

OBSERVATION POINT

DISSENT

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Christmas Spirit Generates Joy

By Philip H. Power



Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King." There wasn't much snow on the ground, but the wind was biting as we turned down the quiet street. Lights blinked silently on and off on the Christmas trees, and we could see through the frosty windows into the family groups in the living rooms. We stopped in front of a house, chosen at random, with the porch light on and children visible inside. And when we started to sing, the cold seemed suddenly just to disappear.

The children heard it first, as always. They looked up, said something, and their parents walked quickly to the window to see what was going on outside, their faces a little bit hard and suspicious. Then they realized it was caroling, their faces relaxed, and they took the children to the front door, opened it, and stood listening. We weren't very good, and the tenor was pretty wobbly. But the carols were recognizable, and everybody was grinning from ear to ear as we sang. An old custom, caroling, and

not so common now. But nice.

DECK THE halls with boughs of holly.

"Merry Christmas," we shouted.

"Merry Christmas. Would you like to come in for some coffee?"

"Sure, we'd love to." By this time we were feeling the cold again.

We sat in the living room, perfect strangers, talking about Christmas, homes, family.

Warm, human subjects. The kind of talk that simply doesn't happen with strangers much these days.

Christmas brought us together.

No talk about taxes or parochial. Nothing about the fears of a recession or racial problems. Not even a beef about the chuck holes on Five Mile Road.

Just people talking and smiling, thinking Christmas.

THE FIRST noel, the angels did say.

"What would you like to hear us sing," we asked the children.

"Sing us about the manger," a little girl squeaked, braids swinging and feet digging at the carpet.

So we sang some more. About manglers and blazing yule logs. About shepherds and fields. And about joy to the world.

And the children's faces blazed with delight! "Sing some more..."

We sang, and the parents joined in. And then the children.

That's why I like Christmas.

It's for people. And especially children.

Christmas draws them together in a way that nothing else can. Joy to the world.

By Mrs. Carl Schroeder
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Livonia

I am beginning to lose faith in the integrity of my fellow human beings who live in or pass through our nice residential neighborhood in Livonia.

Since moving there in February we have heard of neighbors' lawn mowers being stolen and also car parts. Our one neighbor had the back window of his car smashed, another had good garage cans stolen.

Now we too have been a victim. The week of Halloween I put a pumpkin on our step and in a matter of hours it was stolen. Although it made me mad, I put it off as a prank to be expected.

THEN CAME CHRISTMAS and I made a decoration for our door and put a blue spotlight on it. The light was lucky -- it made it for a week and a half before being stolen.

These items weren't so expensive that we're suffering from monetary loss, but I am losing my temper.

Doesn't anyone still have respect for other people's property?

I used to feel proud living where we do but now I'm suspicious of each slow moving car or of people walking by.

I'm not writing to lay down suggestions on how to protect the rights of others but to let off steam. Police patrols can't stop petty thievery -- although in our neighborhood I believe street lights would be very beneficial.

APPARENTLY THE MESSAGE I meant to get across with my angel praying beneath the Star of Bethlehem didn't get across to my thief. I wanted those passing by to remember the real reasons for Christmas. I may have had my say now but no doubt the person or persons responsible will never read this article.

But then, perhaps a parent will who will be reminded of the responsibilities that are his -- honor and respect are taught in the home.

I'll get over this but what will my thief try next?

Tim Richard writes Boundary Verdict Marks Weaknesses

Farmington was the first community to bring a case before the new State Boundary Commission when some of its more enlightened citizenry proposed to consolidate everything as a single city.

And it so happens that the Farmington case -- or cases, now -- have pointed up the Boundary Commission Act's two most glaring faults: It lacks jurisdiction over annexation cases, and it gives too strong a voice to villages.

THE FACTS, BRIEFLY, are these: In November, voters in Farmington township and the villages of Quakertown and Wood Creek, Farms approved the single-city proposal, but the City of Farmington rejected it, and the whole proposition was therefore vetoed.

Meanwhile, a group of township residents petitioned the Boundary Commission for an election to incorporate the township (including its two villages) as a separate city. An hour or so later, some city residents filed a petition asking the Oakland County Board of Supervisors to set an election on annexing the southern half of the township to the city.

Last week the State Boundary Commission rejected the township incorporation petition, contending that because the two villages were involved, the people should instead have petitioned for consolidation.

It was an unfortunate decision, because it now exposes the township to piecemeal annexation by the city. Now, not all annexations are bad, but this one is because it would perpetuate fragmented government.

THE GOOD THING about the Boundary Commission Act is that it allows a state group with quite a bit of expertise to rule on the wisdom of incorporations. The wisdom of economics and engineering can be applied to what used to be a legalistic process of

ruling on the validity of petitions.

The bad thing is that it wasn't written to cover annexations, too -- and after all, they do involve municipal boundaries. Thus, two agencies -- the Boundary Commission and a county board of supervisors -- are in the business of ruling on municipal boundaries and using different standards to do it.

All the power to rule on boundary proposals -- be they consolidations, incorporations or annexations -- should be in the hands of one agency. Bills have been introduced to change this by giving the Boundary Commission power over annexations, too. That way, the Boundary Commission might be able to throw out the Farmington annexation petitions now going to the Oakland County supervisors.

THE SECOND FAULT with the law is that it gives too much status to villages. They have the status of municipal corporations with power to veto consolidation questions.

But in terms of the services they perform, the two villages in Farmington Township are basically involved in zoning and building codes. Its residents get their other services from the township, of which they are still a part, or from the county.

They have no police departments, no fire departments, no public works departments, no parks departments. They do have nice legal charters -- which makes them legal municipalities, but in real life it takes more than a piece of legal paper to make them viable performers of public services.

Had the villages never been incorporated, or had the law never given villages "municipality" status, the Farmington Township incorporation petition wouldn't be in all the trouble it's in now.

That part of the law should be changed, too.



R.T. Thompson writes

Is Generation Gap Responsible?

One wonders if the Christmas spirit exists as much today as it did during our childhood -- one generation back.

Then it was a time to be happy and merry, everyone had a big smile and a cheery greeting for anyone they happened to meet.

Now, with all of the talk about a generation gap, the atmosphere appears to be different. Certainly there are the smiles and the cheery greetings but there is also a tremendous amount of vandalism in all of the six communities we prefer to call Overboardland.

CHILDISH STUFF and very evidently the work of immature teenagers or youngsters who feel it smart to destroy and demolish many of the things that go with the Christmas holidays.

Plymouth has had two prime

examples of this vandalism in the past three weeks in its Kellogg Park, always one of the focal points of the holidays.

A group of youthful vandals stole the Christ child from the manger scene and then tossed it aside a day or two later in a field on the outskirts of the city.

A week later several of the statues around the Yule scene at the fountain in the center of the park were taken, damaged so badly that all will have to be replaced, and then tossed along the road in Hines Park.

Just how much enjoyment can anyone get from stealing and destroying items that are symbols of the happiest time of the year?

From each of the other communities served by the Observer

Newspapers have come similar reports.

Lights stolen from outdoor scenes, figures taken from in front of several homes, displays, that homeowners spent hours putting together, totally destroyed by youthful vandals.

IT'S ENOUGH that area shopping centers have to put up with 'hippy' demonstrators but when the residential areas are invaded, then its time for action.

And that action is likely to come from irate residents who are sick and tired of youngsters making off with anything they can lay their hands on and then discarding it.

We repeat, there may be a generation gap but certainly things like this aren't going to do anything to improve it.

Happy Holiday, Minus One For Road

A tip of the topper to the Automobile Club of Michigan, which in cooperation with the State Liquor Control Commission, the Michigan Licensed Beverage Association and the Liquor Vendors Association, is sponsoring a holiday season campaign for moderation in the use of Christmas spirits -- the bottled kind.

"A little less whoopee" is the theme of this year's campaign. Called "first a friend, then a host" it urges hosts not to encourage party guests to drink too much when they must drive.

The old adage of "One for the road" of late years has been taken to mean coffee or tea and not another snort or two which oftentimes have proved disastrous.

TOASTING THE HOLIDAY season is considered an integral part of many Christmas and New Years parties. But when the various toastmasters leave the party and get behind the wheel, the joy and conviviality of the holiday

season can quickly turn into stark tragedy.

Half of all traffic fatalities involve misuse of alcohol. It is only logical to assume this percentage increases during the holiday season.

Holiday drivers have enough to cope with such special hazards as poor weather conditions, unusually heavy traffic, and early darkness.

The motorist who adds alcohol to this list is in effect playing Russian roulette with his own life and the lives of everyone on the road with him.

Drivers should allow at least one hour per average drink to regain muscular coordination, visual acuity and good judgment to cope with holiday driving.

Under normal circumstances, doctors tell us that the brain constantly receives information which helps drivers keep their vehicles moving safely through

traffic.

Intoxication hinders this process. The driver's senses are dulled, his brain doesn't react properly. His judgment is impaired and he can't think as clearly or quickly as he normally does.

DEATHS AND INJURIES on the nation's highways, especially during the holiday season, can be reduced if individual drivers observe suggestions for holiday travel.

The heads of the various safety organizations stress the need for careful driving. They suggest: allow at least one hour per drink before attempting to drive or better yet don't drive at all after drinking; allow plenty of time to make long trips; pay attention to traffic laws and signs; adjust speed to weather conditions; be alert to mistakes of other drivers and always fasten seat belts.

Our Christmas Prayer

Many members of the Observer Newspapers staff were moved by grace before the meal delivered at our annual Christmas party by Emory Daniels, editor of the Farmington Enterprise & Observer. We wanted to share it with you.

We thank You for this food and ask that You bless it and the partakers.

We petition You tonight, not only as servants, but as stewards dedicated to the task of the enrichment of Your creation.

As we perform our tasks during the coming year with the intent of uplifting mankind, help us to use the most effective tools -- the tools of love, charity, understanding, kindness and wisdom.

We do not believe that man is evil, debased, helpless or hopeless but instead that man, created in Your image, is productive, ingenious, unfettered and destined to achieve.

We believe, indeed, that man is worth helping and to this end apply our efforts, committing ourselves in the name of the Father, who is our creator and inspiration.

Editorial & Opinion

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