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2 little boys are pastor's Christmas joy

By MARGARET MILLER

The Christmas cards mailed out by the Rev. and Mrs. W. Howard School are sung all over the world, but they are most precious when sung close to home.

Rev. School, a resident of Farmington and associate pastor of Covenant Community Church in Bedford Township, sends holiday greetings as Christmas carols—words and music, more than one a year for more than three decades.

Carried through the mails to such distant points as Bolivia, Brazil, Nigeria, the Philippines, Japan, northern Canada and Indian reservations in the U.S. southwest, they've been sung by choirs directed by this pastor's friends in mission stations around the world.

But the School carol for Christmas, 1975, has already been performed—at home in Covenant church by the pastor's two daughters, Miriam Powell and Virginia Niemisto.

And that was especially appropriate because this carol is a little different. It's titled "Two Little Boys at Christmas," and it's about David James Powell, who will be three on Jan. 12, and James Todd Niemisto, who turns two in March.

THE TWO BLONDE grandsons, who look enough alike to be twins, just had to be the theme of this latest Christmas song, said the pastor's wife, Betty.

"He has a special smile for those little boys," she added. "They are a very important part of his life."

Both were right on with their mothers and grandmothers when Covenant Church included in its programs of the Christmas season a whole evening of School's carols.

Seventeen were performed that night, some by the Covenant choir, directed by Pastor School and including daughter Miriam and wife Betty. Virginia Niemisto is organist for another church, Galilean Baptist of Livonia, but was with the family at Covenant for that special occasion.

Miriam, in addition to singing the duet with her sister, was soloist for another of her father's songs, "A Little Child Is Born," and joined Dor-



The Rev. W. Howard School (above, right) holds Davay Powell, who seems to be trying out one of Grandpa's Christmas carols. Above is Todd Niemisto, Pastor School's other grandson. At the right, the boys' mothers, Miriam Powell (left) and Virginia Niemisto, run through their father's new carol "Two Little Boys at Christmas." (Staff photos by Harry Mauthe)

thy Brown for "Come Now and Sing."

LIKE THE CAROLS of Christmas past, "Two Little Boys at Christmas" was an instant hit.

"It is a little different," the composer said, "because it is the first one that hasn't had a direct reference to the Bible story of Christmas."

"Yet it does bring us close to that story, because it makes the point that any birth reminds us of that of the Savior. I encouraged people to change the words a bit to fit their own families."

Mrs. School said one grandnephew in the congregation loved the song but found she couldn't sing it this Christmas.

"Her two little grandsons are in Nigeria with her daughter who is a missionary," Mrs. School explained. "She misses them."

PASTOR SCHOOL wrote his first carol for Christmas, 1946. He had served pastorates and taught in Baptist

Bible Seminary, Binghamton, N.Y., and Detroit Bible College, and recently had earned a degree in music at Wayne State University.

"I thought it would be a good idea to send out a new Christmas carol for a greeting that year," he said, "and it was so well received that I kept writing them."

That first song was "Sing Glory to God." Of the later compositions, Pastor School and his family have agreed they like best "Tidings of Great Joy."

One of the carols, "Then Angels Broke the Silence," was translated into Spanish and sung over radio station HCJB in Quito, Ecuador, by a choir directed by Robert Savage, now a Muskegon pastor.

The earlier Christmas card carols were sent out on single letterhead sheets, and more recently the pastor has used printed bulletins for his compositions. He also used to do all the stencils by hand, and he's glad he doesn't have to do that now because

it's exceedingly difficult to get in all the lines and notes without tearing the stencils.

PASTOR SCHOOL isn't the only member of his family who enjoys sharing special talent.

Virginia, a talented musician now studying organ with Dr. Frederick Marrott, earlier this year memorized Widor's "Toccata for Organ" as a birthday present for her father and performed it for a group of her parents' friends at a special party.

Miriam's talents run to art and craft work, and she also learned flower arranging from her aunt, Ruby Dunstan of Pontiac, who has for two years done Christmas flowers at the White House in Washington.

She worked for Mrs. Dunstan while her husband was in Vietnam, and put some of her knowledge to work decorating the Covenant sanctuary for the performance of her father's musical works.



Spirit of adventure leads to the U.S.S.R.

Part 3—Kiev

(Editor's note: Rochelle Reagan continues her six-part account of a recent trip to Russia. She is a Farmington resident, student and traveler. After her graduation from Western Michigan University, she worked as a systems engineer for IBM.)

By ROCHELLE REAGAN

Aeroflot is never late, thus I must have arrived early at the airport. This was ideal as I had time to read the free literature sitting on tables in the waiting room—treatises by Lenin, Marx and Engels, Soviet travel brochures, and pamphlets on cultural life in the USSR. A leaflet entitled "The Big Lie of the Oil Monopolies" sounded extremely interesting. I was engrossed in Brezhnev's "Peace and Socialism, Part Five" when Era assembled us for the one hour flight from Moscow to Kiev.

Flying Aeroflot is quite an experience, a painful one if you happen to be a cigarette smoker as I am. Smoking is forbidden within the cabin at all times. The cabin lacked somewhat in aesthetic luxury. I found it notable that there were no classes of travelers—everyone sat together in one big cabin. The real problem was the lack of adequate cabin pressure which made my ears pop and unpop despite yawning and gum chewing.

The 11th floor of the 16-story-old Hotel Lybid would be my home for the next four days. From my spacious window ledge, I overlooked the main entrance of the hotel and a busy three-street intersection. Lush, green horse chestnut trees were everywhere, even in the middle of the sidewalks. Across the street was the amphitheatre housing the circus, when it

was in town and behind the hotel stretched a large enclosed shopping mall which reminded me of my own Livonia Mall. And, of course, my friendly Russian ice cream vendors were on every street corner selling not only cones, but also chocolate-covered ice cream bars.

Dinner in the hotel that evening held some pleasant surprises. According to Era, the entrée was Kiev cutlet, but to this day I must it tasted exactly like chicken Kiev. Perhaps my taste buds were hallucinating, having imagined for the past 20 years how chic it would be to partake of chicken Kiev in Kiev. I was overjoyed when I saw salad with real lettuce and real tomatoes; watermelon for dessert. I had forgotten that Kiev was the capital city of the Soviet Ukraine, the bread basket republic of the USSR. A rock band set up shop in the dining room and began playing rather loud, rather familiar, and rather acid.

The next four days were eventfully spent in this 1,400 year old city, a city of contrasts between the very new and the very ancient. Construction of 20th century housing developments and the restoration of antiquated landmarks coexisted everywhere in the city. Kiev seemed to be the most modern yet the most ancient of cities. The Dnieper River divides the old and new sections of Kiev.

A boat trip on the Dnieper showed me the wideness, swiftness, and versatility of the river. From gigantic freighters laden with unknown cargo, to bathers, to fishermen perched on high, four-legged platforms right in the middle of the currents: everyone was doing their thing this sunny afternoon on the Dnieper.

Back on dry land that evening, I

had no time for reflection as I was whisked away by bus out to a countryside restaurant where I enjoyed something like a 20-course dinner complete with champagne and vodka. Sharing the restaurant with us that evening was a student tour group from Poland who joined in singing and dancing to a Russian rock group who varied their repertoire with American classics, Ukrainian folk tunes, and international folk songs.

The next morning I walked the red-bricked campus of Kiev University. It was here that I met Irene and Mishka, a young Ukrainian couple and students at the University. Mishka is majoring in a branch of aviation and Irene is pursuing a career in linguistics.

Two highly intelligent young people who spoke a smattering of English, they expressed great curiosity about visiting the United States. I asked if they had ever desired to live in my country permanently. The answer was no. They were Ukrainians, their families and friends lived in the Ukraine, this was their home, and they were very content living in Kiev.

After a bountiful lunch, which included many more fresh fruits and vegetables than I had eaten in Moscow, I found myself passing the famous "Golden Gate" of Kiev and then inside St. Sophia's Cathedral. Both structures were erected in the 10th century. St. Sophia's can best be

described as a religious art gallery whose still beautiful walls bear frescoes that were painted in the 11th century.

While touring all of these historical spots, I noticed other tour groups from countries I could not ascertain. I did spot a student group from central Africa and an entourage of what looked like businessmen from Havana.

The remainder of that afternoon was mine. I could not quite believe how liberal the Soviets were in their treatment of tourists, especially American tourists. I was able to go wherever my two feet would carry me in Kiev.

My first stop was the nearby Beriozka Shop, also called Dollar Store, to purchase some souvenirs. Beriozka Shops, located in all major Soviet cities, are gift shops where any non-Russian may buy. These stores accept all currencies except rubles.

On first glance, the Beriozka Shop seemed to be filled with inexpensive trinkets. However, I found some fairly decent looking amber jewelry, a native, semi-precious stone of the USSR, and a limited quantity of rather expensive fur pieces. I discovered that the price of Soviet merchandise was not the deciding factor of whether to buy or not to buy, but rather the \$100 duty-free import limit imposed by United States Customs.

In the course of my shopping I stumbled upon a local Ukrainian craft shop where I encountered better quality merchandise than the Beriozka Shop had to offer: embroidered linen shirts, exquisite wood carving, pottery, and ceramic tile pictures.

The circus was in town. Like an excited five-year-old, I bought my ticket

and entered the huge amphitheater, forgetting completely about the Hotel Lybid and dinner. This circus is an international one with almost every country one could think of represented. Instead of the usual elephants there were tigers, one humped camels parading around the sands ring. The aerial acrobats were highly bizarre. Imagine the rim of a moving ferris wheel being used by an aerial artist as a balance beam, or a miniature whirling airplane serving as a trapeze for an acrobat.

My third day in Kiev began with a trip through the Kiev Pechersky Monastery, built in the 11th century and the seat of Christians in ancient Russia. Underneath the monastery were the catacombs through which I walked and viewed mummies, once the live bodies of Russian nobles living in feudal days. In the Palace of the Young Pioneers, I observed a ballet class of 40 girls perhaps nine or 10 years old. The Young Pioneers Palace is a free and purely volunteer school which Soviet youth between 5-17 years of age may attend in addition to their day school. The emphasis seemed to be placed upon creative arts and handicrafts.

The children were delightful to observe, their favorite pastime seemed to be conning American tourists out of chewing gum and American coins. An enterprising young boy greeted me on the school steps with the words "chewing gum?" I gestured that I had no chewing gum. He spotted my orange and black tour button, and I, in turn, spotted the hammer and sickle pin on his shirt. A quick swap was made, both of us pleased with the business transaction. I still have that hammer and sickle pin. I wonder if he still has my tour button?



A view of Dnieper River from Vladimir Hill Park.