

V A N D E R B I L T U N I V E R S I T Y M E D I C A L C E N T E R

HOUSE ORGAN

www.mc.vanderbilt.edu/houseorgan

December 2009/January 2010



**Happy
Holidays**

Art by
Garland Pierce, age 7
Nashville, Tennessee

Don We Now Our Rose-colored Glasses

BY WAYNE WOOD

You hear it all the time. "Christmas is becoming more and more commercialized. Stores begin putting up their Christmas decorations earlier and earlier every year."

I think it's true. It's not hazy nostalgia leading me to think there was a time when Christmas wasn't advertised in late September. It really wasn't.

But thinking about the subject got me wondering what people thought about Christmas in earlier times. Maybe Christmas really was perfect. Stores began advertising holiday sales and putting up decorations after Thanksgiving, but not before. Perfect, like, say when I was 5 years old, in 1963.

But looking though a newspaper from 1963, I came across a cartoon depicting a frenzied-looking Santa Claus, carrying a sign reading "SHOP NOW," and chasing a Thanksgiving pilgrim. The caption has the pilgrim saying "O! Christmas ain't as slow as it once was."

Well, what gives? I remember 1963 as perfect, but this cartoonist, working at the time, thought that the world was going downhill.

I started looking further back.

I found this in a 1954 edition of *Reader's Digest*: "The traffic is terrible. You can't find a parking space ... the stores are crowded ... Mob scenes make shopping a nightmare."

Hmmmmmm. Four years before I was born, the whole holiday situation was obviously a never-ending nightmare.

How about this, from a 1948 edition of *Christian Century*: ".... We cannot refrain from asking whether the commercial activities connected with Christmas are getting out of hand."

"Once upon a time the Christmas commercial season started

continued on page 28

Editor's note:

For budgetary reasons, this printed edition of House Organ consists only of the 2010 House Organ Calendar (a Medical Center tradition since 1982), Watching the Wheels and news and announcements about goings on around VUMC at this busy time of year.

The full issue, including several other stories and features, the Watching the Wheels podcast, and links to, among other things, the House Organ Facebook page, is at the House Organ Web site, www.mc.vanderbilt.edu/houseorgan/

AMONG THE ONLINE FEATURES AND STORIES:



5,000 Flights

Flight nurse Tom Grubbs and pilot Billy Hamblin have been with Vanderbilt's LifeFlight service since its earliest days, and have racked up Iron Man-level flight numbers. Both men were honored with the 2009 Ross Award at this year's Golden Hour dinner. Leslie Hast reports.

Stitching Together

The Vanderbilt Sewing club has been meeting and working on sewing-oriented service projects since the Great Depression. Jennifer Johnston introduces us to this dedicated group of friends.



Employment Eligibility Verification Changes

The way the University handles employment eligibility verification is changing, with the launch of a centralized service this month. This removed the responsibility for handling such verification from individual departments.

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Purchase of tags, cookies, more support Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt

The annual Friends of Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt's Holiday Project is under way. A variety of cards and gift tags designed by young patients and their siblings are for sale. Also for sale are patient-illustrated tins

of Christie Cookies and containers bearing "Choco-Logo" gifts.

New this year are holiday honor cards and memorial cards in two designs created by local artists. With a minimum \$10 donation, donors will

receive an acknowledgement to send to the honoree.

To see designs and order cards, visit www.vanderbiltchildrens.org/holidayproject



Allison Rogers, age 9, Smithville, Tennessee



Emma Wooten, age 7, Nashville, Tennessee



Taylor Tucker, age 9, LaVergne, Tennessee

Turkey giveaway slated for Friday, Dec. 18

■ This year's Vanderbilt holiday turkey giveaway for full-time and part-time faculty and staff will take place on Friday, Dec. 18, at Langford Auditorium. Hours of the giveaway are from 6 a.m. to midnight, said Trish Stapp, director of Medical Center Special Events.

To add to the celebratory atmosphere, there will be entertainment throughout the day.

The turkey giveaway is for both Medical Center and University employees, and there will be a lot of people, a lot of turkeys, and a lot going on—so there are some rules that everybody must follow to make things move smoothly.

In order to pick up your holiday turkey, you must show your Vanderbilt photo badge. A staff I.D. card with another photo I.D. is also acceptable for turkey pick-up. One turkey per person.

In addition to the turkey, employees will receive a scratch-off ticket. Winning tickets will be good for a gift card from Kroger or HoneyBaked Ham.

There will be no rain checks or organized make-ups for

people who aren't at work that day, so if you plan to be off, it's a good idea to plan to come by to pick up your turkey. Also, it's important to remember that each person must pick up his or her turkey in person; a co-worker or family member cannot pick up a staff member's turkey.

For vegetarians or those who dislike turkey, there will be a limited number of Tofurkey Dinners. If you'd like to pick up one of these, it'd be a good idea to come early, because these will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis.

Canned food donations will be accepted, and anybody who donates will receive a "holiday token."

A "turkey shuttle" will run that day between Kirkland Hall and Medical Center North, as well as between the 25th Avenue Garage and Medical Center North. Regular shuttle routes will also be in effect. Special needs parking will be available adjacent to Eskind Library. Please contact Crystal Lasater for advance arrangements or questions at crystal.lasater@vanderbilt.edu

after Thanksgiving Day. If the current trend persists, it won't be many years before it will be launched right after Labor Day."

That was written during the Truman administration, and I'll bet you could get most people to agree with it now. (Maybe because it feels like it's coming true).

How far back can this go? How long ago were people saying that stores put up decorations too early, Christmas is too commercial, and it's not as good as it used to be?

Well, in 1891 there were no automobiles, no paved roads, nothing that we would recognize as a shopping center, and "mall" was something that bears did to people who wandered too far from town.

But it's still possible to find writers bemoaning the crass commercialism of Christmas and remembering the good old days.

From *Harper's magazine*, December, 1891:

"The sentimental Christmas of 30 years ago could not last; in time the manufactured jollity got to be more tedious and a greater strain on the feelings than anything happening to one's neighbor."

Did the writer really mean 30 years ago? That was written in 1891, meaning the writer was thinking that Christmas was perfect in 1861. A little subtraction and a rudimentary knowledge of history shows that this writer held that the epitome of Christmas good feeling fell in the midst of the bloodiest war this country has ever seen. Have a Fort Sumter Christmas!

Does all of this mean that those of us born after the Civil War have never known the kind of peaceful, meaningful Christmas that was once commonplace?

Probably not. Maybe the decora-

tions go up earlier and the advertisements begin while it's still baseball season, but I think the whole problem is that we grew up. Children and adults look at Christmas differently. Children see the pretty tree, the new toys, and funny Uncle Oscar visiting from Topeka.

Adults worry that the tree is a fire hazard. Adults worry about the damage all those new toys inflicted on the Visa bill. Adults know that, after a couple of parties, Uncle Oscar's red nose will make Rudolph look like a piker.

Against all odds, across the years, we cling to our innocent, childlike images of our younger days. We remember them as special. And, especially at Christmastime, we want them back.

House Organ Photography Contest Winners

January: *Snow Daffodils*. Jennifer Wilkins, Pediatric Surgery

February: *Magic Window, Venice, Italy*. Xinyuan Lu, Cancer Biology

March: *Elwood, Lucy and Jake*. Joan Garrett, Hematology/Oncology

April: *Double Rainbow in Maui, Hawaii*. Pat Flemming, Hearing and Speech Sciences

May: *Outside Abandoned Country Store, Kentucky*. Mary Ann Stevens, Pathology

June: *Moon Over Longs Peak, Rocky Mountain National Park*. Les Lasater, Medical Information Services

July: *Blue Skies, Provincetown, Mass.* David DiPersio, Pharmacy

August: *Pacific Coast*. Jeff Wilson, Respiratory Care

September: *Island of Santorini, Greece*. Eula McCall, Orthopaedics/Urology

October: *Falls on Meigs Creek, Great Smoky Mountains National Park*. Jens Krause, Pediatric Infectious Diseases

November: *Olmstead Point, Yosemite National Park*. Sheryl Stamer, Biochemistry

December: *Battlefield Woods, Murfreesboro*. Danica Partin, Allergy, Pulmonary and Critical Care

Holiday time is a good time to check out Discount Program

■ The Vanderbilt Faculty and Staff Discount Program, also known as the Perqs program, provides a listing of businesses offering reduced prices or special offers to Vanderbilt employees.

The discounted goods range from Apartments to Rental Cars to Theme Park admissions.

The list is updated throughout the year, and can be viewed online at <http://hr.vanderbilt.edu/benefits/perqs.htm>.

There is also always a link to the discount program through the *House Organ* Web site at <http://www.mc.vanderbilt.edu/houseorgan/>

Pets next time

■ The pictures of employee pets—all those slobbering dogs, cats curled up in bathroom sinks, unblinking fish, and the rest—will be printed in the February 2010 issue of *House Organ*, which will be on the stands the morning of Friday, Feb. 5.

We should hasten to add that the deadlines for entries has passed, so if you didn't get your beast entered for that issue, keep in mind the call for entries for 2011 will be printed in Sept. 2010 issue.