

When I'm called upon to recall the best Christmas of my life, my mind invariably wanders back to my beloved childhood home on Blair Branch. Where, there in the lead of that narrow Litcher County hollow, surrounded by hills so steep and high that the sun had to fight it's way in for a few hours each day, lie the very foundations of my life to date.

Actually, I'm not called upon to reminisce much anymore. The kids are all adults now and they are long-tired of the stories. The grandchildren are not yet old enough to appreciate the history. "Hardships always knocking at the door" is not a theme that most kids identify with anymore. At least not the ones in my immediate family and that's too bad.

My kids, Carol and Genny and Jennifer and Christopher, last experienced together the scouring of the woods and jointly finding (agreeing) cutting of the tree on Robert Collier's farm there, on Harmon's Lick in Garrard County in 1984. It was a perfectly conical, eight-foot cedar that we carefully packed home through the woods and fields. Our home smelled like a cedar chest for months thereafter but the tree was stunningly beautiful and the lingering aroma reminded of us Christmas for many weeks longer after it was taken down and discarded.

And I'm betting, whatever you want to bet, that on Blair Branch, last week or the one coming, there will be some kids scouring the hillsides for that perfect cedar, pine or hemlock they can cut and trim and make into the perfect Christmas tree. It's tradition and I refuse to believe it dead.

I believe that 1988 was the last time I ventured into the woods to cut a tree. I had found it while squirrel hunting on a slope there on Harmon's

Lick but by then the tree cutting was down to Jennifer and Chris and me and they were more interested in Nintendo Games.

"Just go get it and we'll decorate it!" It's too cold (it actually was) for us to go outside!

So we decorated that tree and on New Year's day we hauled it outside to the garden and I touched a match to the foliage. Only gunpowder would have made a bigger explosion. The flame was enormous and the blast nearly knocked me down. And then I realized what a danger cut trees pose to anyone who has them in their homes.

The next year Loretta and I bought a fake tree which we are using to this day. It takes an expert to tell the difference unless they try to pull off a needle and do the smell test. For sure, it does not take the place of going into the woods and fetching a Christmas tree but we now know that our home is in far less danger of catching fire.

Please be careful folks, if you have a cut tree in your home this year. It doesn't matter how much water you put in the base or spray on the foliage. You are harboring a bomb and all it takes is one little short in the lights to ignite it.

If you have a rooted tree, water it daily and if you haven't bought a tree yet, go out and buy something you can put up for years to come.

And hey, you kids on Blair Branch—have fun but do be careful. God knows I wish I was with you.

Editor's Note: Letters are typed and printed as received. The Signal reserves the right to reject any and all letters.

Our Readers Write

Dear Editor,

We at the Rock of Ages Mission have a very short time to finish filling Christmas baskets.

We had a large list of people in need this year. We have just about enough gifts, but, we need food donations really bad. Some items needed are several hams or turkeys, instant potatoes, stuffing mix, cranberry sauce, onions, beans, rolls, juices, cake mixes, frostings, jelly, pudding, etc. Actually, anything you would have for a Christmas dinner will be accepted.

If anyone would rather give money or a store gift certificate, this would work. Whatever you wish to help with, please call 758-4203 or 758-8546. Time is running out.

Thank You,
Kathy Bretz
PO Box 490
Mt. Vernon, KY 40456

Dear Editor,

Well, we have just celebrated another Thanksgiving - or "Turkey Day" as it has become known - and suddenly we are into our annual ritual of activity in preparation for Christmas, which is no longer Christmas but simply another phrase of the "Holiday Season". And those of us who celebrate in the real spirit for which both days were set aside by a once-Godly government are looked upon as a bit odd. Taxpaying citizens who paid for public grounds and buildings can no longer use our property for a few weeks each year to display a simple crèche or to perform any type of program having to do with the Christian faith. We must keep these spiritual activities pretty much behind church walls or in private property. Thankfully, we still have that right, but the chips keep falling as we find ourselves accepting more and more offenses so that a relatively few non-believers may not be offended!

We now exchange generic messages of holiday cheer because it has

become so difficult to find real Christmas cards. As a result, the faithful have largely capitulated to the forces dedicated to removing Christ from Christmas. But, frankly, it still offends our family, so no doubt it does either; to receive greetings depicting an obviously-soupy guy in a cocked Santa hat with a raised glass of "bubbly". To some this might bring a chuckle and generate a similar response, but not us. We still cherish our childhood faith and mental pictures of wise men bringing gifts to the baby Jesus. And we search for greeting cards that proclaim that same age-old message that rings anew with each telling!

The calendar still lists the last Thursday in November as Thanksgiving Day and December 25 as Christmas Day. But as new calendars arrive each year it would not be surprising to find that both days have been changed to reflect the now-accepted reason for the season.

On second thought, as long as Christians are content to subsidize this mockery by keeping the cash registers ringing and their taxes paid the title of Christmas will likely be preserved. After all, it allows all branches of government to take a couple of weeks off with pay, schools to be closed and even athletes to receive their Christmas bonus!

And so it is a strange, but necessary, birthday party our nation indulges in each year, a party at which the Guest of Honor is not present and no mention of His name or existence is acceptable. And it seems to get more absurd with each passing year as the ACLU and their ilk seek additional ways to stifle religious expression. God help us to find our way back to the faith and courage of our Founding Fathers!

To all who read this, may we wish you and yours a glorious Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year.

Me and Mrs. Ivan McKinney
West Chester, Ohio

Quail Homemakers meet

The Quail Homemakers Club members met at the home of Carol Ann Vanhook in November. There were 15 members present and one visitor, Jean Allen.

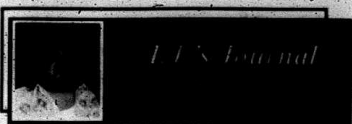
We were served a delicious meal upon arrival. The lesson for November was on Christmas crafts. Some Christmas crafts were shown and we received a booklet with more craft ideas.

The annual Christmas party will be held December 15th at 6:30 at the home of Teet Stevens.

All members should bring a covered dish and a gift for Bingo. Secret pals will be revealed and names will be exchanged for the coming year.

If non-members would like to

share in our fun at the December meeting they should bring a gift for Bingo and one to exchange with other ladies that doesn't have a secret pal. We hope to see all the members there and visitors are always welcome.



Last night, my husband, Stanley and I had an experience that we had looked forward to since this time last year. It was the Eastern Kentucky Madrigal Dinner.

We hope to make this a yearly tradition. What is a Madrigal Dinner, you ask. The tradition of the madrigal was brought from England from Italy in the sixteenth century, and was an informal type of private entertainment at the castles as well as the homes of the local nobility. It was customary that the lords and ladies perform the music themselves as they sat at dinner in the Great Hall of the castle.

Madrigals were songs based on secular text and fables of the period, and usually sung without musical accompaniment. Several voice parts are combined to make each part interesting and independent both melodically as well as rhythmically. Madrigal-singing flourished in England and a Madrigal Society, founded in 1741, still meet regularly in the Carpenter Hall in London. The madrigal tradition reached its first popularity in the Elizabethan Age.

The EKV Keen Johnson Hall Ballroom was the site of this year's Madrigal Feast, as it was previously. It could well pass for the Great Hall of an English castle. The guests first arrived on the ground floor, which was huge and had ornate paintings and sculpture for decoration. The floor was marble and each footstep would echo throughout the vast structure. Court musicians played selections of classical music while the guests waited to be seated.

After a short wait, Lord Chamberlain announced that the feast was about to begin. The "nobility" was led up a grand staircase to the Great Hall where they were announced as "lord" or "lady" to Queen Elizabeth I her court.

The Great Hall was even grander than the ground floor. The floor was also marble, and about a forty-foot ceiling was supported by massive black marble columns. From the ceiling hung at least a dozen three-foot-long gothic chandeliers. Around the walls hung flags from the feudal period. We were transported to the year 1595, in the thirty-seventh year

of the reign of Queen Elizabeth I.

To make things look even more impressive, the Great Hall was lined with about forty tables complete with crisp, long, white linen tablecloths and linen napkins graced each table as well. Modest candlelight reflected on the crystal, and the top-piece settings of silverware at each place setting.

The dinner was served in courses. It started with the first course: that being Wessing. Then we had Quiche Lorraine, Stilton Cheese and Ale Soup, followed by the salad, which was Boston Bibb Lettuce with Bleu Cheese crumbs, English cucumbers, and Roma tomatoes, served with a sun-dried tomato vinaigrette dressing.

The fourth course was Assorted Rolls with fresh cream butter, followed by the main course. The main course was seasoned herb crusted chicken breast served over long grain wild rice, topped with Hunter sauce, julienne carrots, and haricot vert (baby green beans). The dessert course had two items: plum pudding with bourbon sauce and pumpkin cheesecake with Irish whipped cream. They were served individually. Are you starved yet?

During the three-hour meal, we were entertained by William Shakespeare, who brought exotic dancers, magicians, swordsmen, jesters, and a host of court musicians. Period instruments were used, such as harpsichord, Queen Elizabeth I, her court, the musicians, and entertainers were in period costumes as well.

As you can see, this was an extraordinary dining experience that everyone should experience at least once in a lifetime. Most people, after the initial experience, make it a yearly tradition. It gives you a real feeling, and if for only a few moments, we can be in another time and place, another realm far, far away.

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ATTENTION

Parents of 5th Grade Students

The Kentucky Department of Education requires that any student entering the 6th grade must have a second physical and a current up-to-date immunization certificate.

The physical must be reported on the correct Kentucky Form for 6th grade entry. If the student is going to play any type of sports, he/she will also be required to have a physical documented on a Kentucky athletic form. The athletic physical will not be accepted as a 6th grade physical.

The immunization certificate must reflect all immunizations that the student has had. Students entering the 6th grade are required to have a second MMR (Measles, Mumps, Rubella), a Tetanus-Diphtheria (TD) booster, and the 3-doses of Hepatitis-B vaccine. The Hepatitis-B vaccine is given over a 4-6 months period. Therefore, the student should be taken as soon as possible to start this series.

These health forms must be presented the first day of school in order for the student to be enrolled at the Middle School. If your child receives these services before the end of the fifth grade, please send the forms to school so that they can be filed in his/her chart.

You are strongly urged to get this matter taken care of as soon as possible. Doctor offices will be extra busy during the summer. You may be unable to get an appointment if you wait too late.

Again, please be aware that students will not be enrolled at the Middle School without these forms. If you have any questions concerning these requirements, please call the school.

Your cooperation in providing these health records before your child enters the sixth grade will be greatly appreciated.

Rockcastle County Schools
Health Services

Holiday Specials at Hiatt's 5&10

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Reg. 2.99

1.99

100 sq. ft.

Light Set

100 Light End to End

1.99

Votive Candles

15 hr. scented votives

4/\$1

Jumbo Christmas Coloring Books

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1.00

Christmas Flat Gift Wrap

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1.99

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Gift Bags

Med. Size

2/\$1

Gift Tags

50 count

2/\$1

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Only

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