



December 1995 Issue

Special Christmas Edition

Put together by
Dave Franklin, Matt Headley, and Robin Gross

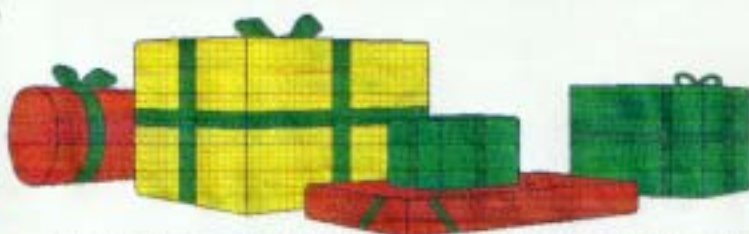


"He's making a list checking it twice,
finding out who's been naughty or nice."

Courtney Jordani Nice
Cassie Marcone Nice
Robin Gross Nice (yeah right)
Laura Boswell Don't know, you decide
Melissa Bala Naughty
Julie Lawrence Naughty & Nice
Julie LaMora Extremely Nice (She's never naughty) Hah
Krissy Myers Nice
Jvy Schneider Very Nice
Christine Rodolico Let's say she's 90% angel
Jamie Gross Very Naughty
Chante Payne-Summiel Naughty & Nice
Karla Baumiesten Naughty 59%, Nice 95%
Melissa Johnsons Naughty & Nice, She's not perfect
Chris Field Nicaughty
David Cook He's always Nice
Mark Eichmanns Nice, except to Jill
Ken Klein Naughty, He's working on the nice thing
Dan Biad Very Naughty
Davy Boswell Really, Really Naughty
David Field I don't know, Naughty
Matt Eichmanns Naughty + Nice
Adam Purzycki Naughty + Nice
Brian Duffy You don't want to know
Matt P. Naughty 25%, Nice 75%
Brian C. Nice 65%, Naughty 35%
Jesse A. Nice 70%, Naughty 30%
Peter Field Nice 90%, Naughty 10%
Dave F. Nice 60%, Naughty 40%
Matt H. Nice 50%, Naughty 40%
Chad H. Nice 100%, Naughty 100%



Our Treasured Traditions



Gifts Galore!!!

THE EARLY CHRISTIANS DIDN'T CELEBRATE THE BIRTH OF JESUS. THEIR MAJOR HOLIDAY WAS EASTER. AS THEY DEVELOPED A CALENDAR TO CELEBRATE THE MAJOR EVENTS OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST, THEY INCLUDED CHRISTMAS. THEY SELECTED THE MONTH OF DECEMBER TO COMPETE WITH THE PAGAN HOLIDAYS. THEIR MOST IMPORTANT HOLIDAY, SATURNALIA, WAS CELEBRATED ON DECEMBER 17TH. THIS WAS A WINTER FEAST OF MERRYMaking AND GIFT EXCHANGING AS A TRIBUTE TO THEIR GRACIOUS GOD SATURN. THE CHRISTIANS HOPED THAT THROUGH THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY THEY WOULD EVENTUALLY OVER-RULE SATURNALIA. JUST AS WITH THE HOLIDAY SATURNALIA, CHRISTMAS BECAME A TIME OF GIFT GIVING.

IN SOME COUNTRIES (ITALY, SPAIN) CHILDREN DO NOT RECEIVE GIFTS ON DECEMBER 25 BUT ON JANUARY 5TH, THE EVE OF EPIPHANY ("APPEARANCE"). THIS IS SAID TO BE THE DAY WHEN THE THREE WISE MEN, OR MAGI, VISITED THE BABY JESUS AND GAVE HIM GIFTS. THEY CELEBRATE 12 DAYS FROM HIS BIRTH (DECEMBER 25TH) TO THE VISIT OF THE MAGI (JANUARY 6TH).

Santa's Starting Point



SAINT NICHOLAS, KRIS KRINGLE, SINTERKLAAS (DUTCH), HOWEVER YOU SAY IT, HE'S SYNONOMOUS WITH CHRISTMAS. HOWEVER, NOT MANY KNOW HIS ORIGIN. HE LIVED IN THE 4TH CENTURY IN LYCIA (ASIA MINOR). EVENTUALLY HE BECAME A BISHOP AND HE WAS LATER IMPRISONED WHEN THE CHRISTIANS WERE BEING PERSECUTED. HE LATER DIED AFTER BEING RELEASED AND WAS CHOSEN PATRON SAINT OF RUSSIA AND GREECE. HE WAS SAID TO HAVE PERFORMED MANY MIRACLES. IN ONE STORY

HE GAVE BAGS OF GOLD TO A POOR MAN AS DOWRIES FOR HIS DAUGHTERS. ACROSS EUROPE THOUSANDS OF CHURCHES HAVE BEEN NAMED IN HIS HONOR.

TODAY, HE IS PORTRAYED IN DIFFERENT WAYS. IN HOLLAND, HE'S CONSIDERED A SAINT AND ISSUES IN THE CHRISTMAS SEASON WITH HIS ANNUAL VISIT. THE ASSOCIATION OF REINDEER WITH HIM CAME FROM SCANDINAVIA WHERE A MAN REPRESENTING SANTA CLAUS TRAVELS ON A SLEIGH LED BY NUMEROUS REINDEER. OTHER CULTURES DISREGARD HIM ENTIRELY. HERE, HE IS A CREATIVE LEGEND THAT MANY CHILDREN BELIEVE IN. JUST AS WITH THE MANY NAMES HE TAKES ON, THERE ARE JUST AS MANY IMAGES THAT PEOPLE PERCEIVE IN HIM.

The Nativity Scene



ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI STARTED THIS CUSTOM IN 1224. IN A STABLE IN THE CORNER OF HIS CHURCH HE SET UP THE SCENE WITH REAL PERSONS AND ANIMALS TO REPRESENT THE FIRST CHRISTMAS. TODAY, IN BETHLEHEM, ISRAEL, A GLASS AND MARBLE MANGER SCENE IS SET UP IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHAPEL OF ST. CATHERINE.





Greenery and Glamour



BEFORE THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY, GREENERY, LIGHTS AND FIRES WERE USED TO SYMBOLIZE LIFE AND WARMTH IN THE MIDSY OF THE COLD AND DARKNESS. THE EGYPTIANS, ALONG WITH THE CHINESE AND HEBREW PEOPLE USED CHRISTMAS TREES, WREATHS AND GARLAND AS SYMBOLS OF ETERNAL LIFE. THEY CONSTRUCTED A WOODEN TREE IN THE FORM OF A PYRAMID. THE SHELVES WERE USED TO HOLD FIGURINES, EVERGREENS, CANDLES AND A STAR. HOWEVER, THE GERMANS DEVELOPED THE FIRST TRUE FORM, A PARADISE TREE. IT WAS A FIR TREE WITH APPLES AND WAFERS HANGING FROM IT. THE APPLES ON THE TREE REPRESENTED THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL. THEY USED THE WAFERS AS A SYMBOL OF REDEMPTION. THIS TREE WAS FOUND ONLY IN GERMANY TIL PRINCE ALBERT, THE GERMAN HUSBAND OF QUEEN VICTORIA, BROUGHT IT TO ENGLAND. THE TREE WAS THEN DECORATED WITH CANDLES, CANDIES, PAPER CHAINS, AND FANCY CAKES. FROM THEN ON THE CHRISTMAS TREE BECAME POPULAR WORLD-WIDE.

OTHER CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS SUCH AS HOLLY AND CANDLES HAVE SIGNIFICANT REASONS BEHIND THEIR LINKAGE TO THE CHRISTMAS SEASON. BESIDE THE SYMBOL OF BRIGHTNESS AND WARMTH THAT THE CANDLES EMINATE, THEY ALSO STAND FOR CHRIST AS "THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD." HOLLY, WITH ITS PRICKLY LEAVES AND RED BERRIES, CAME INTO HOLIDAY USE BECAUSE IT REMINDED PEOPLE OF THE CROWN OF THORNS WORN BY JESUS ON THE WAY TO HIS EXECUTION, THE BERRIES SYMBOLIZING THE DROPLETS OF BLOOD. THIS SERVES AS A REMINDER OF WHY HE WAS BORN. THE STRING OF CHRISTMAS LIGHTS WE WRAP AROUND THE TREE AGAIN SYMBOLIZES BRIGHTNESS AND LIFE IN A TIME OF DARKNESS AND COLD. ALTOGETHER THESE SYMBOLS COMBINE TO FORM OUR VERSION OF CHRISTMAS.



Other Interesting Info.



- THE FIRST WORDS PENNED ON A CHRISTMAS CARD WERE "A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU" BY SIR HENRY COLE.
- CHARLES DICKENS' 'A CHRISTMAS CAROL' IS THE MOST POPULAR CHRISTMAS STORY.
- THE WORD CHRISTMAS COMES FROM THE OLD ENGLISH TERM CRISTES MAESSE, MEANING "CHRIST'S MASS."
- THE JAPANESE AND CHINESE WERE THE FIRST TO MAKE INTRICATE PAPER DESIGNS FOR THE CHRISTMAS TREE.
- SANTA CLAUS IN FRENCH IS PERE NOEL, GRANDFATHER FROST IN RUSSIA, AND FATHER CHRISTMAS IN ENGLAND.
- THE PURITANS TRIED TO ABOLISH CHRISTMAS, BUT EVIDENTLY THEY FAILED.
- THE BEST KNOWN OF MODERN CAROLS IS "SILENT NIGHT, HOLY NIGHT."



DAVID FRANKLIN



Who, In Our Youth Group, Would...

For each question, these are the people who received the most votes and the first name received the most votes, the second received the second most and so on.

Fail to realize that Christmas was here because they were caught up in the bowl games?

Dave Cook, Jason LaMora,
or Mark Eichmann

You said something
about Christmas?



Meow...



Who would box a puppy or a kitten as a gift and forget to punch holes in the package?

Jill Jordan, Tabitha Eichmann,
or Adam String

Give a framed picture of him/herself as a gift?

Christine Rodolico, Adam String,
or Ivy Schneider



Sleep through Christmas unless awakened?

Karla B., Brad Hopkins,
or Chris Field





Best represent the Grinch?

Dana (at music practice), Pastor Mark,
or Dave Cook

Shove a homeless winer away on Christmas eve?

Tabitha Eichmann, Ronnie C., or Chad Headley



Give a handmade card & their own possessions as a gift?

Robin Gross, Pete Field, Courtney Jordan

Tell everyone what they're getting just before they open it?

Robin Gross, Jill Jordan, or Ivy Schneider



Knock the star off the top of the tree?

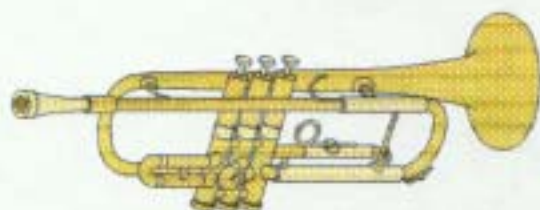
Jill Jordan, Dave Cook, or Ken Klein



Ask for an encyclopedia
set for Christmas?

Sarah Smith, Chris Field,
or Dave Field





Our Favorite Christmas Carols

<i>Chad Headless</i>	*****	Jingle Bells, Eatman Smells -Have yourself a scarry little...
<i>Tabitha Eichmann</i>	*****	Jingle Bell Dock -Hallelujah Chorus -Silent Night (by All 4 one) -Breath of Heaven
<i>Christine Rodolico</i>	*****	Grandma got ran over by a reindeer -Silver Bells
<i>Ivy Schneider</i>	*****	Dockin' around the Christmas Tree
<i>Jill Jordan</i>	*****	Dockin' around the Christmas Tree -O Holy Night
<i>Courtney Jodan</i>	*****	O Holy Night
<i>Cassie Marccone</i>	*****	Santa Claus is Coming to Town -O Holy Night
<i>Laura Boswell</i>	*****	O Holy Night -The Little Drummer Boy -The First Noel
<i>Chante Payne Summiel</i>	*****	O Holy Night -Hallelujah Chorus -12 Days of Christmas -Chestnuts Roasting on an open fire
<i>Melissa Johnson</i>	*****	The Little Drummer Boy -Silent Night -The First Noel
<i>Robin Gross</i>	*****	Joy to the World -O Holy Night -Hallelujah Chorus
<i>Jamie Gross</i>	*****	Hallelujah Chorus
<i>Matt Headley</i>	*****	What Child is This?
<i>Dave Franklin</i>	*****	O Come, O Come Emmanuel



Taking Christ Out Of Christmas

by Paul Homan

By the time most of you finish reading these few thoughts, you'll probably think the author is "one fry short of a Happy meal." I'm a few years older than you teens. (Actually, several years.)

Christmas has always been a special time for me and my family. Back in the 1950's and 60's when I was a kid, Christmas was so different. Sure, there was commercialism, but it wasn't anything like it is today. Yes, Santa Claus was a big part of Christmas. Especially to all us good little boys and girls. (Yeah, right!) Most people back then knew the real meaning of Christmas.

It wasn't till the mid 60's and 70's that I can remember seeing the phrase "Xmas." (I almost feel guilty just typing that phrase.) Today it's everywhere you look. As my kids were growing up, I tried to keep Christmas as pure as what I remembered as a child. (Here's where you start to think I'm strange.) We would never by an "Xmas" tree, or "Xmas" decorations, or anything "Xmas", no matter how cheap the price was.

Over the years I think my kids have come to understand just how important my memories of Christmas are to me. (They've heard my stories so many times, they could probably tell them to me.) Now, that they are grown and on their own, I hope they never forget that the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ, is the only reason we can celebrate at this time of year.

I hope that all of you will always remember the real "reason for the season." I could talk about Christmas for hours, but Matt says he has to put some stuff that you guys wrote in here, too. Anyway, Merry Christmas to all of you!

Hospital gets \$1M from anonymous, lucky friend

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) - Somewhere, somebody hit it big - \$1 million big - in a McDonald's peel-off game. But the winners Thursday were St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and its young cancer patients.

The winner of the McDonald's Monopoly contest took a game piece worth \$1 million, put it in a plain white envelope and mailed it anonymously to the Memphis hospital.

St. Jude executive Richard Shadyac called it "a holiday miracle."

Game rules bar the legal transfer of winning pieces from one person to another. But McDonald's agreed to make good on the payoff, which will be made in 20 annual payments of \$50,000 each.

"The generosity is overwhelming," Trudy Kerwell of Ottawa, Ill., whose son Jacob, 2, is being treated for leukemia at St. Jude, said Thursday. "I would like to thank the person who did this. Without such generosity none of this would be here."

The hospital, an international leader in the treatment of catastrophic childhood diseases, depends heavily on donations and takes in patients regardless of their ability to pay, even covering their family's living expenses while they're in Memphis.

The gift was the largest anonymous donation to the hospital in the 33 years since St. Jude was founded by comedian Danny Thomas.

The money will go into a general fund for treatment and research.

Fred Tillman, a McDonald's franchisee and spokesman, said the company has no way of knowing where the winning game piece was handed out or who got it.

The envelope received by St. Jude was postmarked Dallas and had no return address. Inside was the folded paper game board, with the peel-off game piece taped to it. The piece read, "Instant winner: \$1,000,000."

Game pieces are given out at McDonald's restaurants throughout the country and also are included in newspaper inserts.

The winner was one of only three such pieces distributed nationwide, and the odds of finding one are more than 200 million to 1.

Shadyac, director of the hospital's fund-raising organization, said he hopes the donor knows how much the hospital appreciates the gift. Most of the thousands of donations St. Jude receives each year are \$50 or less.

We consider all the gifts we receive, large or small, as special," Shadyac said. "Clearly, this donor believed in our cause. For that reason, we think of this gift as a holiday miracle."



A Christmas Quiz

THE QUESTIONS:

1. Who were the first to see and adore the newborn babe at Bethlehem?
2. Why was there no room at the inn?
3. Which of history's six Herods urged the Three Wise Men to report back to him after following their star to Bethlehem?
4. Santa Claus is the pop version of which canonized saint?
5. Where did Christopher Columbus spend Christmas, 1492?
6. How did the Pilgrims celebrate their first Christmas in the New World in 1620?
8. Who is best remembered in the role of "The Grinch Who Stole Christmas?"
9. Who designed the first Christmas nativity scene?
10. Where did George Washington spend Christmas night 1776?
11. Which Christmas carol has been voted the favorite of opera singers?
12. What is the favorite carol of Salvation Army bands?
13. By Twelfth Night, how many gifts had True Love accumulated?
14. How do Santa, Rudolph and Tiny Tim fare in humorist James Finn Garner's "politically correct" versions of favorite Christmas stories?
15. What was Franklin D. Roosevelt's favorite custom on Christmas Eve?
16. What executive order did 8-year-old Tad Lincoln successfully beg of his father on Christmas Eve, 1861?

THE ANSWERS:

1. The Shepherds. 2. Bethlehem was thronged with taxpayers enrolling in the empire-wide census decreed by Caesar Augustus 3. Herod the Great. His second son, Herod Antipas, beheaded John the Baptist and interrogated Jesus before his crucifixion. 4. St. Nicholas of Bari, a fourth-century Italian bishop depicted by Fra Angelico as the patron of sailors, maidens without a dowry and pawnbrokers. 5. Aboard the Santa Maria, hung up on a reef near Cape Haitien in Haiti. Damage was so extensive he switched to the Nina for the homeward-bound passage. 6. By shunning all celebration and rituals and getting down to hard work building the colony at Plymouth. 7. Boris Karloff. 8. St. Francis of Assisi in 1223, and it was a life-sized extravaganza featuring real actors, live animals and a wax figure of the infant Jesus. 9. Crossing the Delaware River. 10. The French carol "O Holy Night." 11. "Joy to the World." 12. Figuring each day's gifts were successively repeated in that charming rondo, the number comes to 364. 13. Santa is "an overweight patriarchal oppressor, reindeer enslaver and exploiter of elves." Rudolph is a "nasally empowered reindeer with a unique luminescent olfactory organ." And as one might expect in a socially sensitive reworking of Dickens that begins: "Marley was non-viable to begin with," Tiny Tim is "a vertically challenged pre-adult with a birth-induced delayed trauma disorder." 14. Reading Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol," aloud and all the way through, to the family gathered around the fire at Hyde Park or in the White House. 15. A stay of execution and a full pardon for Jack, the turkey fattening on the White House lawn, who thereafter became a capitol nuisance, intimidating guards and tourists.

SCORING:

Award one point for each correct answer. Determine your holiday IQ according to this point scale:

- 15 - A perfect score makes you the most glittering ornament on the Christmas tree of knowledge.
- 12 to 14 - The citation reads: Santa's helpers first class, worthy of accompanying that rooftop orbiting cosmonaut on his next run down the galaxies.
- 8 to 11 - A Christmas bell ringer fine-tuned for the angelic chorus.
- 4 to 7 - Let nothing you dismay, quiz games may not be your candy sttick.
- 1 to 3 - A bulb or two may have burned out near the bottom of the tree.
- 0 - Bah humbug. Scrooge was right about all this holiday frenzy before he went soft.



I'm Dreamin' Of A White Christmas

by Matt Headley

What do I want for Christmas more than anything this year? A White Christmas. Do you have items on your Christmas list this year that you didn't get last year? A White Christmas has been on my mental Christmas list for years now, and I'm still waiting.

Every year I wake up on Christmas Day, and stupidly but quickly look out the window to see, if by some miracle, if by some 0.00001% chance my yard will be covered in the white stuff. Of course, it never is, and I withdraw my hand and let the curtain come to a close, criticizing myself for acting like a little kid. I just can't help it! I'm hungry, no... starved for a Christmas in which I wake up and there's snow on the ground. I dream about the previous scenario, but instead, actually seeing snow out there. I would run downstairs, and without putting on shoes, gloves, or a coat, I'd storm out the door and into the snow. I'd scoop some up and throw it into the air! Then I'd realize my hand is frozen and run back in!

What exactly is the definition of a true White Christmas? There is none. I learned this fact after I did a little research on the subject. All I found was information on the song in movies, where the term came from. Irving Berlin wrote the song and it was introduced and performed by Bing Crosby in the movie "Holiday Inn" during 1942. Berlin's song won an Oscar for the movie. 12 years later, "White Christmas" was performed by Crosby again in the movie-musical with the same title.

Since I have discovered that there is no exact definition of a White Christmas, I will suggest that everyone has their own definition, and all of them are correct.

Therefore, my definition of a true White Christmas is waking up on Christmas Day, and the area is covered in snow. There is no trace of green on the ground anywhere, and it has to last all of Christmas Day.

If we don't get snow for Christmas, of course I won't be surprised, and I won't get angry. I'll just place it at the top of my Christmas list again next year.



Irving Berlin

A Couple of Snow Facts

- Dirty snow melts faster than white snow because it's darker and absorbs more heat.

- The heaviest snowfall ever recorded in the U.S. was in 1921 when 76 inches fell on the town of Silver Lake, Colorado.



What's Your Favorite Christmas Movie, TV Special, & Story?

David Cook	The Grinch Who Stole Christmas
Ron Cannatella	Frosty the Snowman
Adam String	National Lampoon's Christmas Vac.
Dave Boswell	The Simpson's Christmas
Dan Biad	Home Alone III
Matt Headley	Earnest Saves Christmas
	The Original Miracle on 34th St.
	Garfield's Christmas
Adam Purzycki	National Lampoon's Christmas Vac.
Robbie Baumiester	National Lampoon's Christmas Vac.
Matt Eichmann	How the Grinch Stole Christmas
	Charlie Brown's Christmas
	Mickey's Christmas
	Garfield's Christmas
	The Muppet's Christmas Carol
Brian Coker	The Nightmare Before Christmas
Peter Field	Frosty the Snowman
Brian Duffy	Miracle on 34th Street
	The Santa Clause
David Franklin	Charlie Brown's Christmas
	The Gift of the Magi
	It's A Wonderful Life
Annyonymous	Raging Rudolph



"T'WAS THE WEEK BEFORE CHRISTMAS"

T'was the week before Christmas
It's the same every year,
I just can't get into
The laughter and cheer.

My wife has to work
Seems like most every night.
We should be together
It just isn't right.

The house is a mess
The kids are a pain.
We go look for a tree
And it starts to rain.

Whatever happened
To Christmases past?
Thank God for our memories
In them will they last.

Us kids would get anxious
And eager to know,
"What toys will I get?"
We even had snow!

But Christmas has changed
It's the almighty buck
That ruined the spirit,
And now we are stuck.

Why can't we just
Remember why
This day is so special?
We all have to try!

Remember the baby,
The manger and hay.
That's the real reason
We have this glad day.

So, let's keep hoping
For an old fashioned yule.
As a matter of fact,
Let's make it the rule!

by: Paul Homan (However, Chan delivered it during a blizardous snow storm)



If I Could Have Only One Gift For Christmas I would ask For..

Jamie: A puppy

Krissy: Lindros

Laura: A Starter Jacket

Cassie: a fishy

Courtney Jordan: My own room

Ivy Schneider:

I just wish for world Peace and I wish that everyone would recycle so our children would have a beautiful world. I also wish that there would not be any more unnecessary violence in our society. I wish we all could get along and be friends. Thank you!

Jill Jordan:

I would really like a one world money system. If we all had the same money system we woul all get along alot better. It would be the first step toward total world unity and world peace. The whole world could be friends and we could all buy everyone in the world Christmas presents because we'd have the same money system. Thanks for letting me tell you my one desire for our world.

Jill and I would like to thank all the little people who made this speech possible.

Christine Rodolico:

I would set out to accomplish the world's 1st natural implant. This way women won't have to slash themselves open because they are leaking. I also would clean out the prisons and ship out all the heathen criminals to Bosnia, and make them go thru mine fields so they'd blow up and stop wasting taxpayer's money.

Tabitha Eichmann:

I would want to have lyposuction so that I wouldn't have to butter my hips to get through the door way. I would also pop all the big heads in Hollywood that people get from thinking they're special because they're on T.V. and I'm not! I also want to build a house in my backyard for Boyz II Men & All 4 One so I can get a concert anytime I want.

Brian Duffy: Bosnia settled and a lifetime supply of Peanut Chews.



WEIRD ARTICLES

from the news

TEEN BREATHEAS EASIER WITHOUT CHRISTMAS TREE SPRIG IN LUNG

STOCKTON, Calif. (AP) - Tracy McIntyre will breathe more comfortably this holiday season now that one-inch sprig of fir tree is gone from her right lung. And the 16-year-old won't inhale too deeply around Christmas trees. Her family thinks she ingested the bit of Yule cheer as a toddler.

"I'm probably going to stay pretty far from it," Tracy said of this year's tree. "Don't want to take any chances." Not only did the sprig remain in Tracy's lung for 15 years, said her surgeon, Dr. Isam Felahy, it also stayed green. Since Christmas 1980, when the 18-month-old Tracy suffered a choking fit near the tree, she's had shortness of breath, coughing fits and bad breath.

"Since I was 2 years old, I've been called Dragon Breath," Tracy said.

Finally her parents, Vicki and Mike McIntyre, took her to the doctor. Felahy thought Tracy had a birth defect until Monday's operation, when he removed damaged tissue and found a cavity. Inside was the sprig, green as ever.

In the recovery room, nurses grilled Tracy: "Have you been eating Christmas trees lately?"

A TREE-MENDOUS HOLIDAY ERROR

By Nancy Cambria (Gloucester Co. Times)

DEPTFORD TWP. - The Mason family was so stumped about the disappearance of the 10-foot spruce tree from their front yard, at first they didn't even realize it was missing.

Then a neighbor informed them Thursday of the big, big mistake.

Employees from the township's parks and recreation department accidentally misread the address on a work order Tuesday and took a saw to the wrong tree, said Township Assistant Manager Jack Nestor. Instead of cutting down the correct tree at a neighbor's house across the street on Hudson Avenue, they instead felled the Masons' - Christmas lights and all.

The workers left behind the stump and no note about the mistake, which understandably had the tree's owner Valerie Mason disturbed.

"I'm surprised there's not a trail of lights leaving the scene," Mason said Friday. She said the township has since been very apologetic about the incident and has promised to make restitution. But she still wonders why she first heard about it through a neighbor two days later, and not through the township.

"People from the township were very sympathetic. But the fact that this happened on Tuesday and we didn't hear until Thursday. We're out of our house before the sun comes up and home after dark - and we hadn't tried to turn the Christmas lights on yet because the display wasn't finished - unless our neighbors said anything we wouldn't have known about it," Mason said.

She said Charles Campbell, the director of the township's Public Works Department told her employees were embarrassed and heartsick about the mistake. "And they said whatever they could do to make up for it they would do," she said.

The Masons' neighbor had donated the tree to the township for the holiday display inside the municipal building lobby and workers were instructed to go cut it down and bring it back to the municipal building, Nestor explained Friday. But given the mix-up, the township is now going to use the Masons' tree instead, he said.

Mason has been extremely understanding, and the township plans to also replace the Masons' lights as well, Nestor said.

Mason said estimates to replace the tree are running around \$600. But she still pines for the tree she and her family planted in February 1985.

"There were different sentimental attachments to it. I'm still in awe that this happened," she said.

"The fact that there were people around when we planted it that aren't around now with us. It's sad. Like Gypsy. Gypsy was our Rottweiler and helped to plant it with us."

Mason said the family was considering selling the house, and she wonders if it will affect the value of the home.

"Now there's this empty spot in the front lawn. And the women's tree across the street is still standing."

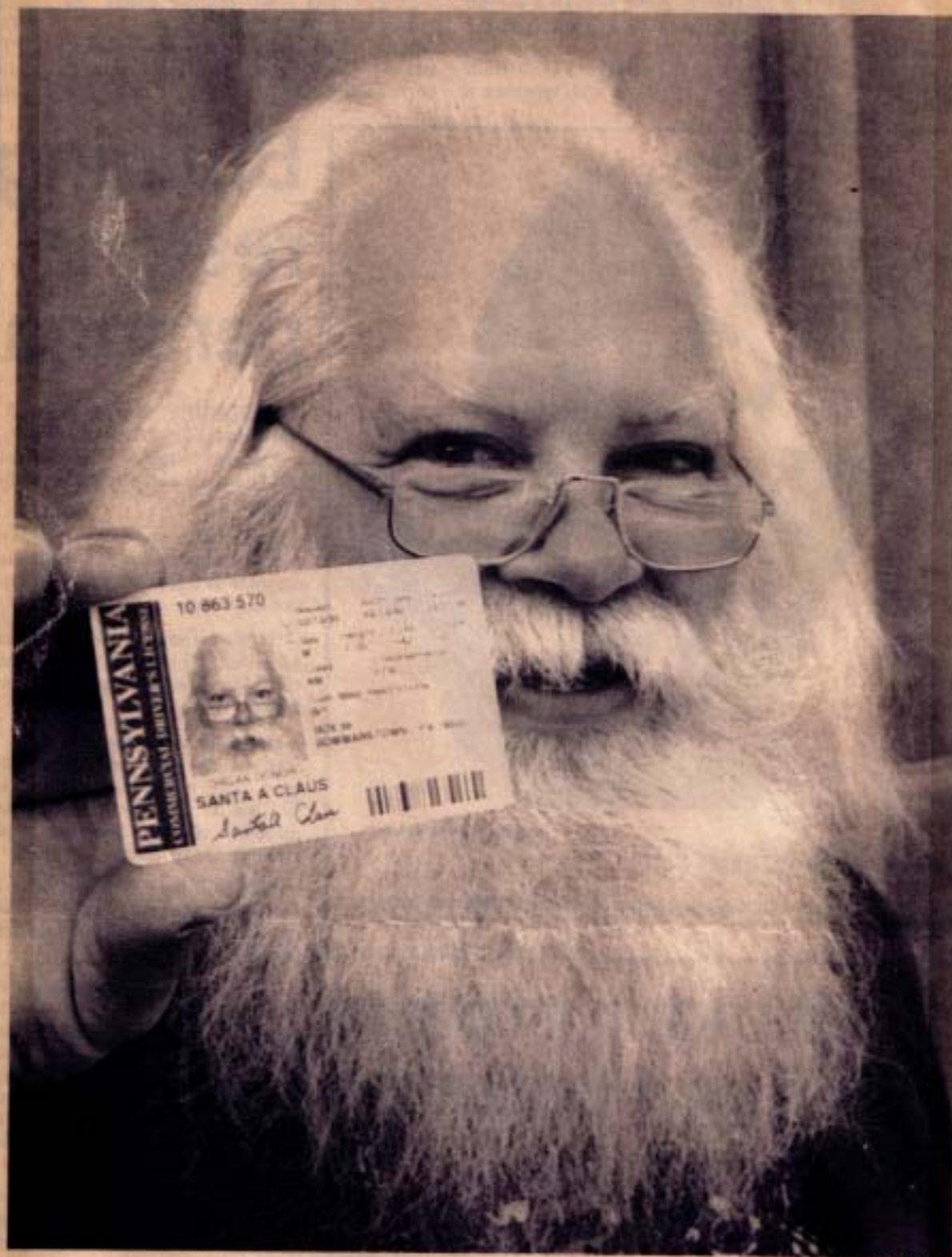


Staff photo by Christopher Barth

LindaLee (left) and Valerie Mason and their dog Jasper stand at the spot where their 10-foot tree was mistakenly cut down by Deptford Township workers. Behind them is the tree that was meant to be taken.



He's parking the reindeer



Associated Press Photo

Santa A. Claus — formerly known as J. Patrick Allen — proudly shows off his new photo driver's license in Harrisburg, Pa. Monday. Claus/Allen, who had his name legally changed to be a more realistic Santa when he entertains at shopping malls, appeared at the motor vehicle agency on his 55th birthday.



Christmas COMEDY



LOISANBOBS

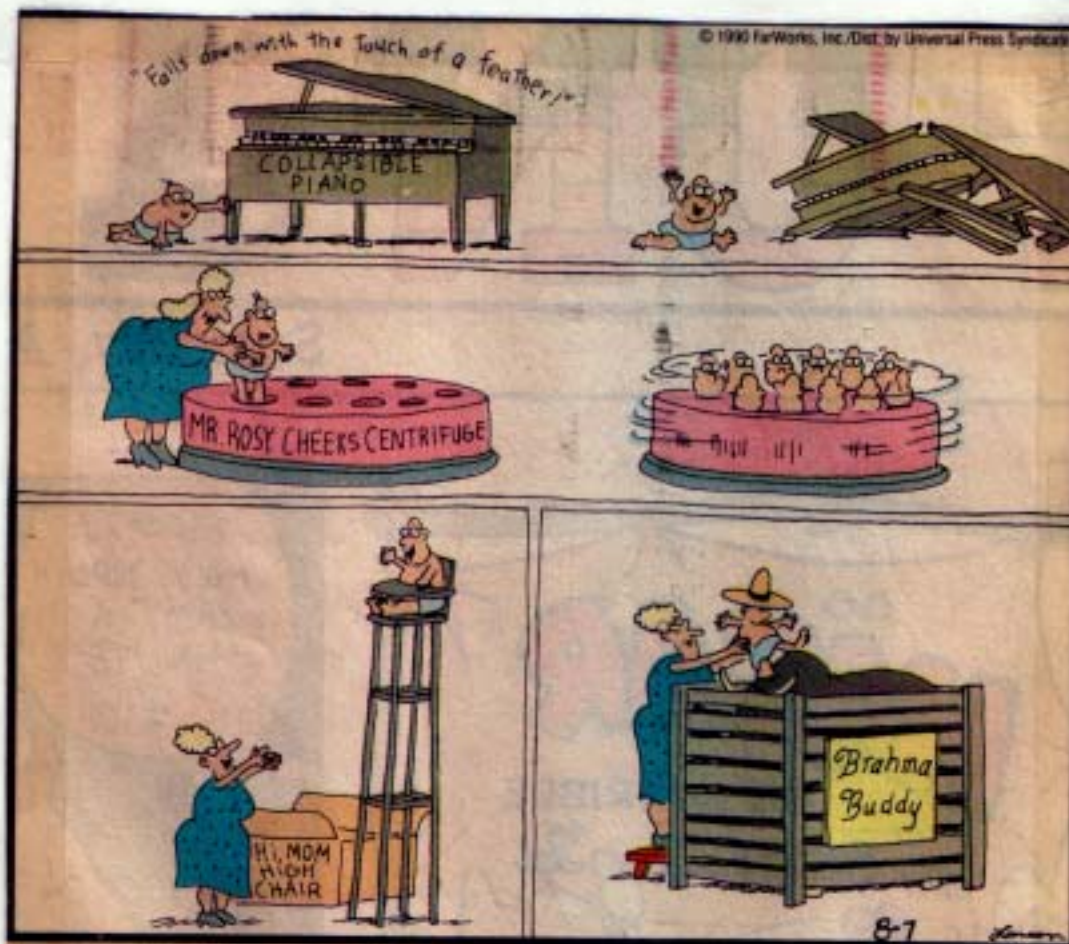
(low' ibs an bobbz)

n. Christmas cards signed in first names only (giving you absolutely no idea who these people are).

UBO (UNIDENTIFIED BAKING OBJECT)

(yew' bee oh)

n. The mysterious green stuff that appears in holiday fruit cakes all across America.



Baby toys and gifts to avoid this Christmas

