



The Stroller

Bring back the putz

By W. W. EDGAR

As the yuletide season approaches each year, The Stroller suffers pangs of regret that one of the most fascinating of all Christmas customs has been side-tracked and pushed to the abyss of forgotten things.

This is the old Moravian custom of building what they called a putz in their churches and—in many cases in their homes to display the Christmas tree and the Nativity scene. The putz is a platform on which the tree is placed and folks worked for hours on end to outdo each other in portraying the scene and the spirit of the season.

That's why, at this season in early December, The Stroller gets a feeling

of homesickness and yearns for another trip through the foothills of the mountains and a visit to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, where the scene is best portrayed.

When The Stroller was a young lad, the city of Bethlehem was the center of attention, not only because it was the home of the Bethlehem Steel Company, but because it boasted one of the oldest Moravian settlements in the country. And at Christmas it was a joy to visit.

NO SOONER had the last month appeared on the calendar than everyone turned on the task of getting ready for Christmas—a day they deemed the greatest of all holidays.

The steel company erected a huge star atop old South Mountain and at night this star of Bethlehem would be seen for miles. Meanwhile the Moravians prepared the official putz in the basement of the church, hard by the banks of the Lehigh River.

This putz was no ordinary job. It was a masterpiece and required most of the floor space in the basement. When it was finished, people came from miles to see it.

This putz was a replica of the Holy Lands, the mountains, streams and all the little towns along the way to Bethlehem. Off in one corner was the Christ child, laying in the manger with Mary at his side. Over the hills the star of Bethlehem was shining and the three Wise Men, sighting it, were following it to pay a visit to the Christ child.

This was the background of the putz. But along the way the three Wise Men were to travel were such things as small waterfalls, oxen and sheep roaming in the fields—and all this in over-all scene. It was as close to the Holy Lands as could be portrayed.

The putz custom wasn't confined to the basement of the Moravian church. Most of the townspeople erected a putz in their living rooms and the custom grew in interest to the point where prizes were offered for the best displays.

THE STROLLER well remembers one of the prize winners. It was different and a thing of beauty.

The chap who built it invaded the neighboring woods and cut off the top

of a sassafras tree instead of taking the usual evergreen. After getting it home he wired the branches and the trunk, then covered the sticky surface with cotton.

Underneath he placed several mirrors, then a few pillars to give the effect of mountains and covered the entire area with white sheets, leaving the mirrors to stand out as lakes. Over the sheets and the tree he sprayed synthetic snow and used blue bulbs for tree lights. You can imagine the beauty of such a setting when the lights were turned on.

To make the setting all the more colorful, this chap also placed candles in each window from the basement to the attic. When the shades were drawn the lights stood out for long distances to let folks know that the putz was on display.

It's too bad this custom is fading away for it was one of the most fascinating of all Christmas displays.

And if The Stroller were asked what he wanted for Christmas he could think of nothing better than the return of the old Moravian custom of the Christmas putz.

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"...I wish I may, I wish I might, have the wish I wish tonight."
 Wish on the first star of the evening on a falling star on the new moon on a white horse on a hay wagon on the first robin of spring on seeing a chimney sweep on seeing a wild rabbit as you toss a coin into a well or fountain.

WISH AFTER DINNER as you and a friend break a wishbone together. Witches call this "merry thought" and say that the one who gets the piece with the flat head of the bone attached will have his or her wish come true. But if the bone breaks in such a way that no one gets it and the part falls to the floor, the wish goes to the "old cat."

Wish when you blow out the candles on your birthday cake when you blow away the seeds of a dandelion when you put your clothes on backwards or inside out

Study women's programs

A national study of women's programs at community colleges has been completed by Dr. Don Nichols, dean of students, at Oakland Community College's Orchard Ridge Campus. The study resulted from Nichols' role as advisor of the Womencenter, a campus and community organization which sponsors programs for women. Nichols will be presenting his findings at the American Association for Junior Colleges Convention next March in Washington, D.C.

"The interest in, and success of, our program made us wonder about what was happening at colleges across the country," he said.

An 88 per cent return was achieved on a survey sent to deans at 630 colleges and is seen as an indication of the great interest in programs for women, he said.

when putting on new clothes for the first time when the hem of your dress is turned up Wish, wish, wish, wish! The list of superstitions about wishing is endless.

I BELIEVE in wishing. Wishes can and do come true. But when I make a wish, I seldom leave it up to chance. Instead, I get busy and help it along. Some say you should never tell your wish to anyone else or it won't come true. But I've found that if you tell it to the right person, it sometimes helps make it happen.

Remember when I told you how to cast a spell? I said there were three things you had to have to make a spell work—emotion, imagination and belief.

Think about that for a minute. If you have the emotion to really want something, the imagination to picture it taking place, and the belief in your own ability, there isn't any wish you can't make come true. Beethoven wished to write a symphony. Thomas Edison wished for a better way to light the darkness.

Half of the two year colleges offer special programs for women students. The survey indicated that programs are financed directly by the colleges and student fees. However, it is rare to find formerly organized Women's Resource Centers, such as Orchard Ridge's Womencenter. Nichols concluded.

"We were particularly interested in the perceptions of deans," commented Nichols, "on the degree of concern for women at their colleges. Our findings show that 77 per cent of the deans perceived their institution as having a high, or moderate, concern." The Orchard Ridge Womencenter is currently offering a series on Women's Issues for campus and community members. The Nov. 25 session will feature a panel discussion on survival economics.

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Sealed Proposals will be received for SMI Renovations at Cloverdale Elementary, 2000 Freedom Road, City of Farmington, Oakland County, Michigan. Proposals will be received at the Board of Education Offices, Business Manager's Office, 2200 Shawwassee, Farmington, Michigan, 48324, until 3 P.M. EST, Tuesday, December 16, 1975. Proposals shall be submitted on forms furnished by the owner.

Plans and specifications are available at the Buildings & Sites Offices located at Bond School, 31300 W. Thirteen Mile Road, Farmington Hills, Michigan from December 1st to 8th, 1975. Plans and specifications are available to prime (General Architectural, Electrical, and Mechanical) trades-division only. A \$25.00 deposit is required in check or money order payable to Farmington Public Schools. At 3 P.M. EST on December 9, 1975, a pre-bid meeting will be held at the job site. Prime contractors must attend in order to qualify to bid on the project.

Proposals in the amount of \$5000 or more shall be accompanied by a bid bond or certified check in an amount of 5% of each proposal. The awarded contractor will be required to provide performance, labor and material bonds in an amount of 100% of the contract.

The scope of work is briefly mentioned: General Architectural trades-Division 1 through 14 Mechanical trades-Division 1 and 15 Electrical trades-Division 1 and 16

The Board of Education reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, and to waive any informalities or irregularities, if it seems to be in its best interests.

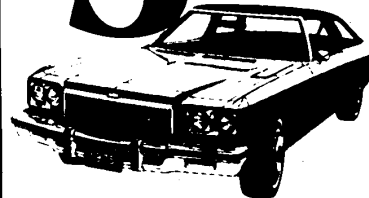
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