

THE EMPTY NEST NEWSLETTER

VOLUME IX NO 2 DECEMBER '90

"I heard a bird sing
In the dark of December"
-- anon

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

AND GOOD TIMES IN THE COMING YEAR



Well, maybe this will be a Christmas issue of sorts. The above picture the ENNL Ed drew for R.A.D. to use as his Christmas post card (you all recognize him of course) and then figured it could do double duty as the Masthead bird. So here I am, trying to finish up classes, read papers, get grades in, do everything let go under pressures of school, and instead writing Empty Nest in order to get an issue to University Duplicating before they shut down till January.

I've been missing Mom a lot, & thinking about her, and want to print here a fragment of a letter that I started to her several years before she died, but never finished and sent -- it got lost in the strata of my house & only recently surfaced. I wrote this on a clipboard while driving home from Vermont, summer of 1985 (I DO keep my eyes on the road & only glance down no longer than a blink.) Writing it to you, dear ones, will be in a sense writing it to her.

Dear Mom -- At one point last winter, in a moment of rare discouragement, you exclaimed, "I'm so useless!"

This is a belated 90th birthday letter. People don't need "uses", just "being" is enough -- but thought I'd tell some of the values of your being, both now and in previous years. It isn't anything I and my sibs haven't said before, but I believe in resaying.

So -- a here and now value: You're giving us all a beautiful blueprint for growing old. Your eyesight's essentially gone, you're crippled up, you're often in a lot of pain -- and yet you stay alert, outgoing, cheery, uncomplaining. You're a joy to be around. And you keep doing things, going places -- Treble Clef, the Symphony, board meetings, visiting family, dictating your articles for the Music Clubs Magazine. Listening to music, books, Karl's Chapter-A-Day, Keeping abreast of the world. Would we could all do so well, if we live to 90 or more -- and if we do, we will be aided by your courage & example.

(Then my clipboard degenerated to scraps. Herewith: "You've had a dedication to a cause beyond yourself, and stuck with it, your music" "how you and Dad have treated our aged and infirm: Hazel, Effie, Grandma Dougan [Funie]". "Your generosity, Dad's line about how you throw in the towel with the hide?" "We've been lucky to have such good genes." "I can't take credit for much of what I am" I listed Mom's interest in books, music, use of leisure, taking us to the lake, etc. "Finding the humor in things." And, "you and Dad have always been unfailingly interesting.")

Ginny Davenport, who works w/ me at SSU, my age, recently lost her elderly mother, too. She said to me, "I'm aware of my mother daily, through myself -- in my mirror, my mannerisms, the way I laugh, what I find myself saying!"

Dear Editor,
Let me get this straight.
You say there is a Santa Claus,
and he flies around the world
in a sled at Christmas...



and gives away
millions of toys
to boys and girls?
How can he do it?

-- Virginia



Dear Virginia,
Volume. Santa does
enormous volume.



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LAUNDRY...BILLS...PAPERS...
DISHES...CLEANING...MEND-
ING...IRONING...COOKING....



I CAN'T DO IT ALL.
I CAN'T HANDLE IT.
I HAVE TO GET OUT OF HERE.



I NEED A GIRLFRIEND. A
GIRLFRIEND WILL UNDER-
STAND... JUST SIT AND RELAX
WITH A GIRLFRIEND, JUST
LIKE THE GOOD OLD DAYS....



COFFEE ?? YEAH, I'LL
HAVE TIME FOR A CUP OF
COFFEE IN THE YEAR 2007!



This strip was
sent in by Katie
Yde; it speaks to
her condition!
Shoe's chronic
paper mess is
one that speaks
to me! Send in
what speaks
TO YOU.

SONJA SHOWS 'EM!

West Bend, WI Sonja L. Yde, age 10, won an Honorable Mention for her piano performance at the Annual Audition of the Wisconsin Music Teachers Association. To qualify to participate, she scored a perfect 15 of 15 at the regional auditions, and at the state level played against 35 others in her level. There was one winner (who by no means blew her out of the water) and 3 Honorable Mentions. Sonja played "Birdling" by Grieg, "Lullabye" by Barviusky and a Polonaise by Bach. Her Great Grandma (VWD) would be PROUD! (We all are, Sonja. And I bet she knows!)

News Notes

Spfld. ENNL readers AND contributors Martha Robertson + Elizabeth Weir were both elected "Employee of the Month" during this year at SSU. At the "Employee of the Year" dinner this week, that honor (\$500!) went to Elizabeth! Elizabeth's been the unsung director/manager of Clayville, a 19th

century farm/stage coach stop that SSU operates as a working museum, and is always threatening to eliminate. So the choice was not only a deserved honor for Elizabeth, but a boost for Clayville. Eliz. went on the Engl. trip, Su '89, + stopped + saw trip-note Ron Douglas recently. ^{Came peering in through his p. window, just at dusk!} Spfld. larded thru this issue are things about our situation down here I should it be caught printing. Don't miss the mirror writing. How'd I do it?

Spfld. I don't think I made much, in the last two issues, of the fact that my roof/chimney/soffits came to \$15,427.50. (The estimate was abt \$10,000) I've paid it all, CASH, between mid-Aug + mid-Nov. except \$1900. The contractor neglected to put down plastic when he exposed the attic, so far I've spent 20 hours trying to salvage important books, papers, stuff you kids + others have stored there. It's filthy work, hard on lungs (so much dirt, shingles, etc) so I proposed HE pay ME \$6 an hr for my time- it'll take me at least 30 more grueling hours. Know what? He didn't answer, only slapped a lawsuit on me + a mechanics lien on the house. Peter, what do I do next?

Durward Long, President
Sangamon State University
Springfield, Illinois

August 30, 1990

Dear Durward:

It has come to my attention (via reports from one of your lackeys) that you have publicly given me credit for "Regurgence," the satirical newsletter which has recently appeared on campus. ("It's that son-of-a-bitch Shereikis," were the precise words attributed to you and reported to me.)

While I am, of course, flattered to be connected with so distinguished a publication; and while I do, in fact, share most of the opinions and beliefs expressed therein, I can, in all honesty, claim no credit for any of the material which has so far appeared under that title.

As you are aware, circumstances force me to spend substantial amounts of time on the production of various UPI publications--"The SSUnion News," "The Classic Collective Bargaining Update," etc.--which consistently bring reliable, informed reports of campus events to UPI bargaining unit members. Those awesome responsibilities leave me little time for frivolities like "Regurgence."

Rest assured, I consider it a badge of honor to be on any of your many shit lists. But I feel I should earn that honor through my own efforts, rather than through credit mistakenly given to me for the work of others. And you should know that more than one literate university employee finds cause for embarrassment and displeasure in your deplorable administrative record.

I will, of course, continue to strive for excellence in my reporting of campus issues; but I must ask you to desist from giving me credit which I haven't earned.

CC: BOR Chancellor Roderick Groves

Sincerely,
Dr. Richard Shereikis
Professor of English

This joke also contributed by Katie, I think we printed it once yrs ago, sent by Uncle Craig. This one may well speak to LOTS of our conditions! But he's taking life as it is



presented to him -- and appreciating it.

CLEAR YOUR CONSCIENCE THIS XMAS:
(a thoughtful service of The Empty Nest Newsletter,
JUST IN TIME FOR THE HOLIDAYS!

[And last holidays, and the ones before and before, your birthday (any year), your graduation(s), showers, wedding(s), new baby(ies), new job(s), anniversary(ies), retirement(s), etc., etc., etc.]

Your procrastination problem is solved! Simply Xerox this form or print it up, on plain paper or (to make it more personal) your own letterhead. It will take care of guilts from long, long ago; more recent omissions; and the ones you are about to commit and add to your conscience, this happy holiday season.

PROCRASTINATOR'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND THANK YOU LETTER

Dear ☐ Family member _____ (if known)
☐ Friend _____ (")
☐ Acquaintance _____ (")
☐ Other _____ (")

I have received

- ☐ your gift (name here if you can remember what it was) _____
- ☐ your letter
- ☐ something from you, not sure what, but I know it was something

which came ☐ today. ☐ recently. ☐ quite awhile ago. ☐ a long, long, long time ago. ☐ I can't remember when, but I just came across it (or remembered it if long gone) and I'm pretty sure I never thanked you for it.

I have enjoyed (LIE if you haven't, after all you're probably atoning for past sins)

- ☐ reading it ☐ looking at it ☐ eating/drinking it
- ☐ smelling it ☐ playing with it ☐ cooking in it
- ☐ listening to it ☐ wearing it ☐ putting it together
- ☐ sitting in the bathtub with it ☐ riding in/on it
- ☐ figuring out how it works ☐ sharing it with __dog__cat__child

__hamster__friend__other (fill in here if you remember): _____

☐ coloring it ☐ planting it ☐ spending it ☐ returning it for something else ☐ What is it?

Words fail me to tell you how much I like it ☐ I love it extravagantly. ☐ It is pretty nice. ☐ It is okay. ☐ I don't much like it but it was certainly considerate of you to send it. ☐ I already have one but I can re-wrap it for someone else I ought to give something to. ☐

Your thoughtfulness

- ☐ moves me deeply
- ☐ makes me feel guilty because ☐ I'm not as thoughtful as you, ☐ don't get my act together, ☐ forgot about you, ☐ haven't yet thanked you for previous thoughtfulness.
- ☐ (here put your own sentiment, if any) _____

In closing, I'd like to say (here is where you personalize this form, but don't make it very long or you won't get it sent; you know yourself):

_____ (Complimentary close of your own choice)

_____ (Name, and don't forget your address in case they've lost it, which they may well have if you haven't written for a long time.)

NOW, dear ones, here is the beauty and versatility of this form: If when you send a gift, letter, what-have-you, you enclose a copy of this sheet AND ESPECIALLY A STAMPED, SELF ADDRESSED ENVELOPE, you will save your friends and family guilt! And what a gift that is! They only need to fill out the form and return it to you, and you'll know they got it, and they'll know you know, and everyone will be happy!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

(I find it serendipitous [+fun] that SHE is a bird! → Sometimes this bird (ENNL Ed) can even find material that gets sent in to ENNL! : West Bend, WI. Dear ENNL Editor:

I wish to make a correction in your reporting in Vol. IX No. 1 Sep-Nov. 90. Contrary to popular opinion (and now, thanks to ENNL, international opinion) R.A.D. did not spend his 88th birthday aboard Arafat Air lines, but in nearby West Bend. Sincerely, Katie Yde.

The editor apologizes. As opposed to her desk (entire house), her MIND often seems swept clean and bare! I knew that Grandpa had a wonderful birthday up at Ydes., spent a couple of days, and now recall, and Ellie Jackson was there part of the time, and had a grand time, too. Grandpa frequently tells me, via phone or when in there, what a warm & loving & hospitable family the Ydes are. Ellie agrees!

Dear Editor; (of the Saugus State Student newspaper)

It's come to my attention there's no money for the usual SSU free Christmas party; that the money was spent on the 20th Anniversary Party and Fall Festival.

The committee for those two events was not told the money was being taken from the Christmas party. I went to the 20th Year Party, for which I paid \$5, could scarcely find my way to the party room through the construction and without signs! The food was scanty and pretty poor, except for the cake. The cake was excellent.

The band was so loud in the small room, those of us who haven't been deafened in our youth by such bands had to leave, hoarse from shouting in people's ears to try to carry on a conversation.

I attended the Fall Festival. It was OK. The big helium balloon that was supposed to lure merrymakers to the event wasn't on a long enough rope to be visible from town. I don't know what it cost, but if you divided whatever it was by how many people attended,

I suppose we all had from a couple of cents to a quarter's worth of pleasure from it.

I think, if Durward had chosen to send "Resurgence" to each of us who visit this campus regularly through campus mail rather to our homes through the U.S. Post, there might have been enough money in the coffers for a Christmas party. Better yet, if he hadn't paid to have it written and printed at all, we could be having the greatest smash-bang party this campus has ever seen. Durward could come as Santa instead of Scrooge!

Jacqueline Jackson
Professor of English

- staple taker-outer.
- Small funnel

- * Washcloths (plain colors) - Catnip toys (for Chewick)
- * Salad spinner
- * Copy of Maryanne Dreams

- * Seat cover (car: drivers' seat any color)

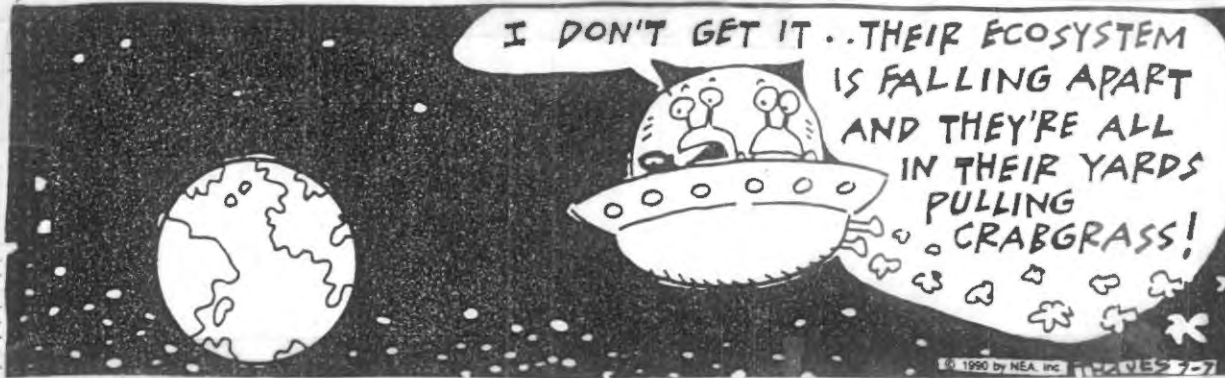
DEMI'S XMAS LIST '90

- * Moosewood Cookbook
- Cassette tapes: blank and nice chamber music/sonatas...
- * Music stand
- Kodak slide trays (80 slots)
- Sewing machine (with zigzag + stretch stitches - I can get used...)
- [\$ always welcome: for art supplies, therapy, mentor, etc.]
- Clip-on earrings (for teaching)
- Catnip toys (for Chewick)
- copy of Maryanne Dreams
- ovaltine - Hershey's syrup just doesn't do it!

ENNL ED rearranged the list to fit the space - but that's all I did come at the end!



THANK YOU, DEMI, FOR A CHRISTMAS LIST! A LONG TIME SINCE I'VE HAD ONE, AND SO VARIED! Family & friends, do like wise!



ON CRABGRASS

Herewith is a testimonial on personal (but more than personal) concerns, some things I don't often do in ENNL. I am no longer giving money to the Church, etc.

to the Discretionary Fund of our rector, where it goes straight for a prescription a family hasn't the money to get filled, or pays to have the heat turned on again. When someone called me to pledge, I didn't go into the fallacies of the great chain of being, or that evolution is a bush, not a ladder, or the Gospel According to Stephen Jay Gould -- only said the rector knew, & turned him down. I won't go into my feelings about church here -- it's been bred into my bones, thru Great-Grandpa Wesson, the words on the silo -- no mention of church there, but

"Life as well as a Living," & my reverence for Life goes deeper than the church -- All so all those Methodist stewardship sermons had their effect. I wouldn't want to lose hymns, liturgy, Bach, Mozart, Vaughan Williams, art, literature, etc. And on the whole I think the Church has been an institution for good, if you exclude Inquisitions, pogroms, witch hunts, etc., & Pat Robertson now taking his church to the liberated Russians. However, I don't see the church as a whole knowing where it's AT; most are pulling crabgrass. Ours (Episc.) is bickering over the ordination of women, whether homosexuals can be priests (the Methodists say, yes, if celibate) etc. etc. DO I know where it's AT? YES, I DO. We may be saving souls but there won't be any planet worth their living on -- or their children, & their children -- or the animals, birds, plant species, either. Were fiddling while the planet burns. So I firmly chuck all the envelopes that come in every mail -- the whales, the seals, etc., and am giving regularly & all I can to the rain forest in Brazil (once gone, gone; and the planet will change drastically; it may be too late to save it already) and to the dry forest restoration in Costa Rica. And, locally, to the Illinois prairie. I want to give more to ENNL under Marion Stocking's big swatch of virgin Maine forest she personally paid for to keep it out of the hands of developers & loggers; she's now needing others to pitch in & help. I give to the land thru the Nature Conservancy, which administers well. World gov'ts aren't doing much: a stealth bomber would pay for a lot of rain forest, Desert Shield's billions could help Nepal not to cut down its forests & even ^{itself} drown the country below it, WILL MY SMALL AMT. DO ANYTHING? A bit. A lot of small amts, from millions of us, will. And pressure on our government. Last year, in one of many Republican mailings to Ron Douglas, there was a questionnaire of 15 qts. on what are our most pressing issues today? NOT ONE WAS ON ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS! We all need to be GREEN, and fast. A 1971 book by leading (cont on p. 6)



CHRISTMAS FUN + PUZZLE CORNER

Good, you got it figured out that you gotta hold this up to a mirror to read the news from Lake Woebegone. This is to get it past the university censor since I print this up at university duplicating. The good news is that our mean, vindictive, lecherous lach of a president has finally been given the boot by the board of regents, but the boot is a very soft slipper indeed. He's advisor to the board for a yr and a half, keeps his car and house free and his eighty seven thou salary but he's off our backs, and chances are slight that he'll return as a professor, though he's trying. Yesterday he cancelled the staff faculty xmas party for the staff by telling them they had to use vacation time to go. A lot of people still went (we had to pay for it this year, see my letter to the school newspaper elsewhere). I went to the party in a santa outfit with a mask I'd made of the president's face and went up to the microphone and sang the following song: I'm making a list, I'm checking it twice, I'm gonna find out who hasn't been nice, And get you all before I leave town. I'm showing my list, You're in for surprise, There's no one I've missed, I'm paying my spies, I'll get you all before I leave town. There's Ettinger and Lang, Ly, Shereikis, Stanhope, Hugh--There's Nina, Nandi, Hayler, Hinton, Jackie, Jean and John: Can you believe, Dave E-ver-son, too! You're none of you safe, Delfy me who dares--The law is on you, They've kicked me upstairs, I'll get you all--I'm not leaving town! My presentation got a huge ovation from half the crowd and huge hostility from the other half who were president lackeys or felt it was out of place even at a lighted xmas party. Tons of food left over. That line with all the names is singable, you gotta put a name on each note and it works v. nicely. I listed only the bargaining team (union) and the one in addition who are saving him, like me, but a prop. eighty percent of fac and staff are on his you-know-what list. I also gave out gifts to those who hadn't been nice, but I can't include because the censor would surely spot it and shred this issue.



CRABGRASS, Cont from p. 5

scientists on the ethics of science, and dealing with all the environmental issues then known, says, "We have thirty years at most; if nuclear bombs don't get us, the failing environment will." Well, we have 10 more years, and it doesn't look hopeful, with the rainforest disappearing ^{at} over 200,000 acres per day. But I give, and hope, and urge you, too, to give not only to the charities & churches & synagogues of your choice, but to the Land, Land, Land, and to the political candidates who are avowedly GREEN, and working to save this planet, too. (If you want to help with Marion Stocking's Maine forest, her address is: RFD 2, Box 154, Ellsworth, ME 04605.)

HOLIDAY BOOK IDEA!

ENNL reader Gertrud Mueller Nelson has written a book, *To Dance With God*, subtitle, "Family Ritual and Community Celebration." It's available from the Paulist Press, in paperback. Or try your religious bookstore. It carries you through the church year with ideas for celebrations; it's personal, detailed, both traditional ideas (with new wrinkles), and new, both how to and plenty of room for your own creative juices to flow. There are activities, games, recipes, along with commentary, history, etc. She's done the illustrations too, I've put three little ones on this page. Gertrud doesn't think I've read her book but I have, & I recommend it.

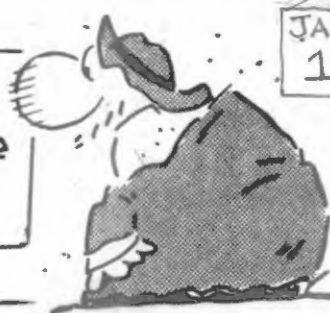


St. Nicholas



TODAY IS THE
FIRST DAY OF THE
REST OF YOUR
LIFE.

and you're
running late
already.



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Jesse
Tree