepped on my back somewhere along the way.

Home we go where I collapse before the computer and call the Mad One to whine about how much I hurt. I can always get a bit of practical advice from the Bulgarian.

"Oh stop it! You whine like a woman. What do you have to do tomorrow, watch Wanda plant the last of the garlic, then you do nothing until spring? Shut up and behave like a man!"

Well, that made me feel better so I fire an email off to the Texan who at least sympathizes with the fact I'm out of wine and mead. She reminds me she has 2,500 cloves to plant and probably will do most of the planting without help. I should suck it up, be a man.

As Wanda confirms those female opinions and advice, I crawl into bed and whimper myself to sleep.

Next day, Wanda locks the factory door around 2:30. I'm waiting for her with 20-pounds of fertilizer and about 650 cloves. We go to the garden without her stopping to catch her breath. "If we go home and I sit down, I won't get up until it's time for bed."

We carry everything to the garden. I start putting fertilizer down while she looks over the bags of garlic, calculating which cultivar she'll plant where. She begins making the garden map as I straighten from the first row and trash all her plans. I want a particular cultivar at the top of the bed as the ground is higher there and drains better. The best-flavored or best growing cultivars should be in the best sections of the garden. She growls something, scribbles on her map, starts over again. By the time I've fertilized the third row I've changed her mind at least four more times. I



think she's relieved when my cousin walks over from the house to see how things are going. While I'm talking to him she can plant without interruption, mostly.

Wanda straightens as the last clove goes in the ground. I dread the words she speaks. "I'm out of garlic and we have room for about 100 more. You have a few cultivars at home we haven't planted. What's wrong with them?"

Marda grows them every year? My fingers hurt from popping cloves? We need something to eat besides culls? I'm tired? I'm sick of garlic?

"I'll pop them if you'll treat them

with the preplanting solutions. I want to finish planting this bed." (She'll learn some of my pain. Next year we'll wear gloves while popping cloves.)

Sighing, I help gather the paper tags, the mesh bags, the fertilizer and head home. I can walk without wobbling. If the gods smile on us, we'll have garlic come July.

Saturday, November 12, 2011, one thousand three hundred sixty cloves are safely in the ground.

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**Jennifer Vanderau
Cumberland Valley
Animal Shelter**

So I had shingles in my eye. Can you imagine this? Oh my stars, it hurt so bad there were moments the pain took my breath away.

I swear, I don't know what I've done to make my body react the way that it does.

Getting old sticks.

I'm sure you're asking, "What in the world do shingles in the eye have to do with animals?" Yeah, it's amazing to me when worlds collide like this, too.

The connection came, believe it or not, at the optometrist's office. I ran into a wonderful woman who works there named Cheryl. On my way out the door, she asked if she could tell me the story of her shelter dog. Naturally, I said yes. Happy stories about animals always make me feel good and I figured that could combat the pain of shingles in the eye.

Well, believe it or not, Cheryl adopted her dog 19 to 20 years ago from the Cumberland Valley Animal Shelter. I remember getting a bit of a chill up my spine and thinking, what an amazingly small world.

She said she went into the shelter knowing that she couldn't just pick the cutest one. She'd actually read a book about how to pick a pound puppy and she understood that the animal's personality had mesh well with her home. Cheryl definitely went in with the right attitude.

She found a 9-month-old guy named Willy, who was a Cocker Spaniel mix, and she liked him a lot, but wanted to be sure. She took a couple of different dogs out to walk and get to know them and went home to think about it.

It just so happened that this was around the time the movie "Free Willie" had come out (great movie if you haven't seen it already), so her kids were convinced that they had to "free" this Willy. Adorable!

Needless to say, Cheryl and her family returned for Willy.

At this point in the story, Cheryl explained to me that she has a special needs daughter, named Katie, who suffers from seizures. When they first brought Willy home and her daughter had a seizure, Willy barked. Cheryl said she remembers thinking, "Okay, calm down, let's not make the situation any more difficult."



Blanche Devereaux is a senior Shih Tzu who came to us as a stray, so we're not sure of her exact age. We named her after the Golden Girl and she is one sweet thing and quite the Southern belle as you can see here. She snorts like a pig sometimes and has the funniest personality. She could stand to go on a bit of a diet and believe it or not, this girl can get quite excited and agitated, despite her age. If you're looking for a hilarious companion, come meet Blanche Devereaux.

Eventually, Cheryl began to realize that Willy wasn't trying to hinder the family -- in fact, he was trying to help.

Willy was using that special "canine" sense that a lot of dogs have to anticipate when Katie was going to have a seizure. He actually got to the point where he would alert the family before it happened. Cheryl said he slept with her daughter every night and would wake everyone up to let them know of Katie's condition.

Katie and Willy were inseparable.

It's amazing to me that Willy, a shelter dog who someone else had given up on, was able to be such a treasure to Cheryl's family -- with absolutely no training. It's like he knew exactly what he had to do and what he was meant to do for his new family.

Two months ago, they had to say goodbye to Willy. Poignantly, he started experiencing seizures of his own and the family had to make the decision to end his suffering. Despite how difficult it is to say goodbye to a beloved pet, I think it's utterly incredible that Willy lived to be 19.

I know Cheryl and her family are hurting and missing their boy terribly, but his job may not be completely finished. I have a feeling I was supposed to hear about Willy.

When I left the optometrist's office, I remember wondering if maybe Willy knew what he was doing all along. Did Willy know he belonged with that family to help Katie? Did Willy stay with them for 19 years because he had such an important purpose?

Sometimes I think our animals know and understand more than we give them credit for.

These are the kinds of stories that keep us going at CVAS. When we have bad days, we have to look at the glass as half full and we have to focus on the animals that we can save and sometimes, we are provided a story where the ones we save truly help save others.

Additionally, Cheryl knew when she found Willy that this was a lifetime commitment and she had to be sure she chose wisely. Indeed, she chose perfectly.

But I have to take my pondering one step further. Was I meant to hear this story to keep me going? Did I have eye problems right when I needed to? Was the pain I suffered from my condition supposed to take me to the optometrist so I could be reminded of my greater purpose? Is telling it now helping you somehow?

The holidays are a time for reflection and family and warm sentiments and feelings and I think Willy's story is perfect for this time of year.

I don't think Willy's job will ever be done, as long as someone remembers what he did and shares it with others. So, help me keep this powerful tribute going and let others know what I told you.

Isn't it amazing how something so incredible can come from having eye problems? Remember that as you experience the twinkling lights of the season and feel the holiday cheer and keep your eyes open for the every day miracles that may seem small, but are, truly, all around us.

* * * * *

Jennifer Vanderau is the Director of Communications for the Cumberland Valley Animal Shelter, and can be reached at cvascomm@cvas-pets.org. The shelter accepts both monetary and pet supply donations. For more information, call the shelter at (717) 263-5791 or visit the website www.cvas-pets.org. CVAS also operates thrift stores in Chambersburg and Shippensburg. Help support the animals at the shelter by donating to or shopping at the stores.

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PETS LARGE AND SMALL

Christmas time

Kimberly J Brokaw DVM
Walkersville Veterinary Clinic

Holidays are rarely celebrated in a usual manner with my family. At the clinic we split the holidays among the doctors so I am usually working at least part of the time. My mother is a human nurse so she works part of the holidays as well. Last year I was on call Christmas Eve. I gave some people advice over the phone. Other farms had problems that were more complicated, so I went out to those farms and treated their animals.

In general clients don't want to call the vet on Christmas Eve or Christmas. This means that when someone does call, either they are hoping you can talk them through treatment over the phone or their pet is really sick. One call was from an owner who said his horse was colicking and slowly getting worse despite his giving some medications he had at home. When I arrived at the farm, the horse was lying on the cold ground, unable to stand. His third eyelid was up partially over the eye and his heart rate was extremely elevated. After the exam and some questions to the owner, we determined that he was actually suffering from an HYPP episode and not colic.

HYPP is a genetic condition in horses; most commonly in those genetically related to the famous quarter horse stallion Impressive. HYPP results in periodic episodes of muscle trembling and in severe cases, paralysis. I treated the horse with an intra-

venous injection of dextrose and instructed the owner to get Karo syrup. In no time the horse was up on his feet and grazing. The owner agreed to monitor the horse carefully and call if any other issues arose.

The rest of my evening was quiet. I met up with one of the other veterinarians on the side of Route 15 on Christmas morning to give him the pager and catch him up on the patients who I had treated the day before. From there, I went straight from there down to my parents' house with the dog and both horses in tow. My mom was working Christmas day so the plan was to not have Christmas dinner until the day after Christmas but I planned to spend the day with my father and sister.

When I arrived at my parents' house, the first things my dad said were that the fuel oil delivery had not arrived, they had run out of heating oil and it was supposed to snow. I knew about the snow, because a neighbor had offered to watch my horses for me so I wouldn't have to drive them in the snow. It's not that I didn't trust my neighbor to watch my horses (he reads this paper so even if I didn't trust him, I couldn't admit it here) but that my parents place backs up to a wildlife preserve and Bart and I always enjoy our rides down there. My dad was talking about how I might just want to go back home late that night. If I went home, I wouldn't get stuck driving the horse trailer in the snow and also I could sleep in a warm house. Driving a horse trailer



in snow is not fun as the trailer handles poorly in slippery conditions. Living in a house without heat is also not fun!

Since I decided it would be best to go home for the night, we moved the time of Christmas dinner forward. We hoped to have it on the table when my mom came home from work around 5:30 that evening. Some families have the focus of Christmas around the presents. My family doesn't really do much as far as gifts, but rather the important part is being together for dinner (whether or not it is on Christmas day is of negligible importance). Christmas presents in my family are always something useful. For example, last year I received toe warmers and a grease gun for my tractor. Our family Christmas dinner is usually fairly elaborate. My sister is great and knows that my joy in life is riding my horse. She volun-

teered to start dinner while I went out for a short ride. She had already declared it too cold to want to join me on the ride.

Bart loves riding along the Potomac River near my parents' home. Bart is getting older yet every time we go riding there it seems to rejuvenate him. He acts silly as he trots and canters down the trails while spooking and jumping at the various wildlife that we encounter (owls, herons, ducks, deer, etc). Two and a half hours later, I arrived back after my "short" ride. My sister and I then proceeded to go down to the barn to treat and feed all the horses.

The Christmas visit is usually when I float my parents' horses' teeth, pull blood for Coggins testing, and vaccinate their dogs. I quickly sedated and floated teeth, trying to go quickly enough so that we would be back up at the house to take dinner out of

the oven before it burned, yet slowly enough to do a thorough job. My sister laughed as I am the supposed chef in the family and she ended up cooking everything while I was with the horses. She did a fabulous job. The dogs and duck were happy too as they got large amounts of table scraps (yes I know they shouldn't eat them but do as I say, not as I do).

After dinner, my family started telling me that I really should be leaving before it snowed. After having spent barely 12 hours with them, I had loaded up the pets and was headed home, thinking that it would have been easier had I just gotten my neighbor to watch my horses.

I woke up the next morning and it hadn't even snowed. I called my dad and we both laughed about the "huge blizzard." On the plus side I had gotten to sleep in a house with heat.

This year I am on call the entire Christmas weekend. For the first time in as long as I can remember, my mother is not working Christmas. I figure my family can drive up here with all their pets to get them treated and spend the holiday here with me. They might even get to go out on a few farm calls.

To read other articles by Kim Brokaw, visit the Authors section of Emmitsburg.net.

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THE MASTER GARDENER

Growing Christmas houseplants

Maryann Ryan
Adams County Master Gardener

As gardeners, we often receive plants or give plants for the holidays. Poinsettias, cyclamen, and Christmas cactus are among the most popular plants given, however, other houseplants are easy to find this time of year. Here are some tips to growing your holiday plants and keeping them alive well after the packages and decorations have been put away.

Growing houseplants can be an easy proposition if all, or most, requirements are met. Knowing what kind of environment you can offer your plant is a good first step. Before entering a greenhouse, study the areas you wish to grow plants. What kind of sunlight is the area getting? Is it near a window and what direction does that window face – north, south, east or west? Are there any air vents where heat or air conditioning will be blowing? What kind of heat do you have? Is it wood stove, electric, or gas? You need to know the answers to all these questions before selecting your plants.

Note the environment that the plants are now growing. Be aware of the kind of care the plant is getting before you purchase it. For instance, if it is a plant that requires high light conditions, such as a croton, and is living in a low light situation in a store, when you get it home it will probably drop many leaves. You will be nursing it back to health for quite a long while. Likewise, if you take a low-light plant, growing in a florescent light situation, take it home, and put it in a window that is getting all day sun, it will likely have leaf burn and lose those leaves.

Take notice as to the watering conditions of the plant. Too dry too frequently can cause much

stress to the plant, allowing insect and disease problems to take over, as well as leaf drop. Too wet can cause rotting of the roots.

After you have taken much care in selecting the healthy plant that is appropriate for your growing conditions, be sure you protect it when leaving the greenhouse or store. Wrap the plant in paper or plastic bags, and be sure to transport it in the front of the car that is heated, not the trunk. Don't make lots of stops after purchasing your plants. Just short distances in low temperatures can cause severe damage or death to a houseplant.

In my experience, watering has often been the object of blame when it comes to plant fatality. Too much water or too little water can cause stress or even death. It's best to grow the plant in a container that has good drainage. Place a saucer underneath the container so the water runs through. After 15 minutes, dump the excess water out of the saucer. If the soil medium continues to be wet for a long period of time, the roots of the plants will rot.

Just as important is not allowing the plant to dry out. If the soil medium is dry to the touch, it's time to water. A good rule of thumb is to check the plants twice a week. If it is dry, water it, if it isn't, let it alone until next time. It is good to get your watering on a schedule like every Wednesday and Saturday. That way the plant is not forgotten. Plant care then becomes habit.

Humidity is important to a plant's survival. Dry heat from a wood stove can be deadly to a houseplant. To create more humidity for a houseplant, group plants together or put a humidity tray under them. Misting plants has very little effect. Locate your houseplant in a room that has



No plant is more beautiful than a Christmas Cactus .

good ventilation, but not drafty.

During the plant's active growing time, typically March through September, fertilize every two to four weeks. Use a well-balanced fertilizer. A typical analysis of a fertilizer is 10-10-10 or 20-20-20. The analysis tells you the percentage of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium that is in the fertilizer.

Keep your poinsettia away from cold and drafty places. Hot spots, such as by a fireplace, near a heater, or above appliances are areas that you should avoid. Poinsettias like the sun, so lots of light is a must for the plant's health and survival. Near a window that is not drafty is the best location for your plant.

When purchasing plants around the holidays, often the plants have foil or paper on for festive color. Keep this on for a short period of time. This can provide a location for water to sit, allowing roots to rot. Often used around the holidays are baskets or other containers to set the plant in. These work great for decorative purposes, just

be sure you are keeping a close eye on the water that can lay at the bottom of the container.

Keep an eye out for insect infestation. Whiteflies, spider mites, mealy bugs and aphids are common insect problems. Scout the plant frequently, and if any are detected, spray with an insecticidal soap. More than one application is normally necessary to control these insects. Be sure to read the label on the bottle before applying.

Poinsettias

After the holidays, poinsettias can be thrown away or maintained for next year's holiday season. They are not easy, but it is possible to keep the plant and get it to re-bloom. Here's some easy steps.

First, you'll want to cut the plant back hard in late March or early April. Water regularly and fertilize once every two weeks with a balanced fertilizer. When the weather begins to warm, about 55 degrees F nighttime

temps, you can put the plant outside. Keep it in a container; don't plant it in the ground. To keep the plant bushy, prune it during the summer months. When September swings around, watch for the temperatures again. It will need to come inside when the nighttime temperatures begin to drop.

Around the first of October, the plant needs to be lit at particular intervals. During the day, when the sun would normally be out, the poinsettia needs sunlight. But at night, when the sun goes down, it needs uninterrupted darkness. An easy way to achieve this is by covering the plant with a box that will allow no light into it at sun down, and uncovering it at sun up. When the bracts begin to color, usually at the beginning of December, your plant is again ready for holiday display!

Cyclamen

Another common holiday plant is the cyclamen. This pretty flowering plant is not the easiest, but certainly is rewarding to see bloom all through the winter months. The most important thing to remember when trying to grow a cyclamen is to realize that it grows best in cool temperatures, and likes plenty of sunlight. A cool window in a cool room would be the best location for this plant. Temperatures that get above 68 degrees F are not beneficial for prolonging the life of a cyclamen. Watering the cyclamen can be tricky. Be careful not to over water; this will cause roots to rot. Water when the soil is dry to the touch. Be sure to discard the excess water that drains into the saucer about 15 min. after watering.

The cyclamen will bloom from October through April. When the temperatures become warm-

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your plant's behavior. Its leaves will perk up, and it will begin to produce flower buds again. Before you know it, the plant will be back to its old self again and ready to perform for you during the winter months!

Christmas Cactus

This plant is enjoyed by many over the holiday season. It also prefers a good sunny location. It requires a dryer soil. In order to get this plant to re-bloom, it requires a cold period in the fall. The plant can be set outside during the summer months, and after a few cool nights in the fall, bring it back inside and put it in a sunny location. The cool snap is what it needs to trigger the flower buds to set. Before you know it, the Christmas cactus will be blooming for you again!

If you are transplanting your houseplant, use a potting mix that is formulated for houseplants. We transplanting your plants, loosen up the roots before planting it in new soil. Transplant the plant in a container that is slightly larger than the one it is now growing in. Water it well and your plant is ready for another year or so of healthy living!

er, the plant stops producing flower buds. As the summer progresses, often times cyclamen will go almost into a state of dormancy. The plant will stop growing leaves, and often appear to be dying. Continue to keep the plant alive through the summer months, keeping it as cool as you can, and giving it plenty of sunlight inside and continue watering. When the fall months approach, and the nighttime temperatures begin to drop, you will see an improvement in

To read other gardening articles visit the gardening section of Emmitsburg.net.

The Small Town Gardener

Mother knows best

Marianne Wilburn

It is inevitable that all things must end. When applied to such natural disasters as extended mother-in-law visits or influenza, the adage is a cherished one. When applied to the sights and scents of a long season in the garden, it is a bit-sweet saying at best, and a cruel suggestion at worst. Yet it is sadly and inexorably true. All around us the natural world is slowly slipping into hibernation; and Nature, in her maternal wisdom, is providing a gentle example for those of us who need to be physically removed from the flower beds before our rubber boots freeze into the topsoil. If only we would listen.

"Time to rest" she whispers with each falling leaf...but there is always one more flower pot to empty. "Days are short," she mutters a little louder when the sun sets just after lunchtime...still, one more vegetable bed to tidy before the bats come out. "The season is over," she exclaims in a restrained, ladylike yell...yet we dilly over the pruning and dally over the raking. Predictably, we leave her no choice but to send a message embedded firmly in the depths of a freezing ice storm: "HEY! Yes, you in the waterproof down filled parka and full face balaclava! It's time to COME INSIDE...NOW!!!"

I admit that I can be a bit deaf to her cries. I never was very good at listening to my mother, biological or otherwise. Without a brigade of under gardeners at my disposal, I must wearily accept that the duties left undone shall remain undone until the winds of March have ceased to blow. A wisteria left untrellised, pots filled with last year's soil, an underperforming photinia bound tightly by the stifling embrace of morning glory tendrils – all little jobs, all slated now for next year and a new start.

Like most mothers, Nature is doing this for our own good. At least there's no spanking involved (unless you count the ice storm). I may be unwilling to bid goodbye for a season, but my plants, trees, shrubs, bulbs and weeds are in desperate need of a well-earned hiatus after months of performances every day of the week. Furthermore, they are exceedingly grateful for a respite from the incessant pruning, moving and nit picking of a strung-out gardener, desperate for one more hour of light before the sun goes down behind bare hilltops. And, Mother reasons, if I will only wipe that look off my face and listen to her for a moment, I may just realize she has the bigger picture in mind.

I need a break too – a complete break. For what pleasure can any activity afford without the contrast of doing without it for a short

while? Even world travel would lose its charm if one was forced to ride a poultry-filled bus from Calcutta to New Delhi every day of the year. My weeding duties are perhaps not as grueling, and certainly not as pungent, but you get the picture. It's time to rest.

Even the professionals are putting down their trowels and hoses and setting themselves to bookwork and planning in the month of December. It is a time to take stock and enjoy the fact that a month's absence in the garden will not guarantee the loss of one's sanity in a forest of seven foot teasel stems. Who knows, we may start to get comfortable with early morning cups of coffee sipped in duvet-draped chairs during the very hours we would have been up to our hocks in the compost pile – dangerously comfortable.

Too soon January will bring the rustle of thousands of seed catalogs, February will usher in trays and soil bags for early seedlings, washing machine tops will be cleared, grow-lights will go up, seeds will be sown, spouses will grumble.

Too soon we will forgo the easy chairs for knee-pads and a lifting belt. Our days will be mapped by frost warnings and seed charts. We'll stop feeding our children and our pets will travel the neighborhoods in search of companionship.

Too soon garden tours will begin, panicking will begin in earnest, vacations will be scheduled according to what's growing, what's sprouting, what needs to be harvested – come to think of it, why bother with that nonsense, who needs a vacation anyway?

You do. I do. The plants do. Access your rational mind for a moment and consider: can you conceive of starting this cycle once again without a thorough break? Such is the beauty and wisdom of a four-season year. When Spring eventually arrives, heralded by that first snowdrop or early daffodil, we will welcome her with open arms and receive her honey-do list like a newlywed in the first blissful weeks of matrimony. With that first waft of lilac, we will cast off the eiderdown and don heavy coats, desperate for a peak of the new season, thrilled to plunge our hands back into that sun-warmed soil. The scales of luxury will fall from our eyes and we will forget about being ladies and gentleman of leisure – just like that. And Mother Nature will pat us on the head, smile that shrewd little smile and remind us gently, "I told you so."

I'll try to take the reproach with grace. My mother is always right in the end too.

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CIVIL WAR HISTORY

The Union soldier during the Maryland campaign of 1862

John A. Miller
Part Two

On September 14th, the 155th Pennsylvania arrived at Monocacy, and they could hear the cannon in the distance that was engaged at South Mountain. While at Monocacy, many men managed to quickly get in a bath, cleaning themselves for the first time since arriving in Washington. Again the daily task was picked up where it had left off and now they would be marching to Antietam.

During the Battle of South Mountain, many of the Union soldiers were wearing a combination of state issued jackets from New York or Ohio, while many others were wearing their fatigue blouses, or what most people call a sack coat today. However, there are two units at South Mountain that wore a complete dress uniform. The first group was the 17th Michigan Infantry. They had been in service for only a few weeks when they fought at South Mountain at Fox's Gap, wearing their frock coats with shoulder scales and their dress hats. This was their

first engagement. The second unit was that of the Iron Brigade. They too, were wearing dress uniforms similar to that of the 17th Michigan Infantry.

To the north of Turner's Gap, many New Yorkers of Hatch's Division would have been wearing jackets provided by the State of New York. Some of the men were ordered to drop their knapsacks before moving up the spur of the mountain. Others, like the 76th New York marched up the mountain wearing their knapsacks, and upon reaching the summit, were ordered to drop their knapsack and engage the enemy. After the battle, some of the men who had left their knapsacks near the base of the mountain were allowed to get them, providing that their brigade or regiment was ordered to fall back and allow the reserves to take position.

In the book entitled "Three Years in the Army, the Official History of the 13th Massachusetts Volunteers" Charles E. Davis wrote about the shape his unit was in during the Maryland Campaign. On September 14th he



wrote: "The unexpected often happens in the army. When we retreated from Manassas, the afternoon of August 30, we gave up all hope of seeing our knapsacks again, as the grove where they were deposited had been taken possession of by the enemy. During our advance up the mountain to-day, the dead body of a rebel belonging to a Georgia regiment was seen lying on the ground near the road, where he was killed. One of our boys, regretting the loss of his knapsack, and noticing the Reb had one, concluded to make good his loss by transferring it to his own back. Now the most astonishing thing about this was the discovery, upon removing the knapsack, that it was his own property,

which had been toted from Manassas to South Mountain by a rebel soldier. He was still more amazed on opening it to find the contents had been undisturbed."

After the Battle of South Mountain on September 14th, many Union troops went to sleep that night under arms upon the battlefield. The next day, the Union army was put into motion marching toward Sharpsburg. Small details were left behind on the South Mountain battlefield to collect and pile accouterments and arms that were scattered, and to bury the dead.

Private Edward King Wightman of the 9th New York Volunteer Infantry wrote about the march toward South Mountain on September 15th. Near Frederick, Maryland he wrote: "In the small hours of the morning our rascally recruits had stolen a suckling pig from a secessionist and roasted him. Our boys are, like most privates in the army, disgustingly unprincipled and profane... They eat pies and drink cider ad lib and walk off with them in their stummuts without a thought of paying... The officers just look the other way, to obtain the reputation of being good fellows." He continued: "They took rations of crackers and salt pork and started marching toward Frederick. They overtook an ammunition train and put their haversacks in the donkey bins strapped behind the wagon, continued our journey with relieved backs and lighter spirits."

Arriving at Middletown, Maryland, Private Wightman rode in the regimental ambulance and spent the night at Middletown. He recalled seeing the old South Mountain battlefield as it laid in ruin. "It was obvious that an army had been there fences torn down, old ladies bewailing the ruin of their cabbage plants, the scarcity of food at hotels and in private houses... and the sight of wounded men, bullet holes in

walls and trees, fences shattered by shells, dead horses, etc."

During the Maryland Campaign the Second US Sharpshooters were documented as wearing their famous green uniform. In the book "Berdan's United States Sharpshooters in the Army of the Potomac, 1861-1865" by Charles Augustus Stevens, he wrote about a conversation that took place in Sharpsburg after the Battle of Antietam. He wrote "As Surgeon Reynolds and myself were riding along the Sharpsburg pike, arriving at the very place where the adjutant fell, we rae a carriage containing a lady. She spoke to us and wanted to be directed to the Second U. S. Sharpshooters, and recognizing our green uniforms, said: "Perhaps you belong to that regiment," to which we replied affirmatively."

After the Battle of Antietam and Confederate General JEB Stuart's Chambersburg Raid, the Union army still laid in waiting. On October 3rd, Private Robert Cruikshank of the 123rd New York Infantry wrote from Pleasant Valley: "I am very well but have hard fare now. The rations are very bad and we have cold nights and do not have clothing enough as our knapsacks were left at Washington with nearly all our clothing. We hope to get them soon."

Stephen Minot Weld, Jr. wrote about the condition of the Union soldier on October 16th, "We have been waiting for clothing, shoes, etc., for the men, many of whom are in a very destitute condition." He then wrote on the 31st of October from Sandy Hook "The men are now all provided with shoes and clothing, which they were very much in need of after the battle Antietam."

On October 17th, while encamped at Pleasant Valley, Private Wightman noted the lack of provisions that his unit had. Their knapsacks had been stored

continued on next page.

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CIVIL WAR HISTORY

A snowball's chance....

Bernadette Loeffel Atkins

During the American Civil War, the winter months gave many troops, both Union and Confederate, an opportunity to rest and recover from three seasons of fighting and marching. In their leisure time, the soldiers would write letters home, play cards and games, read or tell stories. Life in winter camp could become both boring and monotonous. As weeks of inactivity and confinement built up, tempers quickened and quarreling and fighting increased. To release the tension and boredom of their daily lives, the soldiers sought relief in the winter sport of snowballing.

From the first arrival of a few inches of snow until the melting of the snow's remains in spring, snowballing was the most popular sport in camp. It was more

than just a sport between the soldiers, at times a minor snowball skirmish turned into a full-scale battle, complete with bruises, black eyes, gashed faces and even broken bones. Some of the overzealous soldiers would fill the core of the snowballs with rocks or lead. At times, snowball battles were fought with such vigor that many of the participants were severely injured requiring first aid. Many soldiers would build up a surplus of the frozen white missiles in advance.

Wilbur Fisk, 2nd Vermont Infantry recalled, "We had glorious sport this forenoon snowballing...Snowballs flew thick and fast, some of the foremost on each side

getting completely plastered over with them, head, ears, neck and all..."

Albert Harris, a Vermont-er, wrote home to his broth-

er, "The Conal broak one Lieutenant's nose." In the journal of E.Mussence in the Washington Artillery Papers, the Louisianian diarist states, "Cap CH Slocomb lost two front teeth-Lieut Chal-leron a blackeye-Among the privates of the 5th Co was 5 bloody noses a

Blackeye all of them more or less bruised..."

A New Hampshire participant observed, "tents were wrecked, bones broken, eyes blacked, and teeth knocked out - all in fun."

General Joseph Hooker, concerned about his dispirited men, even set up formal regimental snowball fights, complete with officers on horseback. Not all of the

officers encouraged snowballing. In the diary of Edwin B. Weist at Camp Pitcher, he writes, "Some of our boys and the Zouaves got to snowballing and had a big time



of it. It would probably ended in a fight if the officer of the day had not come around and put a stop to it."

William Fletcher, 8th Texas Cavalry wrote, "...All were defeated; all were victorious...with but two reported injured to mar the day's pleasure. There was an order issued prohibiting general snowballing."

Many snowball fights were well documented and written up like an official report as was the Great Snowball Battle of the Rappahannock Academy in February of 1863 and the Battle of the Snow

in March of 1864.

As long as there was an abundance of snow and bored, homesick soldiers, a snowball fight was guaranteed to evolve. John S. Jackson, 9th Kentucky Infantry sums up the sentiments of many soldiers, "We have seen more fun today than at any other time during the war."

Ms. Loeffel-Atkins is a native New Yorker and has lived in Gettysburg, PA for the past 15 years. She is an author and co-owner of Battlefields & Beyond Book Shoppe and Gettysburg Publishing Company.

Continued from page 22

in a warehouse while at Frederick on September 15, and a month later the knapsacks were delivered to the soldier's in Pleasant Valley. The men were looking forward to receiving blankets, overcoats, as well as new socks, clean shirts and a toothbrush.

Private Henry Ropes of the 20th Massachusetts Infantry wrote on October 28th from Bolivar Heights near Harper's Ferry: "We have had a very heavy rain and I find that my rubber tent let in water in the seams which fasten the canvas to the top of the tent." He continued: "Last night we had 1/2 inch of ice. Rather tough for shelter tents and an insufficient supply of blankets. It is awfully cold and I have suffered very much for want of warm clothing for the night."

Private Ropes sent a letter home to Massachusetts asking his family for various items that he needed. On October 30th, he wrote to his family stating that he received a trunk that contained buffalo, two blue blankets, knapsack, India rubber blanket, two bottles of wine, gingerbread, coffee, tea, sugar, lantern, cup saucer, plate and hatchet. By November 1st, Private Ropes wrote home again thanking his family for the knapsack because the army was on the march.

Not only did the infantry suffer during the Maryland Campaign, but so did the cavalry. Listed on a company muster roll for Company E, of the 6th New York Cavalry, it states; "The men were compelled to throw away some of their clothing away in order to lighten their horses and consequently have largely overdrawn their accounts."

The artillery seemed to fair better than the other branches in the Army of the Potomac. According to the history of 5th Massachusetts Battery written in 1902, a portion of Chase's Dairy for September 12th states that their knapsacks were fully

stocked with clean clothing since stripped to light marching orders on August 10th. "The History of Battery E, First Regiment Rhode Island Light Artillery" by George Lewis states upon arriving in Washington that they received much needed clothing.

After General George McClellan was relieved of his command, the Union Army made their way into Virginia. By December, they were fighting at Fredericksburg, Virginia. By Christmas, the soldiers of the Union army would once again

reflect on their homes. For many, this would be their first Christmas away from home. Packages of personal effects such as scarves, gloves, stocking caps, and undergarments would comfort them during this difficult time. Those regiments

that remained in Maryland after the Maryland Campaign fared much better than those on the front lines near Fredericksburg.

To read more on the Emmitsburg in the Civil War visit the Historical Society section of Emmitsburg.net.

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MOUNT CREATIVE WRITERS / HISTORY

The Christmas legend of Larry Dielman

Kelly Conroy
MSM Class of 2012

Historical Society Note: for decades, most Emmitsburgians knew the Christmas legend of Larry Dielman. Sadly however, this legend has all but died out. In hopes of giving it a new lease on life, we challenged our Mount Creative Writer, Kelly Conroy to research the short 7-paragraph legend and expand it with insights for historical facts on Larry's life and from the time period it took place - 1843-1922. We then granted her liberty to enhance it with creative dialogue to personalize it into a story as Larry Dielman himself might tell it.

His boots were brown, but not the brown they used to be. When Larry Dielman first bought his shoes they were a crisp, medium colored brown with darker laces that tied from his toes to above his ankles. Now they were spotted with various shades of brown and there were holes in the front. Larry had replaced the dark laces with bright white ones just last week. *There are some things in life that are not so easy to repair or replace,* the old man muses as he trudges up the mountain behind the Mount to his father's grave.

Yup, my father was good, I'll admit that, Larry thought to himself. "A hard act to follow," neighbors would always whisper. *But I heard those neighbors, every time. I heard their fake pity for me, acting like they were being sympathetic.*

Larry kicked a stone and continued the climb. Then he sighed: *Now I look at my own behavior. No, I didn't look at that back then. I could have just admitted my father was good and moved on. Instead, I acted the role of the kid who had a hard act to follow.*

Wrinkles circle the man's eyes and a beanie hat covers almost all of his thin gray hair. The mountain is steep, but not so steep that a cleared path is needed; Larry grips a walking stick with his gloves. The ground is covered with mushy snow that turns to a brown almost the color of the man's boots with every step that he takes. A perfectly clear sky showcases the stars and moon. Light streams through the leafless trees.

Things got better though - I married her, Larry reflected. *She had sparkling blue eyes and a ready laugh. My hands were shaking and I almost fainted when she said yes. I can still feel her slender hand that I always held when we walked in the land near the Gettysburg battle site. I hear the rough voice that yelled at us for kissing on the train that streamed through our town.* Larry paused for a moment and restricted the water in the crevice of his eye.

The air was getting a little colder as he ascended. He would always make the climb, no matter if he was sick or tired or cold. He did not pause in one spot for long in his hike or in the time of happiness with his wife. *How did I not go after*

her as she walked through the door? Larry broke down. How many times did I return to my spot in front of the store and hunch over in tears?

The same thoughts and the same steps repeated year after year. After some time the man reached the tip of the mountain. He loosened the pouch that was swung over his shoulder and carefully revealed his father's flute. Larry smoothed a patch of snow for a seat and back rest. He checked his watch - 11:00 pm on Christmas Eve.

. . . .

Larry entered Bradley, a building on Mount St. Mary's campus used for classes and functioning as a dormitory. He had been in there when he was little, but this was his first time visiting as a teenager. Everyone knew Mr. Henry C. Dielman, whose office was down the hallway on the left side. A sign reading, "Music is the prayer your heart sings" hung on his office door. Larry would always say "Hi" to Mrs. Smythe when he walked in the main door. After expressing how much he looked like his father, Mrs. Symthe handed him the usual apple from her orchard that she had hidden in her desk.

Larry stuck it in his backpack for later. *I hope it's as good as the apples always used to be,* he thought. He walked past his dad's office and entered through the next door on the left. The room was quiet and three men in suits were seated in chairs. There was sound protection covering on the walls. He gripped tightly onto his flute and walked slowly towards them, his head towards the floor. The walk felt like a mile and he wished someone would break the silence.

"Welcome, you must be Larry, Henry's son." The men stood up and held out their hands.

"I am, thank you," Larry replied and slowly looked up to meet their gaze. Mr. Geralt, Mr. Solomon, and Fr. Richmond - he had heard their names around the house. *My dad's their boss,* he surmised.

"Please, make yourself comfortable," Mr. Geralt spoke again and pointed to a table for Larry to set down his bag and his flute case. Larry slid his flute out of the case and gazed at its perfectly formed shape.

"Whenever you're ready," Fr. Richmond instructed.

Larry remembered his dad leading the symphony orchestra on a Friday night in New York City. He could hear the applause of the crowd after his dad's show in Philly. He looked up at the three men who were about to hear him play. *They've heard my dad play too,* he realized.

Then he started to play. Hesitation in the beginning was soon replaced with confidence. Larry had played this difficult piece hundreds of times and his fingers moved the way they always did. He was back in his corner of the living room in his home and he did not need to glance down at the sheet.



"Well done," the three men smiled, and Larry was suddenly aware of the white walls again. "Be assured that you will be hearing from us soon."

Larry smiled and sighed as he walked out of the door with his bag and his flute. He hadn't yet put it back in its case. Two other young men were wearing suits in the hallway, but they were a little older than him.

Two days later, a letter arrived at Larry's house. He tore it open and read its contents: "Mr. Larry Dielman, Congratulations! You have been admitted to the School of Music at Mount St. Mary's University." Larry made a slight jump in the air and waved the letter! He was just about to find his Mom when he read the closing: "Sincerely, Mr. Henry Dielman, Chair and Mr. Geralt, Mr. Solomon, and Fr. Richmond."

"Why did he sign the letter?" Larry asked. He tried to guess the size of the crowd in New York City and how long the applause lasted in Philly. Then, he ripped the letter into a million little pieces.

. . . .

"Hi honey," fifteen year old Larry winked at a girl in a pink skirt as she walked past. She slowed her step and glanced over her shoulder. Larry smiled and nodded his head to the bench next to him. Slowly, he started playing his banjo and then picked up the pace to create a wild

love tune. The girl kept her gaze upon him until she knew she was out of time.

"Come back," Larry flirted, "You know you're the prettiest!"

The girl felt all jittery as she walked into the store. She would make it a point to do the family shopping for her mom in the future.

The step in front of the general store was a usual spot for Larry on the weekends. He was too young to enter the war between the states and he did not mind having some of the men of Emmitsburg gone for a little while. And although Larry did not really like the banjo or practice it much, it still provided a means of entertainment for the girls.

One day, his sister Adelaide walked up. He tipped his hat and played a slow and respectful song as she entered the family grocery store on Main Street. *Oh stop it, Adelaide flipped her hair and turned towards him.*

"Looks like you're taking great care of the store - Mom and Dad would be so happy that you're being so attentive to the customers inside," Adelaide said aloud.

"The other worker is in there," Larry revealed a big smile and played a couple chords on the banjo in reply. Adelaide pictured her dad leading the symphony orchestras in New York and Philly and then stared down at Larry.

"You know, when we both started playing the flute, you were always better," Adelaide recalled,

"but I didn't let that stop me from playing."

"Hmm ok," was his only reply. "I love it and I know you do too," Adelaide spoke quietly, "Playing at the nursing home to make the elderly smile is great."

"I'll never be as good as him," Larry stared hard at her.

"Maybe not. I hope you can find another reason for sharing your talent with the flute."

"I don't love it," he tried to convince her and he put his hands back on his banjo.

Adelaide turned and walked into the store. Larry looked down at his feet, but not for long. A girl with long, flowing black hair and bright blue eyes was walking past. He struck up a chord on the banjo and the girl flashed him a smile.

"Margaret," the girl held out her hand, "But you can call me Maggie."

Larry pulled her hand closer to give it a kiss. "Oh princess, how charitable to allow me to call you Maggie," Larry's eyes laughed as he spoke.

Maggie slowly pulled back her hand and laughed but didn't know what to say.

"A princess needs a prince you know..." Larry informed her.

"You are so forward!" Maggie interjected and took a step back.

"Date - Saturday night at 7:00?" Larry asked.

"Fine," Maggie replied.

"Great!" Larry smiled, "See you

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MOUNT CREATIVE WRITERS / HISTORY

then!" His banjo played a little more lively than usual as Maggie walked away.

From inside the store, Adelaide watched as Maggie walked away and a group of five giggling girls gathered around Larry. *This is embarrassing*, Adelaide believed. She slid into the front of the group of girls by Larry and it was soon just her and her brother again.

"Thanks a lot for scaring the girls away," Larry grumbled.

"They all think you like them," Adelaide started to raise her voice.

"Isn't that a good thing?" Larry winked at her.

"I hope you will be able to calm down some day and just choose one!" Adelaide yelled at him and left.

• • • •

A large vase held red roses that had been so alive just a couple months ago, but now were brown and withered. Thank-you notes for the wedding presents still needed to be written. Even the "Just Married" sign was still in the front yard.

Maggie dusted a picture of her wedding day with Larry that was hanging above the fireplace. Her fingers lingered for a minute as she thought about how he had called her a princess on the first day. They had gone on a date that Saturday and many dates after that, including walks, carriage rides, and a honeymoon to the shore.

The smell of burnt rice brought Maggie back to the kitchen. She was making his favorite - pepper chicken with rice and asparagus, and peanut butter chocolate chip cookies for dessert. Maggie heard a whistle and knew Larry had to be home. She glanced out the window and saw his banjo under his arm. She slammed the potholders onto the counter and walked outside.

"Where have you been?" Maggie shouted.

"Hi sweetie! Don't you even want to give me a kiss before you start questioning me?" Larry opened his arms for a hug.

"Where have you been?" Maggie repeated herself. "I thought that phase in your life was over. I thought you already found your girl."

"Of course I did," Larry smiled and again opened his arms for a hug.

"It's so pathetic - you still flirting with the girls in front of your store." Water started to gather in Maggie's eyes.

"Oh Maggie, I'm your prince, remember? You know it's not like that," Larry replied.

"What I know is that this is not the first time you've flirted and who knows what else with other women in the three months we have been married," Maggie's knees wobbled and her face drooped with tears.

"Aw, come on, Maggie, let's go inside and eat dinner," Larry walked towards the front door.

"I'm not eating with you,"

Maggie's face became stern. She walked inside, packed her bags, and never returned.

• • • •

The house stood two stories high with a white railing around the front porch. The porch swing let out a loud creak as Larry brushed his hand over it. He twisted the doorknob and with a little push, he stepped inside. There was no sweet smell of apple pie coming from the kitchen. The family picture collection above the fireplace was covered with dust. The brand new record player was in the center of the room - his mother did not live long enough to witness the invention.

"Dad, I'm here," Larry, now in his mid-thirties, pours himself a glass of water and takes off his coat. After a minute, he repeats himself. He glances out the window to the back yard. Then, he walks upstairs, turning his eyes away from his own wedding picture on the wall. "I come to visit and he's not even here to see me," Larry grumbles.

Larry grabs his coat and heads for the front door. Halfway there, he pauses and tilts his head back to look in the master bedroom off of the kitchen. He sees his dad's hand hanging off the side of the bed. He retraces his steps and looks down at his Dad's face. It is red and his dad's lips are moving. His dad's fingers are motioning down to him. Larry slightly bends his knees.

I wish she could be with me now, Larry thought about his wife. *I should've gone after her*.

A noise came out of his Dad's mouth and Larry again looked at his face. "I'm sorry," his dad whispered.

Sorry for your greatness? Sorry that everyone liked you? Larry wondered. *St. Mary's on the hill. That's where my Mom is buried and he will be too.* Larry reminded himself and looked down at his Dad again.

"You were such a good son."

"Good," Larry replied.

His dad's voice was getting quieter and he could not pick up his head when he talked. His speech started to break: "Larry... promise me..."

"Dad, just calm down," his son told him.

"Please... listen," his father begged.

"Just relax," his son instructed.

"Do what you love," his father's eyes opened and stared into Larry's.

"That is only something for people like you," Larry interjected.

Larry's father closed his eyes. There were no women in the house to help Larry make funeral arrangements. His mother had died twelve years ago. His wife had left him; otherwise he would have brought her with him.

• • • •

Glorious tunes from Larry's flute drift through the trees, across the snow, and all around the men and women going to Midnight Mass near the Mountain. He sits very still and the air comes from deep inside him.

The Churchgoers could whisper the words to *When Glory Lit the*



Saint Anthony's Catholic Church

The Rebecca Pearl Gallery will hold its annual Christmas open house on December 10th from 4-7 pm. The year's open house will feature a new watercolor of St. Anthony's Church, called "Autumn Mass." Limited edition prints will be available as a fund raiser for the church & the Emmitsburg food bank. In addition to Rebecca's work visitors will be treated to works by Elizabeth Prongess, Emily Slovika, and Rebecca's students as well as ceramics by Judy Ott and jewelry by Ruth Schipper.

Midnight Air: "With glory lit, the midnight air, Revealed bright angels hovering there. In fear beheld the raptur'd swains, when rose the heav'n inspired strains."

Larry could see his own home and his parent's home from his spot on top of the mountain. He could see the building where he auditioned and his store. He saw most of the town of Emmitsburg and the railroad tracks running to it.

Larry looked down at his parent's gravestones in front of him. *I hope... no... I know you're smiling down, Dad. The people are humming along— Can you hear them? They join in every year. The music makes them smile. I push myself hard. I think I've gotten a lot better. You could still probably give me a couple tips.* Larry's blue eyes glimmer in the moonlight.

He thought about the hikes he had made up the mountain every Christmas Eve. The mountain had

not changed much and his legs had gotten older, but the climb had grown easier every year. *I did not always talk to you Dad, as I climbed up, but I've always done it for you*, Larry smiled.

And Maggie, this climb is for you, too. I remember how you had made my favorite meal on the day I came home with my banjo. Oh the sweet smell of peanut butter chocolate chip cookies! I love you with my whole heart now and I'm sorry it's too late. Please feel my love with every step.

Unlike past years, where the people of Emmitsburg would don their coats and make the steep journey to the gravesite with him, this year Larry was alone. But he didn't mind. In past years, he was unable to make the steep climb and had to be taken by sled, but this year, he made the climb himself.

At 11:55 pm Larry was just about to slip his flute into his pouch, and make

his way down the Mountain to find his usual seat in the back pew of St. Anthony's Catholic Church when he suddenly stopped playing. He faltered and fell to the ground unconscious. Larry's faithful listeners came to his rescue, but he died just a couple months later in 1923. Yet after forty years of playing on the mountain, his flute would not be silenced.

Oldtimers say that if you listen very carefully on Christmas Eve or Christmas morning you can still hear the ethereal strains of beautiful flute music floating down from the cemetery. A short time later, it is gone, not to be heard again for another year.

So this Christmas Eve, as the clock nears midnight, open your window and listen for the sounds of flute music from the mountain, and upon hearing it, pass the Christmas legend of Larry Dielman onto future generations.

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COLD WAR WARRIORS

A diplomat's Cold War

Tom Wajda
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Part one

"A diplomat is an honest gentleman sent abroad to lie for his country."

—Sir Henry Wotton, English ambassador to Venice, 1612–1621



Tom Wajda

Introduction

The Cold War was fought on many fronts: from the deck of ships in the North Atlantic, guard posts along the Iron Curtain, ICBM silos in North Dakota, mud holes in Vietnam, and B-52 cockpits worldwide. Many of the more visible elements of the Cold War and tools our nation used to win it are burned into the minds of those who lived it. While some had upfront seats to the military side of the Cold War, I had a front and center seat to the diplomatic game of the century—a game we could not afford to lose. I was a State Department Foreign Service Officer.

From 1962 to the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s. I served in such places as Kabul, Afghanistan, Dakar, Senegal, South Vietnam, Berlin, Paris and Washington D.C. I saw the Cold War through the eyes and ears of a diplomat for the United States in the best and worst of places, and times.

I was a career Foreign Service Officer, not a "spook" who was using an Embassy assignment for cover. I did not fly super secret missions over

the Soviet Union or work at Checkpoint Charlie in Berlin. I was a working diplomat of the United States – I was just doing my job to represent U.S. national interests – wherever I was assigned - to the best of my ability, be it working on mundane issues such as union activities in a developing country or high tech issues that tied to weapons control and development in the 1980s.

Youth and Education

As a boy growing up on a farm in Johnston, Ohio I can recall becoming interested in foreign affairs. I think it came from listening to Lowell Thomas and Gabriel Heatter on the radio; they described a world that was being shaped by a Cold War, which was happening as I moved from my farm home away to college.

I attended Youngstown State University and graduated in 1962 with a B.S. in Political Science. In my senior year I took every aptitude exam possible in a search for employment. I must have done pretty well, because I came through with a scholarship to Vanderbilt University's Masters Degree program in Political Science and Foreign Affairs.

I was still deciding what to do when the State Department contacted me and offered me an opportunity in the diplomatic corps. I took their written and oral exams and the next thing I knew I was sitting in a room with three State Department interviewers who grilled me for three hours. They would ask me questions such as "what would you do if you were a senior U.S. Diplomat in this scenario" or "OK, you're working for Adlai Stevenson (the then US Secretary of State) in the U.S. Mission at the United Nations and dealing with the China and Taiwan issue. "What are your recommendations to Ambassador Stevenson as to how the U.S. should deal with the Taiwan issue?"

The oral 'exam' lasted for three hours and when it was done, I was asked to leave the room and sit in the hallway. I did as told and was not comforted when I heard my interviewers roaring with laughter as

they reviewed the session. I guess I misunderstood them because shortly afterwards the door opened and I was told that I had passed and was accepted for employment as a U.S. Foreign Service Officer. I was told to report immediately for orientation and training at State Dept. Headquarters in Washington. I was on my way. The year was 1963 and the tensions from the Cold War were at their peak.

I should mention that I met my wife Madeline in 1960 while she was a student at Akron University and we were married the following year (1961). She shared in my lifelong career in the State Department from the very beginning.

1963 - 1967: Tehran and Kabul

My first assignment was to the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, Iran in 1964. At the time, Iran, under the leadership of the Shah, was a staunch ally of the West and a major impediment to Soviet expansion into the Indian Ocean. This was a training assignment to prepare me for my first real assignment in Kabul, Afghanistan.

I was assigned to the embassy in Tehran where I was initiated into the American embassy and began learning the various roles. My first assignment was in the commercial office, which was responsible for helping American businesses seeking to work in the country cut through Iranian red tape. After this, I was moved to the consular office, which was responsible for the issuance of visas and for dealing with local officials when Americans ran afoul of local laws. My last assignment was in the embassy's administration office, whose responsibilities included day-to-day functions like obtaining food, water, and housing for staff and security. Yes, little old me used to oversee some mighty tough Marines!

Upon completion of my last rotation at the Tehran embassy, I was sent to my first real job – Kabul, Afghanistan.

We tend to think of Afghanistan as a small, backward country. In fact, with a population of 28 million in an area of 600,000 square miles it is the 42nd most populous nation in



John Jay, one of the Founding Fathers. He was also considered the father of the American Diplomatic Corps.

the world. The country has a rich and significant history. In ancient times the Silk Road, which was a major pathway for trade and human migration, passed through the country. It was also the military conquest of men like Alexander the Great and Ghengis Khan. Later, in the 19th century, the country became a buffer state in the "Great Game" between the Russian and British empires.

I served in Afghanistan in a relative period of calm. I arrived in Kabul in 1965 to become Head of the U.S. Embassy's Consular Section, an impressive title for an office of one. As the Consular Officer involved in issuing visas to the United States, I became particularly involved with Polish citizens who were working on Soviet projects in Afghanistan. The Soviets were building low cost housing units for the Afghans - and many of these Polish workers sought visas to come to the U.S. in hopes of escaping the communist govern-

ment that ruled their country.

About this time we had 40,000 Poles with visa applications that had been submitted to the State Department in Washington. One thousand (at best) might actually receive a visa, very low odds. The average Polish worker could remain on the list forever, but if they had a good, technical background they moved up on the list.

Their applications could move more quickly if they had some help, but most were terrified to approach the American Embassy because of possible trouble with the Polish or Soviet Security services. So the Poles came to me for help. They approached me at home—not at the Embassy. Through my "home office" of the Consular Section –I managed to get dozens of Poles safely through to America in the 1960s.

My wife Madeline was with me on the Afghanistan assignment (and all others during my career - except Vietnam.) You could say she was managing my Kabul "home office". She recently commented to me that she thinks "Afghanistan was much safer back then." She was right.

Since the late 1970s Afghanistan has been in a constant state of war. A victim you might say of the proxy wars that resulted from the Cold War. The Afghan government, backed by the Soviets, encountered trouble with the rise of a resistance movement, the Mujahideen. The Soviets were called in for support in 1979. Eventually, the Mujahideen overthrew the established monarchy of Afghanistan and the Soviets were forced out of Afghanistan after a long, resource draining fight. The success of the Mujahideen was largely due to US support in training and



Dean Rusk, Secretary of State in the Kennedy and Johnson administration.

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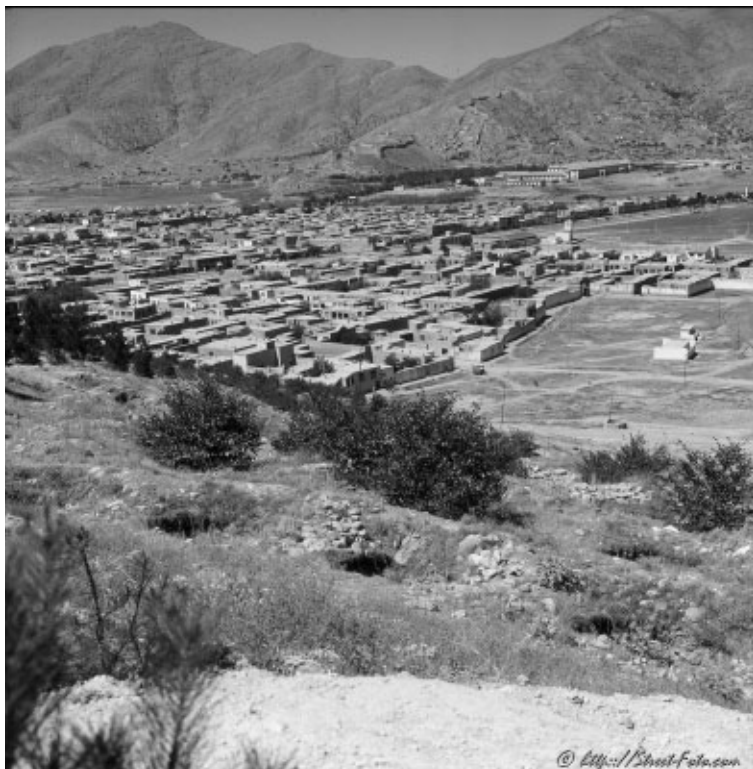
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COLD WAR WARRIORS



Kabul as it appeared in 1960 when the author was assigned there.

supply of weapons. With the collapse of the Marxist Afghan government, the country fell into shambles. In the late 1990s Pakistan intervened in support of the Taliban, which unfortunately led to the rise of Al-Qaeda and the attacks on 9/11, which led to the U.S. military operations in 2001 to overthrow the Taliban government.

But back in 1960, Afghanistan was still neutral and very much in the eye of the major players in the Cold War. If Afghanistan could be won over to the Soviet cause it would serve as a wedge between Iran and Pakistan, another key US ally, and in so doing, buttress India, then a key Soviet ally which had only recently offered the Soviet Navy port facilities, and allowed its navy to challenge the US Navy worldwide.

So Afghanistan was a lynch pin that no-one could afford to lose. Major nations that were in Afghanistan in the 1960s included Great Britain, the U.S., the Soviets and the Germans. All had some particular project they were working on that was important to them. Most of these were "highway projects". For example, the U.S. was building a highway from Kabul to Kandahar, the Soviets, one from Herat to Kandahar, and the Germans were building one from Jalalabad to the Pakistan border, known as the Khyber Pass.

My encounters with the diplomats from other nations were restricted pretty much to local cultural events such as the "buzkashi". This game was a Central Asian team sport where the player's goal was to grab the carcass of a headless goat or calf and then get it clear of the other players and pitch it across a goal line or into a target zone. It was here that we would gather with diplomats from China, the USSR, Great

Britain, and Germany.

I was the unofficial photographer for our diplomats and can recall one time when the Ambassador asked me to take a shot of his party at a buzukashi with the Chinese delegation standing in the background. Of course his intention was to get a shot of the entire Chinese delegation all in one bright, sunlit place. We had strict instructions to avoid getting into any conversations with the Chinese, so this was about as close as I got to them

The Soviets were another matter. We dealt with them from time to time in official and unofficial settings. In the '60s you could usually spot the Soviets that were non-diplomats - or spies. I thought of them as the ex-Soviet Army Tank Drivers: boorish, crude, poorly dressed and in need of a shave. This was quite a contrast with the very sophisticated Soviet "spies" that I would encounter in the 1970s while serving in the Dakar region of Senegal. These Soviets were suave, sophisticated, and fluent in French.

The closest I came to any real action was while in Afghanistan was the 1965 war between Pakistan and India. The second of what would be three wars fought between the two countries, and one more proxy war in the Cold War between the East and the West.

As Afghanistan was a land locked country, all the supplies for the Kabul embassy had to come via the Pakistan port of Karachi, which was in the thick of the fighting. For fear that our supplies would be destroyed, I went to Karachi to round up anything belonging to our embassy and bring it back. It was a stressful and hectic few days and I did not get to rest until I crossed the Khyber pass, the main mountain passageway into and out of Afghanistan, where I ate a kabob and

took a well-deserved nap.

1967 - 1970: Adapting to the Changing Times

After my tour in Afghanistan I was transferred to Washington D.C. and State Department Headquarters where I was assigned to the Operations Center which controlled the diplomatic mission of the United States worldwide and handled the day-to-day implementation of foreign policy. A stone's throw from the White House in the Foggy Bottom area of Washington D.C., home to the CIA, this was quite a change from a one-man consular office in Kabul. It provided me a wonderful chance to see the big picture of the Cold War in all its glory.

The operations center was the nerve center of the State Department. All communications, or 'cables' as they were then called, were routed through the center. If the Soviets made a move anywhere in the world, news of it would soon make its way to the operations center. As one of the operations staff it was my responsibility to read all incoming cables and route them to the appropriate offices for action. In addition, twice a day we would draft a briefing paper for then Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, on key events of the day. It was not uncommon for me to find myself working alone on a weekend and getting called by Secretary Rusk, who was just checking in to see if anything was 'afoot' somewhere in the world.

How many of my weekend conversations with Secretary Rusk went directly to his boss, the President, I'll never know. But it was a challenging time.

This was an era of super diplomacy where the NATO and Warsaw Pact alliances challenged each other worldwide. A time when fear of a major Soviet attack on Western Europe was waning, but when fear of a serious crisis in Europe would rise, resulting from miscalculation or mismanagement. In the plush offices of the State department we wrestled with the Cold War consequences of France's Charles de Gaulle removing his forces from under NATO command; of a Vietnam War growing day-by-day; and of a Soviets led invasion of Czechoslovakia to stop proposed anti-communist reforms.

Two of the more memorable events I can recall while working in the Operations center was the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and the capturing of the USS Pueblo by North Korea.

While not a true proxy war in the Cold war between the Soviets and the US, the 1967 Arab-Israeli war was nevertheless an opportunity for both sides to see how their military equipment would stand up against the other. Unfortunately for the Arabs, they quickly discovered that American tanks and French planes could out shoot and out fly anything the Soviets could build - resulting in the war lasting only six short days with the complete defeat of the Arab forces. While this complete victory was easy for our department to handle, the USS Pueblo incident posed a much greater challenge.

In 1968, North Korea took possession of the USS Pueblo while it was in waters off the North Ko-



rean coast. North Korea claimed that the ship had strayed into their territory, validating their capture of the ship, the boat was really in international waters. This case caused things in our situation room to become complicated quite quickly. As we didn't have diplomatic relations with either North Korea or Mainland China, we had to route all our 'cable' through third party neutral embassies, such as the Swiss. All the while we were in 'damage control mode' trying to come up with a plausible

story for the President to tell the American public as to how we let this puny, backwater country capture one of our super secret spy ships. To say it was an interesting time would be an understatement!

Shortly after the Pueblo fiasco I received a new assignment. This was one assignment where Madeline and the family would stay home; I was going to Vietnam.

Next month: Tom's Vietnam tour and the Cold War arms race of the 1970s and '80s.



The Shah of Iran and his wife. The Shah was a staunch ally of the West and a major impediment to Soviet expansion into the Indian Ocean.

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STAGES OF LIFE

Mom's Time-out

Getting into the spirit

Mary Angle

It's funny, I always want to make my articles "season" appropriate. In other words I want the summer articles to be about summer things and the winter articles to be about winter happenings and the December article to be about...Christmas of course. Unfortunately it is the beginning of November and I am still enjoying looking at Halloween pictures and making Thanksgiving plans. And, although the stores already have their Christmas decorations up and holiday muzak piped through their sound system, I am not quite there yet. So what do I write about? How about what puts me in the Christmas spirit.

Certainly seeing my kids make their Christmas lists for Santa is a big step in the right direction. I used to take my kids to Toys R Us, notepad in hand, and write down everything they squealed about. With four kids that can be quite the undertaking and cause a severe flare up of my corporal tunnel syndrome. Now, without ca-

ble or satellite the kids do not see commercials anymore and therefore don't know what to ask for unless we go to the store. But with the four of them over the years I have gotten a little smarter about how we do things. Now instead of the notepad in hand I have my digital camera. Not only am I able to document much faster what they are frantically insisting they can't live without but I also have a picture of the items. This is invaluable when Grandma asks for an item in the \$20 range and you read the list and have no idea what some of the items are. I am now able to pull up the pictures and know exactly what a DC Universe Red Lantern Skallox is and develop the picture for Grandma if necessary. Although their excitement when we go make this list is a great start toward getting in the Christmas spirit it is by no means the only "Holiday Spirit" tool I have.

There are, of course, the old standbys like watching Christmas movies in the evenings while snuggled under a warm blanket. The original Miracle on 34th St., It's a

Wonderful Life, and pretty much any of the holiday made for TV movies on the Hallmark channel will fit the bill. A close second to the holiday movie lineup is listening to Christmas carols, and listening to them while wrapping presents and sipping hot cocoa with mini marshmallows is possibly even better than the movies. But a Christmas movie, while wrapping, and sipping hot cocoa (standing in my slippers) might just be the ultimate Christmas mood setter.

There have been other things over the years that have helped my Christmas mood blossom, some inexpensive and others very expensive. One year my mother-in-law took me to New York to see the Rockettes Christmas show and, let me tell you, that combined with the tree in Rockefeller Center was a Christmas I will never forget. It probably didn't hurt that I had never been to New York in my life and had, therefore, never seen so many Christmas lights either. A less expensive time was spent going to Hickory Bridge Restaurant in Ortanna, PA. This restaurant is decked out in Christmas lights and garland from the minute you enter the walkway to

the front door. Then, when you enter the building there are old barn hard wood floors and running around the top of the room is an old fashioned toy train. In the corner you will see a beautifully decorated Christmas tree, as you walk over to enjoy cheese and crackers and hot cider set out on an old wagon. When you are seated at your table the food is served family style and the traditions and warmth fill the air. It truly is a magical start to any Christmas season.

Thanksgiving with family is another thing that helps put me in the spirit. I don't like to rush any holiday before its time, but when we all get together as a family for Thanksgiving I can't help but think that Christmas is right around the corner and I start to get in the mood. The day after Thanksgiving, yes BLACK FRIDAY, also helps my mood along. For those of you who have read some of my other articles you know I love tradition and one of my favorites is my GIRLS (me, my girls, my mom, and my mother-in-law) weekend starting the day after Thanksgiving. The four of us pile in the car and go down to the eastern shore to meet my mom and we spend the whole weekend shopping, eating, watching movies and enjoying each other's company.

Another thing that has helped with my holiday spirit is adopting a family from the Neighbors in Need program offered through Human Services Programs, Inc. in Carroll County. This program helps provide a Christmas for Families that would not otherwise be able to afford Christmas. If you adopt a family you agree to provide gifts and food for the Christmas holiday. What better way to celebrate the holiday that is meant to remind us of the birth of Jesus than giving unselfishly of ourselves the way he would have. Sometimes I think we all forget the reason for the season. It isn't about the gifts, the movies, the heartwarming songs, or anything else, but truly about the birth of a savior. A little baby was born with nothing but a family who loved him. And that, the birth of our savior and the love of our family, is truly what should put us all in the Christmas spirit.

I hope this article helps everyone to find their inner child and get into the Christmas spirit and reminds us all of the blessings we have. I hope everyone remembers the reason for the season and that everyone has a safe, happy and blessed holiday season. Merry Christmas, Happy New Year and God Bless!

The Wine Connoisseur

Sparkling wine conjures up images of parties and toasts, glamour and celebrations.

It goes by many names, Champagne in France, Prosecco in Italy, Cava in Spain, and in the US, Sparkling Wine. Each area having their own laws that mandate how it is made and from what grapes it can be made.

It is a common assumption that Don Perignon invented champagne, however the bubbles are a natural occurrence. Sparkling Wines were noted by the ancient Romans and Greeks and very misunderstood. Thought to be the result of evil spirits or phases of the moon, it wasn't until 1622 when

Christopher Merret understood the chemistry behind the sparkle. Don Perignon did worked tirelessly and did succeed in improving the quality of the wines of the Champagne region, but he tried to control the refermentation which causes the carbonation.

In the past, in the cooler northern climates like France, the cold sometimes arrived early after harvest, stopping the fermentation before all the sugar was completely gone. Warmer weather would then cause the wine to begin a secondary fermentation resulting in the release of carbon dioxide or the coveted bubbles. This method, methode champenois, was not perfected until the 19th century

and is sometimes used today along with other methods of producing the bubbles.

Sparkling wine does not have to be saved for special occasions. At Hauser Estate Winery, we have created our own twist on Sparkling Wine. Instead of grapes, we have a Sparkling Apple Wine which pairs well with so many foods that it can be served as an everyday wine. Slightly sweet, our Sparkling Apple has notes of honeysuckle. The Sparkling Apple would pair nice with a starter course like creamy soups. It would also be a lovely match to a salad that contained nuts, blue cheese and apricots. For main dishes, our Spar-

kling Apple would make a nice accompaniment to ham with a sweet glaze and certain pork dishes garnished with fruit. It would also be great partner with many dessert. Apple crisps, pumpkin pies, and

berry tarts would taste nice with our Sparkling Apple.

We, at Hauser Estate Winery, invite you to join us sometime this holiday season and taste our Sparkling Apple Wine. Have a merry season!

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A TEEN'S VIEW

Coming home



Olivia Sielaff

Nothing is more enticing and distracting to a college student than the close proximity of a break. This is especially true when it is the first break of the semester. The topic of discussion before the professor walks into class is where everyone is going for break, how far away home is, and who can catch a ride with someone else. The students are working extra diligently to get as much homework done so it doesn't distract them on break, or they are so distracted by the idea of a break that homework and classes seem basically pointless. There's a certain hubbub on campus, especially the day before a break starts, which is contagious and leaves everyone itching to just take some time off.

My first break this semester was over Halloween weekend, but I could have cared less about the holiday that gives you candy for dressing up. I was looking forward to a holiday at home where treats such as sweet sleep and hot showers are coveted. The entire week beforehand, I was

dreaming of those four days where I could wake up in my own bed whenever I wanted to, not have to go to classes, and then be able to see family and friends. I honestly could not wait for this break. But I was also apprehensive as to what it would really be like to go home for the first time in three months.

The night I came home, I think I was happier to see my bed than my family and pet dog. Not really. But there was something different about my bed, about my room. Everything was in the same place I left it back in August, but my bed seemed really low to the ground and my room seemed small and empty. I stopped for a second, staring at my bed, because I knew it was never that low to the ground. But then I realized I was so used to the dorm beds at college being raised. When I went into the bathroom to take a long-awaited long shower, I noticed my feet weren't used to the bathroom floor being so warm and the shower being so spacious. Those first few hours I was back felt as if I was in my house for the first time again. I had forgotten about the echoes in my house, the way the washing machine sounds, and how soft our toilet paper is. Initially, I couldn't believe how I possibly could have forgotten these details so quickly and become used to living in my dorm. Why was everything so new to me? Things I had never really paid attention to before were the first things I noticed. So this is what it felt like to be a guest in my own house.

After that first night, though, it didn't take long for me to switch back into "home

mode." Unfortunately the freak snow shower that weekend ruined some of my plans to visit family and run errands, but I was at least able to sleep in until noon and then spend the rest of the day at home just relaxing. There was a birthday party for my grandpa, so I caught up with my extended family. I visited some friends from high school and stopped by to see my one friend at her college. I went to Sunday Mass at St. Anthony's and saw my favorite people, the Shields. I even handed out candy in town on Halloween and was able to see some of the local Emmitsburgians.

Those four days flew by so quickly, but reminded me of the other life I had before going to college. It felt as if I was in high school again because my life that weekend depended on the schedule of my family. I could easily become used to living dependently on my family again, having them remind me what I need to do. Just as quickly as I had forgotten about living at home, I almost forgot that I had to go back to college. But go back I did, against my desire to just end the semester then.

My first break from college went over pretty well. I didn't know how different it would feel to come back to a place I hadn't seen in three months, how much it seemed like I was leading a "double life." But as I had hoped for back in August before I left for college, home and Emmitsburg haven't changed. So when I come back for Thanksgiving and Christmas breaks, I can pick up right where I left off. Until then, I will try to stay focused on my homework...

To read other articles by Olivia Sielaff visit the Authors section of Emmitsburg.net

How much is too much?



Kat Dart

Last month I was at a conference, and many of the subject that were talked about dealt with tolerance of other people. The people guiding the conference wanted us to be able to take home that we should always be patient and always calm when dealing with others.

For the most part I agree with their point of view. But after a while, I got to thinking why should we continue to tolerate others who would refuse to tolerate us? Why should we deal with people that don't want to deal with us? Isn't there a limit to how much we should take from other people before we decide that they're not worth it anymore?

Well personally, I believe that there is a time we need to turn around and say that I'm not gonna take this anymore. A time we have to turn around and say that I'm not going to deal with this. And a time where we need to crack off whatever relationship we have, because I believe to move forward there are parts you have to let of from your past.

We have your acquaintances now, and they're the ones that change you now. They're the ones that unintentionally teach you how to live, how to act and how to better yourself. Sometimes that's because they're not a person you always want to be around, but rather a person you need now to show you how you want to improve yourself.

We all have our friends now: the ones we believe will last forever, the ones we know will drift away soon, the ones that we break away from easily. Sometimes friendships die a natural death, and sometimes they are encour-

aged from one or both sides. However, there comes a time where you have learned all you needed from someone, and they from you. That's the time an acquaintanceship or even a friendship cracks and two people drift apart. Sometimes it's for the good, sometimes it's for the bad.

I do believe I have been changed for the better. Because I knew you, I have been changed for good [For Good, Wicked soundtrack, 2003]." His song was a reference to two close friends who realized their friendship was no longer able to continue, due to opposing views on how the country was ruled. They drifted in the end, fighting about themselves, about other people, about their morals and what was right and wrong.

Related to friends (though hopefully not drifting ones) is family. This month held Thanksgiving Day, and Black Friday or as I so fondly refer to it, Sparta. Everyone is so excited for black Friday and the Christmas or Chanukah or Kwanzaa that they skip over thanksgiving. I mean, really, this is one of the biggest American holidays of the year and most people are worried about Christmas decorations. Why do we have Christmas songs playing all over the radio? Why are people in such a hurry to decorate the house? Shouldn't we slow down, stop, and appreciate a lovely four day weekend to spend with family? Why do we all feel the need to skip the smaller for the Grand Prize? It's a great thing to wait and watch in between. It's like the Super Bowl - you get the main event where everyone is focused on watching the game. But then you have commercial breaks, where all the ads tend to be funnier and wittier than normal, and you can laugh about them with other people.

I guess my point for above is that if we hurry too fast, are we going to miss the point of the present? I don't want to miss the now, even though I look forward to the future and plan and wait. I know many people live in the present so the future doesn't come that quickly, or so it comes faster. Shouldn't we all do that to try and be happy in the here and now?

To read other articles by Kat Dart visit the Authors section of Emmitsburg.net.

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SCHOOL NEWS—EMMITSBURG ELEMENTARY

News from EES

December is a magical time of the year. It is a time to celebrate the past year and look forward to another year. Everyone is looking forward to the events planned at Emmitsburg Elementary School in December and a relaxing winter break.

Looking over the past few months, Emmitsburg Elementary has been honored by two groups. Our Media Center was awarded a monetary donation by the National Emergency Training Center class of September 18, 2011. The participants in the training class collected money to assist us in providing quality reading material for our students. Mrs. Reed, Media Specialist, is using the donation to replace some well-read books with new ones.

Another honor was bestowed

on EES by the Frederick Wal-Mart on Route 85 and Guilford Drive in Frederick. This Wal-Mart selected Emmitsburg Elementary as the School of the Year for their store. Representatives from the store, led by Nancy Crum, presented each staff member with a tote filled with school supplies. Ten teachers also received gift cards for Wal-Mart. The ladies and gentlemen provided each child with a goodie bag, as it was Halloween. Also, the store generously gave EES extra totes, school supplies, and 300 lunch boxes. We are humbled and overwhelmed with the support and honor they have given EES.

One exciting event that is taking place in December is a presentation of A Christmas Carol. On Monday, December

12th at 6:30 pm, the EES Chorus and other talented students will take the stage to share Charles Dickens' classic tale. Mrs. Carrie Trax, the EES vocal music teacher will be directing the production. The students will also be presenting to the school during the day on December 12th.

Another exciting event for all Frederick County Public School students in grades 1 – 5 is the annual field trip to the ESSL, Earth Space Science Lab, located at the site of Lincoln Elementary School in Frederick. The students look forward to visiting the ESSL; especially now that it is in a new building with lots of critters. A fully functional planetarium is also housed at the ESSL. Each grade level learns different concepts that relate to that grade level's science curriculum. As noted on the FCPS web site, "The 10,624 square-foot facility

contains a 78-seat planetarium with a 35-foot dome, welcome area, two science classrooms, two aquarium areas, an oceanography lab, geology lab and office space." When students visit the ESSL they are exposed to a variety of creatures and experiences that cannot be provided in the regular classroom. We are very lucky to have such an excellent resource available to our students. The ESSL also provides evening, weekend, and summer programs to the public. More information about the ESSL can be found at <https://sites.fcps.org/essl>.

Possibly the most exciting event for students in December is winter break. This time-off allows for family time and celebrations. We hope everyone has a nice holiday and a great beginning to the New Year.

Good things happen at Emmitsburg Elementary every day!

EES PTA News and Notes

We are hoping you can help in our school's goal of trying to win a Healthy Playground makeover sweepstakes. Our school has the original playground from 1974.

As you can imagine, playing on this equipment is not very exciting for the children. We invite you to DAILY visit the website listed below and enter Emmitsburg Elementary School. Any help would be greatly appreciated.

Please forward this on to anyone else you think would help in our cause. This would mean a lot to our kids and school if you could help us win this sweepstakes.

<http://energybalance101.discoveryeducation.com/be-involved/sweepstakes/>

PRIZES 2 Grand Prizes

A \$30,000 grant from Sports Authority

A new playground from Playworld Systems

*One grand prize drawing will be from among all eligible entries. The second grand prize drawing will be from among all eligible entries whose schools qualify for Title I Schoolwide Program. See eligibility in official rules.

Runner-up Prizes
3 lucky schools will receive a \$5,000 grant from Sports Authority!



Please help us continue to provide EES with the wonderful activities the PTA provides EES, Every Eagle Soars

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SCHOOL NEWS—MOTHER SETON

News from MSS

By Lynn Tayler

Behold—the end of the year is here! Have you emerged from your turkey coma yet? Still hanging onto those last few pieces of Halloween candy? I am proud to say we have gotten rid of it all finally. (With a bit of shame, I confess it's because I know the kids will be bringing in Christmas sweets and treats, and we need the room!)

At Mother Seton School, we are entering Advent and the Christmas season with not only full bellies, but also grateful and full hearts. The 2011-2012 Annual Giving Campaign has just kicked off and we have already received a handful of gifts, some particularly touching. There are some who can barely afford to give, who have. Others sent notes with their gifts – deeply felt thoughts about the difference MSS has made to their life, or sincere hopes of providing for families that may be struggling to give their children a good education. We value each and every loving gift.

I urge you to join these caring benefactors and contribute to the MSS Annual Fund this year. Not only will you be helping a local cause, but you can be assured

that every penny is spent for the children. It is because of our generous donors that teachers have the resources to meet our children's unique needs with innovative new programs and activities. This year we're particularly excited by the opening of the Mother Seton Learning Center. Our Board of Directors has walked out in faith to create this program that gives MSS students with learning differences additional enrichment during and after school. It is so moving to watch these special children reach academic success and grow in self confidence!

Experience this joy with us by participating in our Annual Appeal. Many readers will receive an invitation in the mail and I encourage you to respond, or to join by giving online at www.mother-setonschool.org.

To see the power of your gifts at work, please come see our students in the annual Christmas Program presented on Monday, December 12 at 9:30 a.m. and 7 p.m. (Snow date, Dec. 19). The talents of MSS's band & chorus play a starring role in this stirring performance about the birth of Jesus. You will be moved and inspired for the holidays.

When you switch to your new

calendars for 2012, remember to pencil in our annual Spaghetti Dinner, scheduled for January 29th. Delicious pies, breads, and of course, copious amounts of spaghetti, with your choice of sauce (plain, meatball, sausage, etc.), will be on the menu. Tickets will go on sale after Christmas, so keep an eye out for the announcement.

In case you missed our other event news, the Home & School Association (H.S.A.) was given an opportunity to make the 1st Annual Bull Roast even bigger and better by moving it from November to March. So if you didn't get a chance to buy tickets or if the original date didn't work out for you, this is great news! We've lasoed March 3rd as the new date. Invitations and ticket ordering information will be available in January. It's going to be a blast! Be sure to work off all those holiday goodies so you'll have room for the feasts we'll be putting on early next year!

That won't be a problem for the runners in our midst, including parents Andrea Vietri and Bridget McCarthy, who recently hosted the 3rd Annual MSS Fall 5K Run/Walk at the Mount. Presented by Platinum Sponsors Russell Toyota of Baltimore, Corrigan Sports of Elkridge, and Gunner's Grill of Taneytown, the event was well attended and blessed with a sun-



The community is invited to Mother Seton School's Christmas Pageant on Monday, December 12 at 9:30 a.m. and 7 p.m.

ny day. Thanks to Andrea, Bridget and all of the other volunteers who made this event "run", and congratulations to our winners -

Over All First Place Winners - 5K Christina D'Agostino & Brady Wilt

First Place Masters - 5K Kelly Keith & Edward Metz

First Place 14 & under divisions - 5K Isabella Alley, Daniel Schwenkler, Edison Hatter, Andrew Niebecker

First Place - 1 Mile Jeremy Hochschild & Amina Beasley

We'd also like to congratulate and

express our pride in two of our eighth-grade students, MaryMargaret O'Neill and Taylor Garner, who were honored at the Kids Are Heroes Day on October 29th at the FSK Mall in Frederick. Kids Are Heroes is a non-profit founded by MaryMargaret and her father, Gabe O'Neill, to encourage and promote children who are making a difference in the world. Taylor has helped raised over \$300 for the Justice for Dogs rescue organization. These young ladies are role models for the entire community and we give thanks that they are a part of our school.

Dear readers, enjoy the rest of the holiday season! May you find peace, comfort, and joy with your loved ones. Merry Christmas from all of us at Mother Seton School!

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Advanced Ticket Prices: \$6.00 Ages 7 to Adult
\$4.00 Ages 3 to 6 Ages 2 and Under FREE

Please stop by or call MSS Office to purchase tickets in advance 301-447-3161 (Tickets purchased at the door will be \$7.00 ages 7 to adult & \$5.00 ages 3 to 6)

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FOUR YEARS AT THE MOUNT

Freshman Year

A family affair

Klye Ott

Writing is a rare and wonderful craft in that the words we create come from adventures we have experienced, things we have seen and people we have cared about. So as the last leaves fall from the trees, and the thoughts of our class turn to Christmas and our families back home, my own mind ponders the mystery of family. Many of us left our homes for college with the pretense that being in school would make us adults. That once we moved into our dorm rooms and began classes, the responsibilities of fully formed adults would just fall into place. We were ready to take on the world with new-found skills and eagerness. And most importantly, we were going to do it without anyone else's help. Then a funny thing hap-

pened, we all got to college and immediately replaced the families we had been given by blood with families we chose through the bonds we shared. Boyfriends, girlfriends, teammates, peers and study buddies form an intricate network that is less like a family tree and more like a family forest. And for me, life among the trees has been nothing short of fantastic.

It all began when I was inducted into the spontaneous brotherhood that is the Pangborn third floor. Our first night as friends was spent in the throes of hurricane Irene. When the storm wiped out power to our campus, we decided to leave our dorm for a midnight walk. Over the course of a simple one hour journey, we developed more inside jokes than we thought possible, and began a friendship that would shape the rest of the school year. What began as a group of eclectic individuals, motorcyclists, philosophers, skaters, lacrosse play-

ers, hardcore gamers, and one observant young writer—quickly became a brotherhood. It all began on a stormy night (and that's actually not just some literary trope I threw in for fun) as hurricane Irene was finally dying down. The power had been annihilated by the storm, and the boys on the floor decided that nothing could be better than a walk through the dark. As we traveled across the unlit campus, we discovered that not only did we like one another; we had more in common than we thought. I discovered one of the guys was writing an adventure story in between games of basketball at the gym. Another hall-mate got us hooked on video games, that we played as a team. From that point on we were brothers, not hall-mates; Pangborn was not a dorm, but a fortress, and we did not live on the third floor: we lived on Pang 3. The shenanigans of our intrepid band continued well into the school year, but all of our adventures could be summarized with the word: random. The perfect example of this was the Pang 3 "Gentleman's Dinner"

which occurred when our group decided we wanted to add some class to Patriot dining hall and wore our button-down shirts and ties to dinner, and sat as a group. I assure you, never before in the history of Mount St. Mary's has a group looked that classy. The rest of the year has passed as a blur of study sessions in the library, midnight conversations, high fives, and man-hugs. Regardless of what happens in the crazy world of college, the one thing that keeps us sane is the knowledge that a warm embrace, an epic fist pump, and a kind word are always waiting for us when we return to our home. These are the guys that I trust with my life; they're the ones that have drawn me out of my shell and made me a better person, and I'm proud to say that, as much as my teachers have taught me, my brothers have shown me just as much.

I've also been blessed with a plethora of sisters, in the form of the ladies living underneath me on Pangborn, second floor. The running joke is that I don't actually belong to a floor, but have dual citizenship, and it's not

hard to see why. The girls have been more than hospitable to a young, hungry college boy (something that is not easy to do, let me assure you). However there have been numerous times, too many to recount on these pages where I have received from my sisters a kind word, open arms, and a place to rest my head. These are the people who offer me motherly advice whenever I need it; they have breakfast with me three times a week, and take me off campus when I need a break from the world of college. These are friends that I love and I'd do anything for, up to and including walking around the library a grand total of 35 times (worth it I assure you).

So as the Christmas season goes into full swing I'll be thinking of the family that I've been blessed with from birth and the family that I've made for myself here on campus. Regardless of whether I'm home in my own bed, or (barely) sleeping in Pangborn, I only know one thing: it's good to be home. I'm Kyle Ott; won't you sit and read for a while?

Sophomore Year

Life is just happening

Carolyn Shields

I'm sitting in our church in Dublin and I hear the harmonica player on the other side of the wall, standing beneath the string of Christmas lights. I close my eyes and reach into my heart, thanking God for David kneeling beside me, who helped me as I stumbled back from a pub to my apartment, not sure why or how I was so dizzy. Who inspired me to dig deep into the crevices of my Bible when I came to him with a panicked heart, and who carried me on his back across a puddle in the face of the Atlantic. For the memory of praying the rosary with him with the distant Cliffs of Moher bearing witness, and for treasure hunting on the fields of time and within the boundaries of Europe with me.

I thank God for Emily and all the

belts of laughter between us, for the memory of our walking out of London's grim Victoria Station and beholding the Apollo Theatre with towering advertisements for "Wicked," and by some miracle acquiring tickets to that evening's performance. For jumping with joy in the downtown London streets. For running in the Irish countryside, not because we had any certain place to go, and our only watches were our cellphones thrown somewhere in our book bags, but simply because we could taste a rare freedom that millions only dream of. We ran until we were out of breath. I thank God for her humor, when we stood on Tower Bridge—and not London Bridge—chanting U.S.A! to those passing below on ferries, and for her contagious twinkling laugh that is always reflected.

I thank God for their companionship during these weeks as the three of us take on Europe. In early December we will plant a few more American footprints on Spanish soil, and then take a stroll to our opera in Austria and explore Christmas markets in Germany. John 16:33 says, "In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world."

So this Christmas season I have so

much to be thankful for. But like Advent, nothing lasts forever. So here's to us right now. Here's to our anticipation of the first Dublin snowfall. Here's to our daily meals of peanut butter sandwiches and frozen pizzas. To cold European showers and hormonal Irish skies. Here's to our handshake after we conquered another country. Here's to our conversations within the folds of wooden walls in pubs whether in Dublin, or Scotland, England or Belgium. Here's to the adventures still ahead: climbing the Rock of Gibraltar in southern Spain, seeing the Viennese opera, returning home to our loved ones on that approaching date, December 14th. To our continuous journey to that scary and far-off land that doesn't have a chapter in a single Rick Steves book: the Future.

These past two months have been filled with adventures ranging from absolutely sprinting to catch our flight home from Paris ("Hold on miss, take off your belt. Miss, did you empty your pockets? Wait, miss—" "MY FLIGHT IS GOING TO LEAVE!") to absolutely taking our time as we stroll amongst the ruins of a 12th century castle in Scotland. Last night? We saw Michael Buble light up Grafton Street's Christmas lights.

But there's been more mishaps than my sprinting to my flight two weekends in a row. Ahem, it is three hours before we leave for our four-day vacation to Paris and Rome. David calls

me saying he's throwing up. I calmly finish painting my fingernails and ignore the bile rising up in my throat. "God, I trust you," I say in an inner voice that sounds so much calmer than my wracking nerves. So I never got to Rome, but my other friend and I made it to Paris and Versailles, where my literary yet historical characters came to life before me. I felt Marie-Therese's spirit walking with me in her gardens, and I packed six years of research in my carry on. Rome has gone back on the list for my honeymoon, where it originally was. I will behold the Vatican with The Greatest Man I Haven't Met Yet, or maybe next fall with the second greatest person in the world, Olivia Sialaff, whom hopefully I will visit when she studies in Austria next fall.

We had to cut Santiago de Compostella unless we weren't planning on sleeping for a straight forty eight hours, and we are still trying to figure out how to do two continents (Europe and Africa) this coming weekend. Nurem-

berg was replaced by Frankfurt.


We almost missed our flight home from Scotland and sprinted to that gate as well, but it was because we were so wrapped in conversation. And Emily and I were upset because we couldn't get to the Flogging Molly concert in London on Friday night, but then God showed us the "Wicked" advertisement eight hours before the curtain went up. There were three tickets left.

And we still have three countries yet, all with languages longing to trip us, but again, if the above incidents haven't helped me to trust God more fully, nothing will.

So Switchfoot sings, "I close my eyes and go back in time. We were so young, we had no idea. That life was just happening." Switch all those past tenses with present and you've got my life in five lyrics or less.

*Over the course of this article, I've eaten two peanut butter sandwiches. Family: fourteen days until I run home to you, the most beautiful place on this earth! Life is just happening.

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FOUR YEARS AT THE MOUNT

Junior Year

Christmas is in the air

Samantha Strub

Christmas is in the air with the decorations and the sound of Christmas music. The Mount brings the spirit of Christmas to the students as we all prepare for the last three weeks of the semester come to a close. In these 3 weeks all the students are stressed with the amount of papers, tests, and projects at the same time. The Mount helps bring a little bit of Christmas cheer and the feeling of home to the campus. It is a small gesture to decorate the campus but it means so much to the students to have that small bit of Christmas brought to the campus.

The spirit of Christmas is brought to the campus by the way the campus is decorated with the Christmas

Tree, wreaths, and the lights decorating the cafeteria. As you are eating the decorations around the cafeteria brings joy and Christmas spirit to your dinner and to the rest of your day. They bring a smile to your face when you walk into the cafeteria. The decorations that put up help calm and relax the students as they are focused on their studies.

The other way that The Mount decorates the campus are the arcs of lights lining the road into campus and the Nativity sense that they place in front of the Academic Center. The arcs of lights are gorgeous at night and they are a sign to the students that Christmas is coming along with the end of the semester. It is always a comforting sign when you see the light arches going up because it adds

to the environment of the campus as well as the knowledge that the stress of finals will not last forever. The Nativity scene in front of the Academic Center reminds us where our hearts really need to be during the Christmas season. You have to place the focus of Christmas on what truly matters because that is what Christmas is really about.

The students take matter into their own hands to decorate their rooms. Most of the time you see the Traditional decorations of a mini tree and Christmas lights across the ceiling. Some apartment's students taking decorating for Christmas to another level, they go all out. They put up Christmas lights all over the ceiling and the walls of their apartment, making the place come alive with color and Christmas spirit. They put up a mini tree because as everyone knows you cannot have Christmas without the tree. It helps get you in the mood for Christmas when you put up the tree. Stockings are a

wonderful way to bring the Christmas spirit into your apartment. Even college students love being reminded of Christmas' past and running downstairs and see what goodies Santa brought for them in the stockings that were hanging over the fireplace. When you are really serious you bring out the garland and run that around your apartment. It adds a little shine and shimmer to your room along with Christmas spirit.

The surroundings all come together when you add the Christmas music and baking to the decorations and the focus of Christmas to being on Jesus. When you bring the Christmas music your mind instantly goes to the atmosphere and the spirit of Christmas. All of the songs add such sunshine and happiness to your life when you're driving in the car or in your room or when you're doing anything else. They float you away to another world of pure bliss and comfort.

When you walk into your house coming home for Christmas the first

thing that hits you is the scent of cookies in the air. You can't wait to sit down with a cup of coffee and a warm cookie right out of the oven and chit chat with your family after being gone since August. Bringing that feeling of warmth, love, and holiday spirit into your apartment is one of the best things that we can do in order to inspire holiday spirit. Baking cookies and other delicious goodies with your roommates is a wonderful idea to create Christmas spirit and grow your relationships with your roommates. It is a wonderful feeling to bake with your friends and chit chat about everything under the sun. Try it for a break in your studies. It will do wonders.

All of these else elements of Christmas bring everything together. The decorations, both at the school and in your room, the music, the cookies and the correct focus of Christmas bring the holiday spirit. Make sure you bring some to your dorm room, you don't want the spirit of Christmas passing you by.

Senior Year

LDAC: Conquered

Julia Mulqueen

This month I will continue with the tale of my time during Leadership Development and Assessment Course in Fort Lewis, Washington. Last month, I ended with my defeat while on the Night Land Navigation Course. To be sure, I awoke the next morning feeling my shame covering me like molasses. I bit my lip and twisted my greasy brown hair back into a bun. As I rolled up my sleeping mat, my battle buddy came over to me. "What's going to happen to us? Will they send us home?" she asked. I honestly did not know the answer to her first question. I did know that they would not send us home, but my feelings of self-pity were enough to make me hope that they just would.

As the day continued, I thought about what my dad always said to me about leadership and failure. Failure is only failure if we do not learn from it. Great leaders do not succumb to their feelings of worthlessness after defeat; instead, they use those feelings as a springboard into brilliance. With these thoughts, I became once again determined to brush off my humiliation. I would not allow this small setback to push me into mediocrity. No, I would use it to my advantage.

With this renewed confidence in my ability to conquer LDAC, I arrived at the Company Assembly Area. Here our company was to undergo the next phase of training before we went out to compete our Squad Situation Tactical Exercise training. We spent one day learning first aid. The next day we spent on the Field Leader's Reaction Course. This is a course that tests one's ability to execute an often outlandish mission with limited supplies and limited time. All twelve of us in the squad went through a rotation as a leader. I had the lucky place of last. I say it was lucky, because the person who

goes last is able to take all of the feedback that the evaluator has given throughout the day and use it to her advantage. My mission was to transport three crates of ammo and all of my squad across a blown out bridge in order to resupply a platoon on the other side. With the help of my squad, the mission was a success, and I received the highest marks possible on the evaluation. This certainly brought a smile to my face after my defeat just days before.

The next morning it was time for us to leave the Assembly Area and go out to the Tactical Training Base. This base would be our location for about a week as we did Squad Situational Tactical Exercises, or STX lanes, and patrolling. STX lanes and patrolling are evaluated events at LDAC. They are a culmination of everything a cadet has learned during his or her ROTC experience, and they are a way to see how well a cadet is able to lead, especially during stress. Evaluators purposely throw curveballs at cadets during STX lanes and patrolling in order to better determine who is fit to become an officer and who is not.

My squad and I awoke at 3:30 in the morning on the day of our first STX lanes. We were to go through the lanes for 12 hours a day and a total of four days. Each lane has a squad leader who is evaluated on how well he or she receives the order for the operation, briefs it to the squad and then executes it. A patrolling lane is similar to a STX lane, but encom-

passes two squads instead of only one. The lanes are physically challenging and mentally demanding, but luckily my squad was motivated throughout. We received each mission and attacked each lane with excitement. We slathered our faces in green and black paint, and we ran through each lane with determination.

After those four days of STX lanes and the two days of patrolling, I was closer to the people in my squad than I had ever been to anyone before. We had struggled through early wake-ups, exhaustion, aches, pains and awful food together, and we were better off for it. My words truly cannot do justice to the bonds that grew between the 12 of us at Fort Lewis. The closeness that develops between soldiers is one of the great gifts that people in the military receive, and for it, I am truly thankful.

Our last few days at LDAC were spent in relative calm compared to the first three weeks of our time there. The rest of my squad, besides my battle buddy and me, was ready to graduate. The two of us, however, along with all of those cadets in our regiment who had failed land navigation had one more opportunity to pass. I went out into those woods that night for my retest with determination just absolutely pumping through my veins.

When I found my last point amidst the dark and the cold, I knelt down in front of it and thanked God for everything He had given me. Through my initial defeat, I had been humbled. Through my triumph that night on the course, I was able to finally realize that this dream of mine was to be fulfilled. I feel like that night will forever mark my birth as an officer. Indeed, I

will not commission as an officer until this May, but that night, with tears flowing down my cheeks and dirt clinging to the beds of my fingernails, I finally began to understand the brilliance of the journey to officership on which I had embarked. I saw that the Lord had used my time at LDAC as a time to both humble and teach me.

Two days later, I stood outside in the sunshine during our regiment's graduation ceremony. I felt

as if I had sprouted wings. Afterward, I ran up to my parents and my brother. Hugging them I knew that the torch had just passed from them to me, and with that passing, the rhythm of the Army is able to continue in me. Now the American people are mine to protect, and I will do them justice.

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THE GRADUATE

Culture, culture, culture!

Katelyn Phelan
MSM Class of 2011

Most people do not miss school. They do not miss taking notes and writing papers. Most people are not nerds. Unfortunately in this case, I am not part of "most people." It's been 6 full months since I've graduated from the Mount, and the thing I most sorely miss about school, is learning.

Of course I'm learning tons of things now, but they're not academic things. I'm learning the best phrasing when emailing a parent, or how strict to be concerning late homework assignments. While useful, these things are not very interesting. I've been craving real learning. But, in lieu of taking a class myself (no matter how much I might wish for it, I would need to eliminate sleep from my schedule to fit it in), I've begun to take advantage of the culture that sits nestled only short distances from Emmitsburg.

One of the most wonderful things about this area is of course how beautiful it is, but also how close it is to everything. Little old Emmitsburg is just a stone's throw from Washington D.C. and Baltimore, and a drive of a few hours to the Big Apple. And honestly, that's

part of the appeal, at least for me, to this area. I like being about to live "in the middle of nowhere" and see cows and vast corn fields on a daily basis, but still be able to go see a show without having to take a flight somewhere to do so. Lately I've been taking advantage of our proximity to these rich cultural centers.

At the end of October, I made the drive to D.C. to see *Les Misérables*. This musical has been a wild success for the past 25 years. It's based on Victor Hugo's tome of 1000 pages, about a man Jean Valjean, who steals bread to feed his sister's starving family. He's put in jail for a number of years for his crime and when he is finally released, he can't get a job because of his record. He decides to change his name and he rises to the position of mayor after a number of years. However, Jean Valjean is still being hunted by a perseverant parole officer.

This officer suspects an innocent man is Jean Valjean because of his impressive strength, and arrests him. The real Jean Valjean has a crisis over whether to turn himself in, and ultimately decides to reveal himself. However, he has promised a dying woman, Fantine, that he will look af-

ter her illegitimate daughter, Cosette. Valjean asks his parole officer for three days so he can go provide for the girl. The man refuses, and Valjean knocks him out and escapes.

Valjean raises the girl, who eventually falls in love with a young revolutionary, Marius. Marius is busy leading a group of students in revolution. Valjean show up among them and recognizes his parole officer disguised as a spy. Instead of killing the man, he spares him and smuggles him out of the fighting. The officer, unable to bear this act of kindness from a man he has been hunting, commits suicide. Valjean meanwhile carries a wounded Marius away from the fighting, saving his life.

Cosette and Marius marry, and Valjean, old and sick, prepares to die. He finally reveals to Cosette the truth about her past, and she and Marius thank him for his kindness. He dies; the play ends.

The musical is three hours long; I think you can see why after reading this summary! It's action packed and fast-paced, making it a delight to watch. It is the first musical I've ever seen where there is not a single word spoken. Everything is sung. However, all the words are in English, which my boyfriend was greatly relieved to discover. He was scared I had dragged him to a three hour show in French. Though he's not generally a huge fan of musicals, he was certainly entertained by *Les Mis*.

Les Misérables is the second show I've seen at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C. and both shows were magnificently done. The singing and acting was superb, as were the sets and costumes. The Kennedy Center is also beautiful. The tickets are a little pricey, especially if you want to



sit close to the stage, but the experience is wonderful. Buy your tickets early because they sell out quickly!

A few weeks later I went to see *Othello* at the Folger Shakespeare Library, also in D.C. This theater sits in the shadow of the Capitol building and was as delightful as the Kennedy Center, though in a different way. The Folger is one of the most important and prestigious locations for the study of Shakespeare. It has a kind of museum that has a small display of rare books, like Shakespeare's First Folio, which is the first collection of some of his plays, like *Hamlet*. The book is one of the rarest and most valuable in the world, priced at 4-6 million dollars! The Folger also has early copies of the King James Bible, some of which have mistakes like "thou shalt kill" which seems like a pretty serious mistake to me!

The actual theatre is very intimate. It only holds about 300 people. I sat in the center area, six rows away from the stage, which also happened to be two rows from the back. There was also a

balcony where some people sat. The actors and actresses interacted with the audience, moving up and down the center aisle, speaking from the balcony, and at times asking the audience questions.

The play *Othello* is one of Shakespeare's most famous plays. Well, I suppose all of Shakespeare's plays are quite famous, but *Othello* is one frequently read in schools. The play features Othello, a general. He has just promoted Cassio, leaving Iago, who wanted the promotion, furious. Iago manipulates everyone in the play—Othello and his wife, Desdemona, Cassio, and even Iago's own wife, Emilia. Iago creates an unbelievable amount of strife between all the other characters; through his lies, he turns all of them away from each other and closer to himself. He incites some to rage, and they murder the people they once loved and trusted. At the end, Iago is left standing among a sea of dead bodies. His deceit is revealed, and he awaits some kind of punishment.

As with all of Shakespeare's tragedies, *Othello* is heart-wrenching. The play makes you as an audience member want to shout out "No! Go talk to the person you're mad with and sort it out! You'll see the lies Iago has created!" But of course you can't. The play is powerful and still applicable to today because of its timeless themes—love, racism, betrayal, and jealousy. Though I've read the play before, seeing it performed is so much more powerful. The acting was brilliant, the scenery stunning, and the whole experience was just wonderful. Best of all? I got a parking spot on the street directly in front of the theatre, and it was a Sunday so I didn't have to pay a parking meter!

Seeing these wonderful pieces of literature performed has stanchied my desire for college classes a bit. I'm making an effort to do something cultural once a month and in our area, this is not too expensive or hard to accomplish. Next up? The Holocaust Museum.

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IN MY OWN WORDS

Traditions old and new

Jackie Fennington
MSM Class of 2010

Hello Christmas season! I welcome you with open arms the day after Thanksgiving as I sleepily but hastily walk through the mall at 5 a.m. to catch all the great sales. After a few days of recovery, my fingers shop just as fast on Cyber Monday to get the online deals. Still, no matter how much Christmas shopping I try to finish on these two great sale days, I inevitably have to face the crowds and venture to the mall for last minute gifts.

All shopping aside, the season of giving is upon us. It is a time of tradition, whether we keep old traditions with family and friends, or make new traditions. It is the traditions that make the holidays so full of cheer.

This year I look forward to making new traditions with my own family. I have never before had to think about making the traditions happen; what I mean is, I was never the parent making the traditions for my kids. I was always the kid just going along with whatever we were doing. Now it is my turn to carry on old and make new traditions for my family. It will be interesting to see which traditions will last through Lucy's days as a parent.

In preparing for our first Christmas together as a family, Sean and I have been reminiscing about past Christmases of our childhood. Out of all the traditions, I am so thankful we both have fond memories of going to a tree farm and cutting down a Christmas tree. I will never have a fake tree!

My family and I usually go to the tree farm on the Saturday after Thanksgiving or the first Saturday in December before all the good trees are taken. I love picking out the tree, but I hated being told to stand guard at a potential tree while Mom and Dad searched for a better tree before settling on one. It felt like I was standing by the tree for hours before they returned with a tree bailed and ready

to go. I do remember a few times, though, that the tree I was guarding with my life actually turned out to be "the one."

Once we find the perfect tree, Dad begins sawing away at it. In the distance I hear another little kid shout, "I found a good one!" followed by the sound of a chainsaw and a tree abruptly falling to the ground. It took them all of two minutes to saw down their perfect tree and they were able to get on the next tractor back to the parking lot to enjoy the free hot chocolate. Meanwhile, Dad is still sawing away at the tree, while all of us push the tree towards him to make it easier. A half hour later, we get to the bail station and then hop on the final tractor back to the parking lot.

From that moment on, Christmas is the only thing on my mind. The holiday cheer is inescapable; I hear it on the radio, smell it in the kitchen, feel it from smiling faces around me and see it wrapped around banisters and hanging from houses in sparkling lights.

The night after we set up the Christmas tree, Dad and I decorate the outside of the house. For a while, we were the only house on the block lit up at Christmastime. A few people caught on and put up a few strings of lights, but for the most, our house lights up the entire block. Seeing the dark streets lit up by tiny white lights on trees and houses is another one of my favorite things about Christmastime. Light is always welcoming, but there is something about Christmas lights on dark, cold winter nights that make the frigid air seem not so bad.

Many traditions, like the tree farm, will carry on with my new family. Though, instead of making Lucy stand guard by a tree, I will bring flags to mark the potential keepers. She will thank me. Another tradition I will keep with Lucy will be reading *The Polar Express* as a bedtime story on Christmas Eve.

Traditions may be somewhat different for my parents this year, too, since my older sister and I



are both gone on our own. One thing is for sure, Dad will definitely get slippers from Santa and he will tear the box to shreds when he opens it like a little kid. Luckily we know what size slipper he is now so we do not have to return them the day after Christmas. I remember a few years in a row when Mom bought the wrong size, but Dad still opened the box like a little kid. We would then have to explain to the sales associate why the box looked like a dog got a hold of it when we tried returning the slippers. It takes an incredible amount of patience and guts to work in retail around the holidays.

I love shopping around the holidays a little too much. Sometimes the sales get the best of me and I end up giving myself Christmas presents. When I was little, however, I would say the only thing I wanted for Christmas was world peace. I wrote a letter to Santa every year with a wish list of regular kid gifts, but sure enough, world peace was also on that list. I prom-

ise I was not trying to win a beauty pageant; I just always wanted to remember that Christmas is not all about the presents. In recent years I have enjoyed the traditions of the holidays more. I guess I appreciate the traditions more just by being older. For me, the best part of this time of year is being with family and friends. I could do without the presents and have just as good of a time.

There is a rewarding nature to giving presents, however. It feels good to give someone a gift that they truly enjoy and appreciate. Gifts do not have to be bought, though. It is difficult to buy a present for every person you care about. No one can realistically afford that, and if you can, you should donate your money to people who cannot afford food or shelter. This time of year is about giving. Sure we enjoy

giving things that we buy, but remember what kinds of things we can give without buying – love, kindness, hospitality, life and the list goes on and on.

Giving is a part of the holiday traditions. After all, it is the season of giving. After binge shopping on Black Friday and Cyber Monday, I challenge myself to first think of gifts I can give without buying. What can I give of myself to help others during this time? I encourage others to do the same. Volunteer your time, donate to charity, write a note or bake cookies for someone you care about. I always say the best presents are homemade.

Merry Christmas! May your season be full of good spirit and giving.

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SIMPLE SERVINGS

Ghosts of Christmas [cookies] past

Sharon Racine

Why do we only bake cookies for special occasions? Most of us are lucky that we even have cookie recipes to speak of, seeing as they are only unearthed a few times a year to celebrate Christmas and a few other qualifying holidays in between. Nowadays recipes are easy to pass down through the generations with e-mail and the Internet, but how did these recipes come to survive the "dark ages" of the pre-computer era?

Maybe we can take a page out of *Emmitsburg News-Journal* Editor Mike Hillman's book. Growing up, Mike's Great Uncle Frank was famous in the Hillman family for his Nestle Tollhouse chocolate chip cookies. Every Christmas, Uncle Frank would give Mike's father a tin of his beloved chocolate chip cookies, which were then distributed carefully among Mike and the rest of the kids. As Mike recalls, "It was always a real treat, and [eating the cookies] always resulted in my father telling us stories about growing up. I learned more about my father listening to him as I ate those cookies than at any other time in my life."

Uncle Frank passed away in 1975, but not before the family recipe was



handed down to Mike's younger sister Anna. Anna made them for a few years, but the recipe eventually fell to the wayside until Mike went searching for it. Without the benefit of e-mail to share information that would otherwise go missing, Uncle Frank's legendary chocolate chip Christmas cookies may not have lived to tell the Hillman tale.

Uncle Frank's Original Toll House Chocolate Chip Cookies

As recorded by Anna Hillman circa 1970

*Per Uncle Frank, the dough MUST be stirred with a wooden spoon!

Cream:

1 cup butter (add less butter)
 ¾ cup brown sugar (add more sugar)
 ¾ cup granulated sugar (add more sugar)
 2 eggs beaten whole
 Dissolve 1 tsp. baking soda in 1 tsp. hot water and mix alternately with:
 2 ¼ cups flour sifted with:
 1 tsp. salt.

Lastly, add chocolate chips (7 oz.) and chopped nuts
 Flavor with 1 tsp. vanilla, and stir.

Bake 8 – 10 minutes in 370-degree oven.

Makes 100 cookies

Another favorite Christmas cookie recipe (in the Hillman household and beyond) is the ever-popular Christmas tree butter cookie concoction. I think every home that celebrates Christmas has enjoyed these delicious treats at least once in their family history, so it's not surprising that this recipe has survived through the years.

Mike Hillman's mother used to hide these cookies from him and his brothers every year, but they always managed to discover the stash and

devour the evidence. They are still a big hit at Hillman holiday gatherings, and are enjoyed by all present – including the dogs. Though three of the Hillman dogs that enjoyed the butter cookie tradition have passed away, each dog still receives a Christmas cookie atop its respective ash-bearing decorative box. "This way," Mike states, "each dog gets its Christmas cookie, and I get mine."

Christmas Tree Butter Cookies

Makes 6 dozen

Ingredients

Cookie press
 1 cup of butter (2 sticks)
 1 egg
 1/8 teaspoon of salt
 1 teaspoon of almond extract
 ¾ cup sugar
 2 ¼ cups all-purpose flour
 ¼ teaspoon baking powder

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees
2. Cream butter and sugar, adding sugar gradually
3. Add unbeaten egg, sifted dry ingredients, and almond extract. Mix well.
4. Fill cookie press with dough and push shapes onto greased cookie sheet.
5. Decorate cookies with sprinkles, sugar, or other desired embellishments
6. Bake in oven for 10 to 12 minutes, allowing cookies to brown lightly.

What would Christmas be without oatmeal raisin cookies? These cookies have been in my family forever, so it's no wonder that they're my dad's favorites. I can remember Christmastime when I was little, when my mother would make enough dough for what seemed like hundreds of cookies. She always used to prepare the cookie dough the night before the baking would actually take place, which was great for us kids; she never did seem to notice the decreased lev-

el of cookie dough in the giant metal bowl in the fridge the next day. When the cookies were complete, our kitchen would be filled with stacks of Christmas-y tins filled with chewy, cinnamon-y oatmeal raisin cookies. I'm sure I'm not the first person to report that these cookies make for an excellent breakfast.

Cinnamon Oatmeal Raisin Cookies

Makes 3 dozen cookies

Whisk together and set aside:

2 cups all-purpose flour
 1 teaspoon baking soda
 1 teaspoon baking powder
 ¾ teaspoon ground cinnamon
 1 teaspoon kosher salt

Cream wet ingredients:

1 cup unsalted butter, softened
 1 cup sugar
 1 cup dark brown sugar, firmly packed
 2 large eggs
 2 teaspoons vanilla

Then stir in:

3 cups oats (not instant)
 1 ½ cups raisins

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 350°.
2. Mix cookie dough, following steps above.
3. Using an ice cream scoop, drop dough 2 inches apart on greased baking sheet.
4. Bake 11-13 minutes on center rack until golden, but still moist beneath cracks on top.
5. Remove from oven; let cookies sit on baking sheet for 2 minutes before transferring to wire rack to cool.

A fourth and final must-try cookie recipe this Christmas is for Sybil Blood's sour cream cookies. Delicious and unique – these sweets do not disappoint!

Sybil Blood's Sour Cream Cookies

Ingredients

½ tsp baking soda
 1 cup sour cream
 2/3 cup of shorting
 1 1/3 cup sugar
 2 eggs
 3 1/3 cups of flour
 1 tsp salt

Directions

Mix baking soda and sour cream and let stand. Combine sugar and shorting, add sugar gradually as you mix. Beat eggs well and add in. Add in Sour cream, mix well. Combine flour, baking powder and salt. Sift well and add to cream mixture (use a very large bowl). Mix well. Chill mixture in refrigerator for half an hour. Use tablespoon to scoop out individual cookie mix and place on greased cookie sheet. One dozen cookies per sheet. Dot each cookie with three seeded Muscat raisins or course chopped prunes. Preheat oven to 400 degrees and place in oven for 10-12 minutes.



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A very merry (and busy) Christmas!

Kathryn Franke

Well, Emmitsburg, it's that time of the year again. The time of packages, mistletoe, stockings and trees! Santa Claus, gingerbread, reindeer and wreaths! The time when our wallets may feel lighter but our hearts feel fuller. In case you haven't guessed already, it's almost the most wonderful time of the year... Christmas! But as you're dashing through the snow and jingle bell rocking the night away, it's likely that you're also looking for things to do with the family that don't break the bank. Well, fear no more! There are plenty of things to do in the area that can keep the Christmas spirit alive and keep your wallet stocked, too.

On December 4th, there will be a "Service of Lessons and Carols for Advent," performed by the Mount

St. Mary's University Chorale. This is sure to be a great way to celebrate the start of the holiday season. The program will include choral music and scriptural readings, and it will be held at St. Mary's Chapel on the Hill at the National Shrine Grotto of Lourdes in Emmitsburg. The program begins at 3:30 p.m., and it is free and open to the public.

In our little town of Emmitsburg, St. Philomena Catholic Books and Gifts & Holy Grounds Café is offering a variety of programs throughout the month of December. As stated on the store's website, St. Philomena's is now under new management by Pam and Bruno Sialaff, who have already begun to transform the store in terms of both its physical appearance and its purpose in the community. In addition to making the atmosphere more inviting, St. Philomena's is

aiming to promote local authors and artists by carrying their unique products in the store. This includes one-of-a-kind art pieces and jewelry, which gives the authors and artists more exposure by helping them get their work out in the public.

So what programming are they going to be offering for the community? Well, they have quite a wide variety of things planned for this month that will no doubt be fun for the whole family. On Friday, December 2nd, they will be offering their First Friday Open Mic Nite. Bring out that inner star in you from 7-10 p.m. and have a night out with your family and friends. The Open Mic Nites are held the first Friday of each month from 7-10 p.m. at the café. All are welcome but they ask that you do not bring any electric guitars or drums, only acoustic instruments. Lyrics cannot be offensive, rude, or contrary to their faith. You are welcome to recite poetry or a witness as well. This programming is a great way to become introduced to a receptive audience and gain experience with your performing. The staff asks that you make a small monetary or goods donation to benefit the non-profit organizations in the community.

On Saturday, December 3rd from 1-3 p.m., local author Ann Hall Marshall will be hosting a book signing at St. Philomena Catholic Books for her work entitled "Full Measure of Love." If you are looking for a musical event to attend, you can enjoy the harmony of Celtic Contemporary tunes as "Seasons" performs on Saturday, December 17th from 3-5 p.m.

The Emmitsburg Community Chorus will host their annual Christmas Concert on Sunday, December 4th at 3 p.m. at the Basilica. The concert will feature the traditional Hallelujah Chorus from G.F. Handel's oratorio "The Messiah" and W.A. Mozart's "Alleluia" as arranged by Russell Robinson. It will also include the traditional French carols "Christmas Comes



Anew," "Angels Was A-Shoutin' On Christmas Morn." Some of our favorite ballads will also be played, including "Silent Night," "Mary Did You Know," "Sleep Holy Child," "Mary's Son Precious One," "Love Came Down at Christmas," and "All on a Starry Night." The chorus will also be singing at the Emmitsburg Carriage House's "Evening of Christmas Spirit," St. Catherine's Nursing Home and Homewood at Crumland Farms. The Emmitsburg Community Chorus is under the direction of Peggy Burrier and Pianist Lisa Mattia.

On Friday, December 9th from 6:30-9:30 p.m., Elias Lutheran Church will be hosting a Christmas Party Coffee House. The event will feature Children's Praise Choir, Christmas Play, and Silver Lining Band. The event is free, but you may bring a dessert to share.

The Civic Chorus of Gettysburg, PA will be putting on its annual Christmas Concert on Sunday, December 11th at 3:00 p.m. in the Chapel of the Lutheran Seminary Campus in Gettysburg. The concert will be a varied program of sacred and secular holiday favorites, including both a cappella and instrumentally

accompanied selections by composers such as Mozart, Berlioz, Rutter, Biebl, Hayes, Shaw, Degree and more. The concert is free to the public, but there will be an offering collected during intermission for those who wish to contribute.

Also on December 11th, you can bring the family out to see the Mount Instrumental Ensembles Fall Concert. The concert will be under the direction of Dr. Mark Carlson and it will consist of the Wind Ensemble, Lab Band and String Ensemble. The program will begin at 4:00 p.m. in Knott Auditorium on the Mount Saint Mary's University campus. There is no admission fee. See how all of the hard work the musicians have put in throughout the semester has paid off. It is sure to be a concert that will bring you to your feet, chanting for an encore.

Come on out to see a holiday classic as the Moscow Ballet presents The Great Russian Nutcracker. A tradition for the whole family, this show consists of forty Russian dancers and is set to Tchaikovsky's famous music. The show will include lavish costumes, larger-than-life puppets, and hand-painted backdrops with 3D effects. It will take place on Monday, December 12th at 7:30 p.m. at the Majestic Theater.

Eileen Ivers will also be performing at the Majestic Theater with her band, Immigrant Soul, on Tuesday, December 20th at 7:30 p.m. Her skills with the Celtic fiddle are impeccable, and you can see them firsthand at her show entitled "An Nollaig: An Irish Christmas."

As you can see, there are a lot of arts events going on in our area this month. With all of the chaos that comes along with buying presents, decorating, and writing that oh-so-important wish list to Santa Claus, be sure to take the time to come out to some of these events. They will keep the holiday spirit alive and provide fun and entertainment for the whole family. So don't be a Grinch or a Scrooge...come on out and have some holiday fun! And what is on my wish list this year? All I want for Christmas is for you and your families to have a safe and blessed holiday season!

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IN MY OWN WORDS

Reflections: an attitude of gratitude

Megan Kinsella

Happy Holidays, Emmitsburg! This month I decided to take a break from writing about Mount Sports. Instead, I am going to introduce you to a whole different part of my life. I've gone to Catholic School forever and every single year growing up the Allentown Diocese would sponsor "Catholic Schools Week." Each day during that week was dedicated to a different aspect of our lives as students: Teacher Appreciation Day, Parent Appreciation Day, Athletic Appreciation day, and so on. Seeing that it's the holiday season, let us consider December "Family Appreciation Month."

At the end of October, I was heading back to the Mount from a week at home with my parents. I turned on the radio (to the local country station of course) and the song I heard brought tears to my eyes. It's a new song called "Keep in Mind" by The Locash Cowboys. The chorus of the song goes like this: "I know those dreams you're trying to chase, you want them now but they won't wait. The last thing you're thinking about is slowing it down, and the ones you left behind. But I'm always thinking of you, cause when somebody loves you that's what they do all of the time. So keep me in mind." My immediate re-

sponse, like that of any young woman, was to start balling my eyes out. But, as that became hazardous after a few minutes of almost swerving off the highway, I dried my eyes. My next inclination was to turn the car around and drive straight home into the open arms of my loving parents, who would surely still be standing at the end of the driveway, right where I left them. I could hug them and tell them how much they mean to me and live with them for the rest of my life and never ever leave again! I talked myself out of that though, as I had driven for two hours and I could already see the statue of Our Lady on top of College Mountain.

We all have those moments in our lives; Days when we are able to step back for a minute and put things in perspective. It usually happens around special occasions: high school graduations, college reunions, weddings, the birth of a child, funerals. But it happened to me during that drive back to school. No, living at home with my parents for the rest of my life wasn't a serious consideration. But, listening to that song made me realize how important my family truly is to me.

I've heard it said that families are like fudge: mostly sweet with some nuts. Well in my case, the fudge that I call family is extremely sweet, with a whole truckload of nuts mixed in. It's

a very small family. I have a brother and a sister, two cousins on my mom's side and two cousins on my dad's side. What we lack in numbers, however, we make up for in exuberance. Growing up, summer vacations entailed weeklong stays at the beach or, to our dismay, educational treks through our nation's capital (dad's vacation of choice). Thanksgiving and Christmas were spent with extended family in Pittsburg and Connecticut. Some of my fondest childhood memories are set in my grandparents' kitchen, helping Grand whip up the mashed potatoes, spraying cranberry juice all over the walls, and making specialized name tags for the table settings.

Over the past two years, my family life has changed drastically. I, the baby of the tribe, picked up and moved down here to Emmitsburg. My brother graduated college and is now an officer in the U.S. Coast Guard, stationed out in California. My sister, who moved to New York a few years back, met her soul mate (an Oklahoma native), got married, and is now expecting their first child—all in the span of 12 short months. My parents are still holding down the fort in good old Allentown, keeping themselves busy by traveling to visit their three lovely children almost every weekend.

However, despite all the changes and distance between us, the Kinsella Clan has never been closer. Weekend camping trips during the summer and impromptu visits to New York City during Christmastime have taken place of planned excursions. My brother still gets to blow out his birthday candles, whether it's in person or through webcam out in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea. We still go "over the river and through the woods" to grandma's house, but a stop at the airport to drop someone off or meet an incoming flight is often included. The Christmas tree still goes up the day after Thanksgiving, but instead of five bodies wrestling for premium ornament branches, my mom and I pull the artificial out of the basement and decorate while rocking out to Manheim Steamroller.

Last year is a perfect example of the new and improved Christmas with the Kinsellas. My birthday is on December 19th, so we decided to spend the day in New York with my sister, Caitlin, and her then fiancé, Kyle. On our way into the city, we swooped by the airport to pick up Kevin, my brother, who had just flown in from San Francisco. We got into the city, parked the car, and started walking to our rendez-



Mount Track Star Megan Kinsella began her running career 5 seconds after this photo was taken as she sprinted from Santa's lap to her mom.

vous point in Central Park. On the way, we absorbed Kevin's girlfriend Becca into our steadily growing pack. We met up with Caitlin and Kyle next to the ice skating rink in Central Park, dumped all of our things in a locker, and spent the next few hours cruising around the ice together. After the first hour, I was bragging to everyone that I was the only one who hadn't fallen yet. With that, I zipped off into the crowd and smashed right into Santa Claus, who had been merrily sauntering around the rink all afternoon, and fell flat on my behind. Happy Birthday, Megan. After we were good and tired from skating, we walked around the city, saw the tree, did a little shopping, and stopped in a crowded Chipotle for dinner. While we were eating, my dad stood up and hushed the multitude of cranky New Yorkers. To my horror, he kindly asked if everyone would sing happy birthday to his 20 year old daughter. I presently hid my bright red face in my burrito and kicked him under the table when they finished singing. Everyone went their separate ways, and we met up again on the 24th for Christmas Eve mass at our home parish. Christmas morning entailed an early wake-up call, the traditional opening of presents by the tree, and driving to Connecticut to visit family for the day. Later, we were back on the road, dropping Cait and Kyle off at their apartment, then heading west to visit the other side of the family in Pittsburg before Kevin had to catch another plane back to the west coast. Shew! Talk about a whirlwind!

Although the time we get to spend together is shorter, it is definitely sweeter. Because we are not together all the

time like we were growing up, we have come to appreciate each other so much more. I remember a conversation I had with my dad a few months ago. I had called home to complain about how horrible my week had been, listing off all the monstrosities a college kid has to deal with: homework, sleep deprivation, roommates snoring, bad food in the cafeteria, etc. etc. After patiently listening to my list of grievances, he sighed and cleared his throat. I knew something profound was coming, so I braced myself. He did not disappoint. He told me to start working on having an "attitude of gratitude." Instead of sweating the little stuff, we need focus on all the good things in our lives. Okay, so there are definitely times that I miss my family like crazy and wish I could be with them all the time. But, instead of complaining and crying about it, I can look forward to the times that we will have together. And when we are able to be together, it's so important to live in the moment and cherish every single second of it.

We never really realize how much something means to us until it's gone. We take advantage of the things in our lives, expecting them to always be there. The same goes for the people in our lives. Going home for breaks is always great because it lets me get away from school work for a few days and catch up on sleep. But, every time I get in the car to drive back to school, I always find myself wishing I had spent more time just sitting and talking with my family. With that said, I have some advice for you this holiday season: Don't get caught up in the hustle and bustle of commercialized Christmas. Take a step back and remember the reason for the season. Take it one day at a time, sometimes even one moment at a time. Don't think ahead to tomorrow, because today is all we are given. Live in the moment. Instead of wishing the time away, be with your loved ones in the here and now. Also, don't forget to TELL the people you love that you love them!

So, have a very merry and blessed Christmas, Emmitsburg. And a happy New Year! See you in 2012!

For more stories by Megan, visit the Authors sections of Emmitsburg.net.



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PASTOR'S DESK

The waiting place

**Pastor Katie Penick
Incarnation, United
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Several years ago, my family and I went to Virginia to spend Christmas with my godparents. It snowed the night before we left, so our trip was beautiful. As we got closer to their house, the view began to change. Instead of snow, they had had an ice storm. Everything was encased in ice – the leaves, the signs, the roads, the power lines. It was beautiful but dangerous. We arrived safely to a cold, dark house. The live Christmas tree that my godfather had bought was still in the truck, caked in ice. The men dragged it as far as the front porch. As if on cue, the power came on, and we spent the afternoon baking gingerbread cookies and decorating them with icing. Then, bundled in our coats and gloves, we went to the porch and hung them on the frozen tree.

The next day, the thaw came. As the frozen tree melted, the cookies began to stretch and pull; their icing smiles began to droop. Eventually, one by one, they fell to the ground and our festive, frozen tree was decorated with ghoulish heads, as their bodies littered the ground.

I have been thinking about that tree lately. Sometimes it seems like we are a lot like those gingerbread people, living in a place that is sometimes beautiful, and sometimes deadly. Waiting and hoping that the environment doesn't change in such a way that we are left with nothing.

We, people of faith, are now in the season of Advent, those four weeks that usher in Christmas. Advent is a time when we wait. We hover in between the promise of God and the realization of those promises. Hovering and hoping...

But this waiting game can become very difficult, especially as it stretches on year to year, generation to generation, age to age. During this season of waiting we remember the promises of the prophet Isaiah that the people will "beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against na-

tion, neither shall they learn war no more." (Isaiah 2:4)

What a wonderful vision: no more war or terrorism. The boundaries that separate people from each other melt away. No more need of weaponry and all that technology used to create tools that help our society to grow and thrive. Can you even imagine what this would be like, in this era of underwear bombers and intrusive security checks?

But now all we can do is wait. In his book, *Oh The Places You Will Go!* Dr. Seuss wrote of the "Waiting Place" where people wait and wait for buses and trains, mail or rain, yes or no. I think Advent is our Waiting Place. All of us have been called to spend more time than we like in the Waiting Place!

From Egypt to the wilderness, from Babylonian exile to Roman oppression, God's people have stayed in the waiting place. Sometimes we wait for generations at a time, longing for the God of Sinai and the burning bush to tear open the heavens and come down. The people demand God's presence, waiting for God to intervene in history again.

Yet we don't like to think of believers as people who wait. For God. Ours is not a culture that wants to wait. We want what we want, and we want it right now.

We might be impatient but God has shown the people over and over again that God's ways never change. Throughout the Bible, God takes the initiative while God's people can only wait. And so today, December 2011, we can only sit down in the waiting place and... wait. We must wait, just as the people waited in the wilderness and in exile and today. We must wait like a mother waiting for a baby to be born. We must wait like a father waiting to walk his daughter down the aisle. We must wait, like a child waiting for Christmas morning.

God is still with us and if we listen very carefully, while we are in the waiting place, we might hear God's voice whisper: "Be still and know that I am God." Advent,

these days as Christmas approaches, reminds us to take time in our hectic holidays schedules and be still, to make ourselves quiet... to wait for God's greatest gift of all.

If we allow ourselves to stay in the waiting place, we can prepare ourselves, like a child waiting for a bedtime story. In the waiting place, we will hear the familiar but always new story of a starry night in Bethlehem as God intervenes in history again. We hear of new parents in a manger, shepherds and Magi... and it all begins anew. In the waiting place, we enter a place of preparation before revelation descends upon us, like the light from a North Star.

Which bring me back to that Christmas tree and the drooping gingerbread people. After its dreary beginning, that same tree was planted in front of my godparents' house in the spring. Now, thirteen years later, it stands tall and strong, offering shelter and beauty... offering hope for new life. The waiting place is not a permanent stop on life's journey. It is but a resting place as God prepares us for the destination. Isaiah's vision of peace and prosperity still lives in our hearts and God's vision of a new reality, ushered in with the birth of a baby boy, continues. While we sit in the waiting place, we have confidence in the reality that Isaiah proclaimed.

The congregation of Incarnation United Church of Christ invites you to join us in our waiting place, as we celebrate that moment when God's grace burst forth in the birth of Jesus Christ. Join us on Christmas Eve at 8:00 pm for a special candlelight service. On Christmas Day, we will gather together to celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus during our regular Sunday 9:15 am service.



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DESIGNER'S CORNER

Selling homes during holidays?

The month of December is typically a very hectic month for most families! Busy preparing festive dinners, decking their halls with holiday ornaments and decor, shopping for the perfect gift for loved ones--it's hard to imagine adding "selling your property" to your December to-do list! However, there are actually quite a few advantages to selling your property during the holidays.

While November through January usually shows a dip in the housing market, you'll be surprised to find that most shoppers are typically more serious about buying a home during the holiday season. If you are considering putting your property up for sale during this most wonderful time of the year, you may want to keep the following tips and ideas in mind to help your property sell.

For starters, most people who look at your home over the holidays are serious buyers. Serious buyers have fewer homes to choose from over the holidays as most sellers take their homes off the market. That means less competition for you, and top dollar for your sale!

An incentive to the buyer is to purchase by the end of the year for

tax purposes; and a great incentive to the seller--host a holiday open house, or an event to benefit your favorite charity--a win-win for all!

Another great reason to sell during the holidays--properties show better when they are decorated over the holidays. As you may want to decorate your house festively, we suggest not going overboard--especially with religious items, decorative outdoor lighting, and large cluttered holiday décor. Keep it simple, yet elegant, and appeal to the masses. Be sure not to cover up the most important architectural features of the property--a fabulous room with view, a wood burning stone fire place, or a newly remodeled kitchen!

Since many buyers like to first shop from the warmth of their homes, keep in mind it's important to post great photos of your property on the web. Make sure you present professional uncluttered looking photos of the main rooms of the home. Once they are ready to see your property, make sure you've got great curb appeal! Keep fallen leaves raked, ice or snow neatly handled.

Finally, buyers are more emotional during the holidays and tend to spend more money, which means you have a better chance of



getting your asking price! Now, add another log to the fireplace, bake some chocolate chip cookies and invite your next potential buyer in to a cozy winter retreat!

There are many great reasons for selling your home during the holidays. If you need assistance with simple staging solutions during the holiday season or any time, contact a real estate staging professional, or visit: www.MeredithDesignGroup.com or call Laura at: 877.465.4975.

Frankincense — Sacred Gifts

Charlotte Test

Frankincense is a dried resin which comes from a species of Boswellia tree that is mostly found in Ethiopia, Egypt, and parts of Saudi Arabia. Some of these trees are so hardy that they are found growing through rock. When the bark of the tree is damaged or cut, the tree secretes this resin known as "tears". Frankincense, either the tears or the pure essential oil, is most valued for its aromatic fragrance making it a common ingredient in incense, perfume, and potpourris.

History:

Frankincense has been traded for over 5000 years. In ancient times it was often deemed a more precious commodity

than gold. The essential oil of Frankincense has been known far back into history for its amazing healing powers and benefits in aromatherapy. For thousands of years in the Middle East, even before it was offered as a gift to the Christ child by the Magi, Frankincense has been used to enhance the ability to communicate with the Creator. In addition to the Holy Bible including 52 references to Frankincense, Egyptian records report the use of Frankincense in cosmetics, perfumes and as an embalming agent. The Chinese had found it to be a useful treatment for those suffering from leprosy.

Historical Uses:

The medicinal actions and uses of Frankincense include its use as a stimulant, relaxant, expectorant, and anti-inflammatory used externally. Frankincense has been used for tumors, particularly of the breast and lungs. In addition to the breasts, it has been used for a variety of female concerns such as inflammation of the ovaries and pain during menstruation. Frankincense has also been used for respiratory complaints such as asthma, shortness of breath, sinus troubles as well as laryngitis. It has also been used to help strengthen the immune system. It was applied as a salve and liniment for rheumatism, wounds and athletic injuries. Currently, clinical trials in Germany have shown health benefits observed in patients affected by rheumatoid arthritis, chronic colitis, ulcerative colitis, Crohn's disease, bronchial asthma, and other diseases.

Emotionally and mentally, Frankincense has been found to be very beneficial in relief of depression while also soothing the nerves. It has been found to reduce stress levels and to relieve irritability. Frankincense has also been found to be very powerful in soothing the mind. In fact, it's been used quite often to soothe the mind to enhance meditation. Its sacred uses in spiritual practice are well known among many religions such as Christianity, Judaism, and Hinduism.

Common Applications:

Frankincense tears can be burned in a dish made for incense such as those made from soap stone, or in a sturdy sea shell with a layer of sand. Once lit, the aroma that fills the air has an especially beneficial effect in balancing the emotions and mood. The essential oil of Frankincense, a high quality grade that is commonly used in Aromatherapy, can be mixed with massage oil and massaged into the skin. To benefit the respiratory system, Frankincense essential oil can be diffused in a nebulizing diffuser made for aromatherapy, or simmered in hot water so that the steam is able to diffuse the oil into the air.

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CONTRACTOR'S CORNER

Construction tools for the homeowner

Andrew Wivell

Christmas is just a few short weeks away. Typically, this time of year, we see a seasonal slow-down. I thought it would be fun to switch from the "project" style articles to a article highlighting the tool industry. More specifically, a discussion of tools for your handyman or the couch potato in your life whom you want to be handier. Having the right tools makes even the smallest job so much easier.

Basic Hand Tools - A tape measure is essential for even the most basic of household tasks - hanging pictures, placing furniture, measuring your kids, etc. I recommend getting one with a 1" wide "blade". With limited use and care, it will last a lifetime. Stanley is currently a popular manufacturer.

A small inexpensive level (2' will do) will help your own work come out straight and plumb. It is also handy to have a level to check someone else's work in case you are hiring a contractor.

Another "must have" tool that can last a lifetime is a standard claw hammer. A 16 oz. weight is kind of a "all-purpose" hammer. I recommend one with a fiberglass handle or steel handle and a rubber contoured grip.

Screwdrivers have lost some of

their luster in recent years due to the cordless tool craze. It is still important to have a good selection of standard flat blades and phillips heads. In addition to different size tips, it is nice to have long and short handled ones for those hard to reach jobs or tight spaces. Several manufacturers are making combination drivers that can store multiple tips in the handle. These have proven extremely popular and handy in the industry as you have access to flat, phillips, square, and torx heads all in one tool.

A basic set of wrenches that goes from 1/4" to 3/4" will tackle many household issues that arise. An adjustable wrench or "Crescent" wrench is a good substitute for multiple wrenches and usually cheaper. An adjustable wrench will also eliminate the possible need for a second set of wrenches that are metric sizes.

A first cousin of the wrench is the pliers. A basic pair of slip-joint pliers will get a lot of use around the house. Most pliers today come with a rubber grip. The rubber grip is more comfortable and provides some protection from electrical conductivity. I use my pliers often to pull the large needle through the hole as I am restringing ball gloves for the kids.

A medium sized plastic tool box is a necessity to conveniently store the

tools mentioned above. I like the ones that have the compartments in the top of the lid to store miscellaneous fasteners, wire nuts, tape, glue, etc. They can also double as a lunch stool or a "office chair" as you field phone calls in your mobile office. Some other basic tools that should be considered are a utility knife, stapler, speed square, chalk box, carpenter's pencil and C-clamps.

Power Tools - There are a wide range of electric and cordless (battery operated) power tools on the market today. Many are "purpose-built" to satisfy a specific task in the industry. In keeping with our theme, we will focus on the general purpose necessities and Christmas gift ideas for your handyman.

Drills and Drill Drivers are a must have for drilling pilot holes or for sinking fasteners in some of your harder woods. If you are just putting a few screws in some soft pine, then a hand screw driver will do the trick. For harder woods, such as oak, or for larger quantities of fasteners, a cordless drill is invaluable. The price of these tools has come way down since their introduction due to the competition and increased sales. Your best value for these tools is to buy a "Combo" Pack. Typically, this will include



Mark Zurgable and Tony Orndorff

several battery operated tools, a tool bag, 2 batteries and a charger. A four Combo Pack that includes a drill, circular saw, sawzall, and flashlight is a great asset to any shop area. Buying these tools separately, will usually cost about double the price of the Combo Pack.

If you are doing a home project with a lot of sawing, such as a deck, you will definitely want a good quality circular saw. Many manufacturers are making circular saws now with a laser that illuminates on the object to be sawn in the exact location of the saw blade. This is a helpful evolution for novices and pros alike.

My personal favorite new tool in the last three years is what is generi-

cally referred to as the Multi-tool. You may have seen the "info-commercial" on TV and the tool is as good as advertised. My multi-tool is made by Dremel. It has a vibrating head with 10 different rpm settings. The best use that I have found for it is plunge cutting into wood trim. You can make some very precise controlled cuts with rpm's turned down. They make a variety of heads for it including sanding, grout removal, etc. The tool is relatively cheap at about \$100, but the different attachments range from \$5 to \$20. My carpenter likes it so much that I have not seen it since I left him borrow it 3 weeks ago!

Remember Zurgable Brothers Hardware Store when planning your shopping trip. They have a good selection of the items mentioned above and are conveniently located at the intersection of South Seton Avenue and Old Emmitsburg Road - just west of the Getty Station. You will also get a friendly greeting from the knowledgeable staff of Mark Zurgable, Owner, or Tony Orndorff. Additionally, you will get the benefit of supporting a local business. If you haven't been there lately, then it's time you gave them another look. You will also find some other gift ideas, including Gas Grills, snow sleds, shop vacs, work lights, coffee makers, and a range of automotive products such as jumper cables and "hot-shot" battery chargers.

I hope this helps as you stock your workshop or fill your stockings as you shop for the handy person in your life.

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COMPLEMENTARY CORNER

Resolutions for well-being

Renee Lehman

We are approaching the time of year when I hear people talking about New Year's resolutions. Frequently the resolutions deal with wanting to lose weight for spring and/or starting an exercise regime to become more fit. These are great goals, AND there is more to being well than just nutrition and physical fitness. Think about the categories in this Circle of Well Being:

These are key areas that are associated with a lifestyle that promotes well-being. Imagine that for each category the line running from the inner to the outer part of the circle is a scale from 0 to 10. Regarding your satisfaction with each category, a zero would be equal to completely dissatisfied and a ten would be absolute satisfaction. Place a hash mark on the line for each category where you would rank your level of satisfaction in each area. Now draw a line that connects each of the hash marks together. What do your connecting lines look like? How far away from the center circle are your lines? If one or more are close to the

center circle, this may be a category that you might want to focus on for future well-being.

Another way of assessing an area in which you may want to make a resolution is by using a modified version of the Health-Promoting Lifestyle Profile II (HPLP II). This was developed by S.N. Walker, K. Sechrist, and N. Pender in 1995. This questionnaire contains statements about your present way of life or personal habits.

Score Responses as: 1 = Never; 2 = Sometimes; 3 = Often; 4 = Routinely

1. Discuss my problems and concerns with people close to me.
2. Choose a diet low in fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol.
3. Follow a planned exercise program.
4. Feel I am growing and changing in positive ways.
5. Praise other people easily for their achievements.
6. Limit use of sugars and food containing sugar (sweets).
7. Exercise vigorously for 20 or more minutes at least three

8. Take some time for relaxation each day.
9. Believe that my life has purpose.
10. Maintain meaningful and fulfilling relationships with others.
11. Take part in light to moderate physical activity (such as sustained walking 30-40 minutes 5 or more times a week).
12. Accept those things in my life which I cannot change.
13. Look forward to the future.
14. Spend time with close friends.
15. Eat 2-4 servings of fruit each day.
16. Get a second opinion when I question my health care provider's advice.
17. Take part in leisure-time (recreational) physical activities (such as swimming, dancing, bicycling).
18. Concentrate on pleasant thoughts at bedtime.
19. Feel content and at peace with myself.
20. Find it easy to show concern, love and warmth to others.
21. Eat 3-5 servings of vegetables each day.
22. Discuss my health concerns with health professionals.
23. Do stretching exercises at least 3 times per week.
24. Work toward long-term goals in my life.
25. Touch and am touched by people I care about.
26. Get exercise during usual daily activities (such as walking during lunch, using stairs instead of elevators, parking car away from destination and walking).
27. Balance time between work and play.
28. Ask for information from health professionals about how to take good care of myself.

29. Practice relaxation or meditation for 15-20 minutes daily.
30. Am aware of what is important to me in life.
31. Pace myself to prevent tiredness.
32. Eat breakfast.
33. Expose myself to new experiences and challenges.

When you are finished, add up all of your scores and divide by 33. This is your overall health-promoting lifestyle score.

There are also subcategories within this questionnaire that may assist you in identifying specific areas of your lifestyle that you may want to focus on. To calculate your score for each subcategory, add up the scores as follows:

- Specific questions dealing with Health Responsibility include: #16, 22, and 28. To score this subset, add up these scores then divide by 3.
- Specific questions dealing with Physical Activity include: #3, 7, 11, 17, 23, and 26. To score this subset, add up these scores then divide by 6.
- Specific questions dealing with Nutrition include: #2, 6, 15, 21, and 32. To score this subset, add up these scores then divide by 5.
- Specific questions dealing with Spiritual Growth include: #4, 9, 13, 19, 24, 30, and 33. To score this subset, add up these scores then divide by 7.
- Specific questions dealing with Interpersonal Relations include: #1, 5, 10, 14, 20, and 25. To score this subset, add up these scores then divide by 6.
- Specific questions dealing with Stress Management include: #8, 12, 18, 27, 29, and 31. To score this subset, add up these scores then divide by 6.

What were your scores for the questionnaire and each of the subcategories? To rate your scores,

consider the following guidelines: a score of 90 or greater as excellent, 80 – 90 as good, 70 – 80 as average, and below a 70 as may need improvement.

To improve upon your Health Responsibility score consider reporting signs and symptoms to a health professional sooner than later; learning more about ways to improve your health by reading educational materials or attending programs; closely observing your physical/mental/emotional states; and seeking guidance when necessary.

To improve upon your Physical Activity score consider becoming more active. If you are a novice, first receive a physical exam by your physician. If you can, use your activities of daily living as a way to be more physically active.

To improve upon your Nutrition score consider eating less processed foods (foods around the outside walls of the grocery store); learning nutritional information from a health professional; and reading food labels to identify the amount of nutrients, fats, sodium, and sugar content within the item.

To improve upon your Spiritual Growth score consider reading spiritual information that is inspiring to you (sacred texts, or magazines such as Spirituality and Health, Guideposts, etc); seeking guidance from a spiritual counselor, minister, rabbi, etc; and asking yourself questions that deal with your life's purpose and future goals.

To improve upon your Interpersonal Relations score consider improving your support network of caring friends/family; learning to settle disagreements with others through discussion and compromise; and by spending quality time with friends/family.

To improve upon your Stress Management score consider learning specific methods to control your stress; relaxing every day; learning to meditate; learning to balance work and play; and lastly, getting enough sleep.






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FITNESS AND HEALTH

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Linda Stultz
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Dear Santa,

I've tried to be good this year. I help my family and friends when they need me. I get all of my work done on time. I do all I can for everyone else. For Christmas I would like: lower blood pressure & cholesterol, less stress, better mobility, stronger bones and muscles, to loose weight and, oh yes, MORE ENERGY. Something else I would like is someone to teach me how to improve my nutrition habits.

Does this sound like a letter you may write to Santa? If it does, don't feel bad, hundreds of other people just like you feel the same way. Well, help is as close as a phone and now is the time to reach for it.

For years, when my husband asked me what I wanted for Christmas or my birthday, I would say "A Personal Trainer". I always thought I could not afford one, but little did I know, I could. I needed someone to lead me through each step and tell me exactly what to do. That's just the help I got. That's also why I decided to become a personal trainer. I wanted to give others the help and guidance I received in the hopes of them becoming

healthier, happier and more confident. Now, as a personal trainer, I realize the financial concern people have in these tight economic times, but personal trainers are affordable. Just think of how much you have spent on those diets and gimmicks that didn't work. This will work, if you commit to it and it will be worth every penny by improving your health as well as your appearance and self esteem.

Many people tell me that over the years, they have tried every diet, every diet aid, fad and miracle diet. Of course, nothing worked. The only real way to loose weight, keep it off and improve your health is the old fashion way, to develop a healthy eating and exercise program. There is no quick fix. The weight and health problems did not develop overnight and they cannot be corrected overnight. Becoming a healthier person is not only for you but for your family too. By consulting with a trainer, you will learn the proper form and necessary information to exercise and be able to maintain and keep improving. Exercise is not as hard as you may think and can even become fun and something you look forward to.

Start out this holiday season with a healthy outlook and carry it into the New Year. Let this coming year be the Year for You! Maybe you are not the one who wants to start exercising and eating better but know someone who does. Get a family member, a friend, or a group together and call me for more information and a FREE consultation at 717-334-6009.

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Fitness Matters

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Inga Olsen
**Anytime Fitness
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Question: Is it true that you can only digest 30 grams of protein at a time?

Answer: No—this is definitely a myth. Some claim that Lou Ferrigno came up with this one back in the 1970s, but no one knows for sure. I am amazed at how many people think this is true, and I'm also curious to know where these folks think the rest of the protein (above and beyond 30 grams) goes if it isn't digested. The simple truth is that you can digest any amount of protein that you ingest, but the caveat here is that the digestive process will just take that much longer. This is true of any macronutrient. The more you eat, the longer it takes to process—simple as that. If you happen to hear this myth being bantered about in the gym at some point, be sure to put forth the real facts.

Question: Is it ok to do casual physical activities on my days off from working out?

Answer: Absolutely! Scheduled physical activities aren't necessarily warranted, but it doesn't mean you can't go out and have fun. This includes playing with your kids, going for a walk with your spouse or partner, or playing a sport with some friends. You'll obviously improve your fitness and health by doing this and, for most folks, it really isn't going to be detrimental to your training regimen. Only elite athletes typically abstain from all forms of physical activ-

ity on their days off, and that's generally because their bodies are under so much stress during their daily training. Days off were never meant to be spent lounging on the couch watching movies, though occasionally that's just fine too!

Question: I have a friend that's using some questionable supplements. How should I approach him given the fact that he seems to believe they're working well?

Answer: This is a tough question to answer, but you might want to start by telling him that diet is a huge part of the equation, and that supplementation, though useful at times, can't make up for a deficient diet. Then, I would have him meet with a qualified expert that can take a look at the supplements he's using and provide some real, science-based feedback on the safety and efficacy of the products. Sports dietitians have specialized training in this area, and you can find one in your area by checking out the SCAN website (www.scandpg.org). Keep in mind, if he truly feels that the supplements are helping him achieve his goals, there might not be anything you can say that will change his mind. Just know that you did all you could.

About the author: Inga Olsen is the Club Manager and NSPA Certified Conditioning Specialist and Nutrition and Weight Management Specialist at Anytime Fitness in Thurmont. To submit a question for future articles, please contact the author at Thurmont-MD@anytimefitness.com.

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ASTRONOMY

The night sky of December

Professor Wayne Wooten

For December 2011, the Moon will be first quarter on December 2nd. The first week find the moon waxing in the evening sky. The waxing gibbous moon passes five degrees north of Jupiter on December 6th. The full moon is on December 10th, the long night moon by tradition. The waning gibbous moon passes eight degrees south of Mars on December 17th, with both rising about 11 PM. The last quarter moon occurs in the morning sky on December 18th, and it passes south of Saturn on December 20th. The winter solstice occurs at 11:30 PM CST on December 21st, and winter begins on the shortest day of the year. The waning crescent moon passes 3 degrees south of Mercury in the dawn on December 23rd. The new moon occurs on December 24th. The waxing crescent moon passes six degrees north of Venus in the SW sky on December 27th.

Venus dominates the evening sky for the next six months. She is still on the far side of the sun, and telescopically appears as a small, gibbous disk. Mercury passes from evening to morning sky as December begins, with the crescent moon south of it on December 23rd in the dawn. Mars is rising in the NE in Leo about midnight, and will come to opposition next spring. Jupiter is still well placed in the southern sky through March of 2012. Saturn rises about midnight near Spica in Virgo, and the famed rings are now open about 8 degrees. They were edge on as seen from the Earth in 2009, and will be tilted 27 degrees toward us at solstice in 2017, when they will double the planet's present brightness. Saturn is in the morning sky in Virgo east of Spica now, but comes to opposition and moves into



The famed Pleiades cluster; they lie about 400 light years distant, and over 250 stars are members of this fine group.

evening sky by late March of 2012.

The square of Pegasus dominates the western sky. The constellation Cassiopeia makes a striking W in the NW. She contains many nice star clusters for binocular users in her outer arm of our Milky Way, extending to the NE now. Her daughter, Andromeda, starts with the NE corner star of Pegasus' Square, and goes NE with two more bright stars in a row. It is from the middle star, beta Andromeda, that we proceed about a quarter the way to the top star in the W of Cassiopeia, and look for a faint blur with the naked eye. M-31, the Andromeda Galaxy, is the most distant object visible with the naked eye, lying about 2.5 million light years distant. Overhead is Andromeda's hero, Perseus, rises. Between him and Cassiopeia is the fine Double Cluster, faintly visible with the naked eye and two fine binocular objects in the same field. Perseus contains the famed eclipsing binary star Algol, where the Arabs imagined the eye of the gorgon Medusa would

lie. It fades to a third its normal brightness for six out of every 70 hours, as a larger but cooler orange giant covers about 80% of the smaller but hotter and thus brighter companion as seen from Earth.

Look at Perseus' feet for the famed Pleiades cluster; they lie about 400 light years distant, and over 250 stars are members of this fine group. Our photo feature for December is this fine view of the Pleiades by Bob Gaskin. The clouds of dust that accompany this young cluster in its tour of the Galaxy are beautiful, and recall the poem "Locksley Hall" by Alfred Lord Tennyson, in which he notes, "Many a night I saw the Pleiads, rising thro' the mellow shade, Glitter like a swarm of fire-flies tangled in a silver braid." Bob's fine photo certainly conveys the verse...

East of the seven sisters is the V of stars marking the face of Taurus the Bull, with bright orange Aldebaran as his eye. The V of stars is the Hyades cluster, older than the blue Pleiades, but about half their distance. Aldebaran is not a

member, but about twice as close as the Hyades; distances in astronomy can be deceiving.

Yellow Capella, a giant star the same temperature and color as our much smaller Sun, dominates the overhead sky. It is part of the pentagon on stars making up Auriga, the Charioteer (think Ben Hur). Several nice binocular Messier open clusters are found in the winter milky way here. East of Auriga, the twins, Castor and Pollux highlight the Gemi-

ni. The pair are associated with Jason and the Golden Fleece legend, for they were the first two Argonauts to sign up on his crew of adventurers.

South of Gemini, Orion is the most familiar winter constellation, dominating the eastern sky at dusk. The reddish supergiant Betelgeuse marks his eastern shoulder, while blue-white supergiant Rigel stands opposite on his west knee. Just south of the belt, hanging like a sword downward, is M-42, the Great Nebula of Orion, an outstanding binocular and telescopic stellar nursery. It is part of a huge spiral arm gas cloud, with active starbirth all over the place

Last but certainly not least, in the east rise the hunter's two faithful companions, Canis major and minor. Procyon is the bright star in the little dog, and rises minutes before Sirius, the brightest star in the sky. Sirius dominates the SE sky by 7 PM, and as it rises, the turbulent winter air causes it to sparkle with shafts of spectral fire. Beautiful as the twinkling appears to the naked eye, for astronomers this means the image is blurry; only in space can we truly see "clearly now". At 8 light years distance, Sirius is the closest star we can easily see with the naked eye. Below Sirius in binoculars is another fine open cluster, M-41, a fitting dessert for New Year's sky feast.

Almanac

Mid-Atlantic Weather Watch: Cloudy and cold (1,2) turning stormy with snow in the northern part of the regions and rain in the southern part. Fair, windy, and cold (6,7,8,9) with an Arctic cold wave and a chance of snow flurries (10,11,12,13). Nor'easter with heavy snows (14,15) turning fair with rather cold temperatures (16,17,18,19,20,21,22). Heavy snows in the north, rain in the south (23,24,25) returning to fair weather but windy and cold (26,27,28,29). The month ends with even colder temperatures and possible snow flurries (30,31)

Full Moon: December's Full Moon will rise on Saturday, December 10th at 9:36 AM EST and has been best known by Native Americans as Cold Moon (for obvious reasons!). It also has been

known as Beaver Moon because beavers are very active now trying to complete their dams and lodges so that yearlings and kits will have protection during the coming Winter. It has also been called Ice-Forming Moon, because the dropping temperatures are causing the streams, lakes, and ponds to freeze over.

Holidays: Celebrate Christmas on Sunday, December 25th. Enjoy family and friends during this festive time and try to keep that joyful and giving spirit alive throughout the coming year. Make plans to watch a classic Christmas movie such as Miracle on 34th Street, A Christmas Carol (the 1951 version with Alistair Sim is the best!), White Christmas, or the very funny, The Christmas Story (written by humorist, Jean Shepard). New Year's Eve is Saturday, December 31st. Make plans to attend a First Night Celebration and enjoy family-oriented fun, food, and enter-

tainment on the very first night of the year. To find one nearest you, check out www.firstnight.com/cities. Some have huge fireworks displays planned at midnight that are simply marvelous. You won't be disappointed!

The Garden: Rake up all remaining leaves and place them on a compost heap. If left on paths they become a hazard when the colder weather comes. When cutting evergreen foliage from the garden for Christmas decor, cut just above a bud. This ensures that no spurs will be left to encourage decay. To avoid rodent damage during the winter, keep a couple of inches clear of vegetation and mulch around the base of young trees. Plastic or metal hardware cloth can be wrapped around the base to deter chewing on bark. Remember to put plenty of seed out for the birds, especially if the ground is covered with snow.

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COMPUTER Q&A

The computer geek is back in town!

By Aysë Jester (Stenabaugh)

Many of you know me through my affiliations with Jester's Computer Services (our family business) others may know me only from the article that I have been writing for the past year. What some of you may or may not know is that in December of last year I relocated to Pittsburgh with my (now) husband and our two children. Prior to moving away I worked with our family business doing everything from service calls to web design. My sister and I recently found a house to rent together in the area and my family and I will be moving back to the area.

I'm sure you wondering "So what does this mean for me?" Well if you're a current or future customer of Jester's Computer Services in need of a service call it's highly likely that I will be the one providing that service for you! In addition to service calls I will be offering a number of services that Jester's Computers doesn't currently provide including drop-off and pick-up, one-on-one computer classes, new computer set-up, website design, and graphic design services.

Here's a little background on myself. I graduated from Fairfield high school in 2005, while attending Fairfield I took advantage of Computer tech. maintenance and repair classes offered through HACC. After completing high school I was an employee in the Wal-Mart electronics department for over two years before I became an assistant manager for Radio shack. After a year there I became heavily involved with the family business until October of last year when we made the decision to move to Pittsburgh. I am currently attending the University of Phoenix online for my associates degree in web design.

A little about the services I will be offering:

Service calls: If you need something simple done, can't afford to be without your computer for long, or have a networking issue in your home this service could be very beneficial to you. Service calls can be scheduled by calling Jester's Computer Services at (717) 642-6611. Prices vary depending on your needs and the amount of time

the job will take.

Drop-off/pick-up service: Can't get to us during regular business hours? Don't feel confident in connecting and disconnecting your computer? Soon we will be offering this service to pick up and drop your computer back off for service at Jester's Computer Service. Those who do not want hook their computer up themselves will also have the option to have it unhooked and hooked back up after service for a small additional fee. To see if we service your area and to obtain pricing information on this service please contact Jesters Computer Services.

One-on-One Classes: Before I left the area I offered one-on-one classes for a variety of Windows based software. Whether you are a beginner, want to brush up your skills, or need to learn a certain program for work or school I can be of assistance. I can

give you the one-on-one attention that you deserve in the convenience of your home on your own computer! I have taught classes on basic computer software including internet browsers and email clients all the way up to more in depth software such as Microsoft Office, and QuickBooks. If you are interested in classes please contact Jester's Computers for availability and pricing.

New computer set-up: Buying a new computer is an awesome experience but for many can be a headache as well. Why not have someone help you set-up your new computer, install old software, and install device drivers for things like printers and digital cameras? This can be a great Christmas gift for those who are already getting everything and might need a little help with setup. In addition to setting up the computer, software, and

devices, I will provide a mini lesson to show you around your new computer if you aren't familiar with the version of Windows that you will be using.

Website design: Getting even just a basic website online can really boost your business. If you are interested in an informational website for personal or business needs I offer extremely competitive rates and very personable service.

Graphic design: Need a flyer design? Business card? Newsletter? Brochure? Don't want to spend a lot of money? I can create a professional looking design for you at a competitive rate. You will receive professional and fast service!

For those of you that were looking forward to the December article I apologize for not having a helpful fact-filled for article this month. I will continue to write the article every month just as I have in the past! I promise to drum up a fun one next month to make it up to all my readers!

If you have any questions about the services above please contact Jester's Computer Service's at (717) 642-6611 located at 5135 Fairfield Road Fairfield, PA 17320. As always for professional, fast, and friendly computer repair services Jester's will be able to help you with all of your needs!

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MS. PHELAN'S CREATIVE WRITERS

Christmas: A dog's point of view

Lizzy Ryan

Editor's note: in last month's the Graduate article Katie Phelan talked about using creative writing to teach her students how to write. We asked her to work with Lizzy Ryan, one of our Teen Point of View writers who also happens to be one of Katie's students at Delone Catholic Highschool, for a special Christmas article. We hope you enjoy it.

I keep hearing this word. They (meaning the family I live with) call it Christmas. It was starting to get cold out, and the colder it got, the more they talked about it. I am an older dog pushing five years old. I'm not a puppy anymore, so the cold gets to me. But for some reason every time I heard this word, I forgot about the cold and felt like a puppy again ... I don't know why, but I did.

Oh! I forgot to introduce myself... my name is Blizzard and I am a Saint Bernard. I was adopted from the Humane Society earlier this year and I have never really experienced this thing called Christmas. Now I'm not crazy I have seen snow! For Pete's sake I'm a Saint Bernard! We're supposed to have originated from mountains with lots of snow. Anyway, back to Christmas.

Then two weeks before Christmas my owners put me on a leash. I hoped that we were going on a walk because I love walks. Instead they said that we were going to look for this thing called a Christmas tree and they bring it in the house and hang decorations on it. They must be crazy to bring a live tree into the house! They also said that under the tree there are going to be presents. I hope that I can get a present like a bacon flavored bone. It was the first day this year that it started to snow. So we got to the Christmas tree farm and Rosie and Wyatt (the kids) were throwing snowballs at each other while I was chasing them and having fun. I chased a squirrel right up a big tall Canaan fir. That is the tree that my family decided to buy to decorate. My family bought the tree and stuffed it into the back seat of their van and away we went back home.

When we got home, my family brought the tree into the house and set it up. They just spent twenty minutes just trying to figure out if the tree was straight in the stand. After that they strung different colored lights in the tree and that took forever. Later my family brought up several bins of ornaments. It took my family even longer to put them on the

tree. There Rosie and Wyatt would alternate who would put the ornaments up. I thought that was cool. My owner came to me with an ornament that looked like me and she was showing me and then she put it up toward the top of the tree. I can't believe this, an ornament that looked like me!

Later that day my family brought up another bin from the basement with a bunch of outside lights. They strung them up all over outside in the snow! While they were doing that I and the Rosie and Wyatt were outside playing in the snow. We played outside until it was dark. Then my owner called our names and said that she wanted to show us something. When we got there, there everything was lit up in different colors. There was even a reindeer family that moved and lit up together. It was so pretty.

Days passed and before we knew it, it was Christmas Eve. The children were so excited for Christmas the next day. My family left that afternoon to do some last minute Christmas food shopping at the local market. I was left at home by myself. I wandered around the house trying to find something to do. I sniffed around but found nothing. I was really curious what I would get for my Christmas present, but I couldn't find it. I walked past the tree and heard a small crash. I had accidentally knocked down an



ornament off the Christmas tree! It shattered everywhere. I guess it was my tail that had accidentally knocked it down.

Later my family came home with a bunch of groceries including a giant ham for the whole family because they were coming to visit

tomorrow on Christmas. My family put the groceries down and saw that I had knocked down the ornament. They looked at each other and said "Oh well I guess that would happen with having a Saint Bernard in the house. We have plenty of ornaments anyway."

The family baked cookies that evening. I found out that they made sugar cookies, chocolate chip cookies and oatmeal cookies. Rosie even snuck me a sugar cookie from under the table! It tasted delicious. That night the father read The Night before Christmas, a book about events that happened before Christmas. The Wyatt told me that they read it every year. The children went to bed that night feeling very anxious. So did I.

The next day at 7 in the morning, my family woke up and ran downstairs. Under the tree there were a bunch of presents. As my family was opening presents, there was wrapping paper everywhere. I had fun playing in that, tearing it apart and rolling in it. As I got tired I lay down at the feet of my owner and she said that there was a present under the tree for me. She handed it to me and told me to open it. At first I just sniffed at it. It smelled really good. I started very gently opening the paper with my teeth and I finally got to the present. It was a huge bone! That's what smelled so good! I took the bone and ran with it. I gnawed on that bone all day. It tasted delicious. I didn't realize it but it got to be late afternoon and people started coming. I stopped eating my bone and all of the guests were petting me. It was awesome. Later they ate dinner and everyone would feed me scraps from under the table. It got to be really late. I was really stuffed. All the guests had left. That was the best day of my life!

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UPCOMING EVENTS

December 2
Hollabaugh Bros second annual Holiday Open House! The holidays are coming, and what a better way to prepare than joining your friends for refreshments, samples, holiday music, special holiday deals, guest vendors, and more! 545 Carlisle Road, Biglerville, PA. www.hollabaughbros.com.

The Carroll Valley Citizens Association's Tree Lighting at the Carroll Valley Commons.

Open Mic Night at St. Philomena Catholic Books & Gifts.

December 3
Mother Seton School's Breakfast with Santa and Holiday Bazaar - a fun morning of 'Breakfast with Santa' and also a great 'one stop shop' for your holiday gift giving.

Elias Lutheran Church Annual Ham, Turkey and Roast Beef Supper and Christmas Bazaar. 100 W. Main Street, Emmitsburg.

Book Signing of Full Measure of Love novel by local author Ann Hall Marshall at St. Philomena Catholic Books & Gifts.

24th Annual Gettysburg Christmas Parade - Enjoy a variety of bands, floats, costumed characters, distinguished guests, dancers, youth groups and, of course, Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus! Downtown Gettysburg.

December 4
The Emmitsburg Community

Chorus annual Christmas Concert at the Basilica.

December 5
Emmitsburg's and "Evening of Christmas Spirit" See front page for details.

December 9
Elias Lutheran Church's Christmas Party Coffee House featuring the Children's Praise Choir, Christmas Play, and Silver Lining Band. Event is Free, though you may bring a dessert to share. 301-447-6239 eliasluth@yahoo.com.

16th Annual Gettysburg Tuba Carol Fest - Tuba players from everywhere playing Christmas Carols on "historic" Lincoln Square in Gettysburg, PA.

December 10
Carroll Valley Citizens Association event 'Breakfast with Santa' at Fairfield Fire House.

Outdoor Live Nativity - The Worship and Music Committee of Grace United Church of Christ at 49 W. Baltimore Street will be presenting an outdoor live nativity for the community on the front church property. This living nativity will feature church members, children, a choir and live animals. This is a free and family friendly event.

December 11
Gettysburg Civic Chorus Christmas Concert in the Chapel of the Lutheran Seminary Campus

in Gettysburg. The 100-voice chorus will present a varied program of sacred and secular holiday favorites. The concert is free to the public with a free-will offering being collected during intermission.

December 12
MSS Annual Christmas Program 9:30 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. Mother Seton School invites you to join us for our annual Christmas concert and program at the school. Snow date is Monday, December 19. For more info: 301-447-3161 or www.mothersetonschool.org.

Gettysburg's Majestic Theater presents the Moscow Ballet's Great Russian Nutcracker. For more information visit www.gettysburgmajestic.org or call 717-337-8200.

December 17
St. Philomena Catholic Books & Gifts and Holy Grounds Cafe's Music by "Seasons". Come enjoy the harmony of Celtic Contemporary tunes.

December 20
The Majestic Theater presents Eileen Ivers "An Nollaig" An Irish Christmas. The queen of the Celtic fiddle takes center stage in this holiday treat with her band, Immigrant Soul. For more information call 2717-337-8200 or visit www.gettysburgmajestic.org.

December 22
Trinity United Methodist Church in Emmitsburg, Maryland will be hosting a "Blue Christmas"

Worship service for those in the community who find the holiday season especially hard. For more information visit www.trinityummcmitsburg.com and call 301-288-1373.

December 31
Gettysburg Majestic Theater presents A New Year's Evening with Groucho. This fast-paced comedy consists of Groucho's best one-liners, showbiz anecdotes and songs. A perfect New Year's Eve show for all ages! For more information call 2717-337-8200 or visit www.gettysburgmajestic.org.

For more details on these and other events visit the *Upcoming Events* section of Emmitsburg.net.

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For ticket information, visit www.weinbergcenter.org

*

SERVICE OF LESSONS AND CAROLS FOR ADVENT

Sunday, December 4

St. Mary's Chapel, Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes, 3:30 p.m.

Celebrate the start of the holiday season with choral music and scriptural readings performed by the Mount Chorale.

*

Seminary Open House

Sunday, Dec. 4

Mount St. Mary's University Seminary, 2 p.m.

Tours every 20 minutes, light refreshments.

Holy Hour: 3:30-4:30 p.m.;

Advent Lessons and Carols: 4:30 - 5:15 p.m., Chapel of the Immaculate Conception

*

STUDENT INSTRUMENTAL AND VOCAL RECITAL

Wednesday, December 7

Knott Auditorium, 7:30 p.m.

Please join us for a year-end concert of masterworks by a talented group of Mount singers and instrumentalists.

*

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY MASS

Thursday, December 8

Grotto of our Lady of Lourdes, 12:30 p.m.

Chapel of the Immaculate Conception, 4:15 p.m.

*

INSTRUMENT ENSEMBLE FALL CONCERT

Sunday, December 11

Knott Auditorium, 4 p.m.

Join the Wind Ensemble, Lab Band and String Ensemble for a concert under the direction of Dr. Mark Carlson.

*

THE FEAST OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

Monday, December 12

Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes, Mass at 12:30 pm

*

THE SOLEMNITY OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD

Sunday, December 25

Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes

Solemn Mass of Christmas Day at Noon

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THE FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH

Friday, December 30

Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes, Mass at 12:30 p.m.



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