



Ted Taylor: At Large The kid saves Christmas

It's December 1948 and it's the first Christmas since my Dad died. Mom had her hands full because not only did she have me to worry about she, somehow, wound up with her mother as a resident of our house.

It was explained to me that since my mom and Uncle Rudy, though the youngest of eight, were her only "real children" it came down to the two of them – and since he had three kids and was struggling Mom won. Grandpop's first wife died, he married my grandmother and threw in six kids. Lucky her.

Christmas was looking pretty grim. Mom was depressed over losing her husband and I'm sure I was a handful too. I was 9, what did you expect? The big day was getting close and we had no tree, no decorations, not much of anything. It really looked like Santa Claus was taking the year off from the Taylor family.

With two weeks to go, it looked like the two colored porch lights were going to be the only Christmas decorations at our house. Then I took matters into my own hands. I still had some birthday money – I was always a saver – and I marched off to Glenside to personally rectify the lack of decorations. I was just a kid but I knew exactly

what I was going to do.

First I went to the 5&10 in the heart of town and looked for something that would add a festive look to our living room. I found it, too. A little plaster manger scene was for sale and it came with all the people – and animals – necessary. I paid for it and I marched home.

Next I headed back to Glenside where they were selling Christmas trees at the gas station near the school. Since I had spent most of my bankroll on the manger scene I'd need to be careful with my tree selection.

I picked a regular sized tree and asked the man in charge, "How much?" I flinched when he quoted a price – and I put it back. This scenario repeated itself over and over, all the trees cost too much.

But the man selling the trees took pity on little me and steered me toward a beautifully shaped tree, albeit no taller than I was. "I can let you have this beauty for a buck," he said. I had a buck, but that was it. I replied, "Okay but can you throw in some of those greens laying there?" And that's what they were, just branches off of other trees. He smiled and said, "Sure, I can do that."

My Mom later told me that she

happened to be looking out the front door and saw me trudging up the street, dragging the tree with one hand, holding a load of greens in the other. She said it made her very happy and she immediately got the Christmas spirit.

We dug out the old tree ornaments from the attic and put the little tree on a table in the living room. The manger scene was placed on the mantel. Mom wrapped a red ribbon around the greens, hung a few Christmas balls on them and hung them from the door.

Christmas had found the Taylor family after all.

I don't exactly remember what I gave her – or she gave me – that Christmas, but I do remember that we were very happy, even my grandmother. It was us against the world and we were willing to play it that way.

The manger scene makes an appearance every year in my house. It is a cherished part of the holiday season and lets me recall when we didn't have much – but shared a lot of love.

Ted Taylor, a longtime writer for local newspapers in the Philadelphia area, lives in Buckingham Township. Listen to him Tuesdays on WRDVF (89.3) from 8 a.m. to noon.

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Stephen Nolan: Voices of Reason Peace on Earth

Last year I wrote an article called, "A House Divided," quoting Abraham Lincoln who was quoting the New Testament, "... every city or house divided against itself will not stand."

I lamented the fact that news agencies had adopted the practice of referring to red and blue states, indicating Republican and Democrat, and how that visual image reminded me of the blue and gray states I had learned about as a boy.

I said that it promoted division, that it was a subtle, constant reminder of practically opposite colors. I felt that it suggested a sense of permanence that hurt compromise, and that Washington, especially in recent years, has reflected that mind-set. Compromise, the very life-blood of a democracy, had become a dirty word; and gridlock became a way of life in D.C.

The popularity of Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump suggested that the public was fed up with the intransigence of business as usual by the Washington establishment. But that is not the vibe I got from the election result.

I feel two opposing things. On the one side I get: "To the victor belong the spoils." From the other side I get: "We won the popular vote so our agenda is the majority opinion." We are more divided than ever.

This election ushered in something that truly threatens this country. Mark Twain said humorously, "If you don't read the newspaper, you are uninformed. If you read the newspaper, you are misinformed." Will Rogers said, "We have the best Congress money can buy," and we smile, because there is partial truth in the statements, but they are not universally true.

With the decline of newspapers and television networks (that only slightly differed in reporting the same facts) and the

rise of social media and propaganda websites, the truth has been sacrificed for opinion. We are in trouble. We now have both an uninformed and misinformed electorate going to the voting booth believing utter nonsense.

There are a hundred examples on very important issues but I will mention just one – the "birther movement." When it started I was a military officer and the president was my commander in chief. Does America have the imagination and decency left to understand the implications of that disloyalty and what it suggested to my young recruits? Can Americans understand where we're going if this is what our children have to ingest?

How do we pick up the pieces following this election? How, in the present climate, are we going to find healing and common ground? For me the answer comes out of religious teachings. Perhaps that's why Lincoln quoted Scripture. There is a difference between right and wrong, between the truth and a lie, between cheating and being honest.

We don't blur the lines for our children in Scouting or when we take them to worship. Why, for heaven's sake, are we blurring the lines for our kids with politics and political figures? We know the moral character we want for clergy, for Scout leaders, for high school principals. We don't send our children to school to learn to be nasty and negative and dishonest. We expect these institutions to stand for something resembling the spiritual truths we cherish.

President Jimmy Carter wrote a book titled, "We Can Have Peace In The Holy Land." What a marvelous and accurate title. He did not say we can have peace in Palestine or peace in Israel or any other red or blue, blue or gray state. He said Holy Land.

There can never be peace if you cling to that which can never

be compromised. There can be peace when you cling to that which is holy. But what is holy? And haven't we had Holy Wars? No, we have not. There has never been a war that was holy. The Dalai Lama and Pope Francis have both stated that there is no such thing as a Buddhist terrorist or Muslim terrorist or a Christian terrorist, because the two things cannot co-exist.

We know what needs to be done. We allow kindergarten teachers to tell it to our children without controversy or debate – it's called the Golden Rule. Children can grasp it because they can feel its immediate implications.

Only through amnesia of this simple rule do we arrive at the adult completely counter-spiritual principle of entitlement. It's worth teaching because it is a rule that will serve them well throughout their life: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

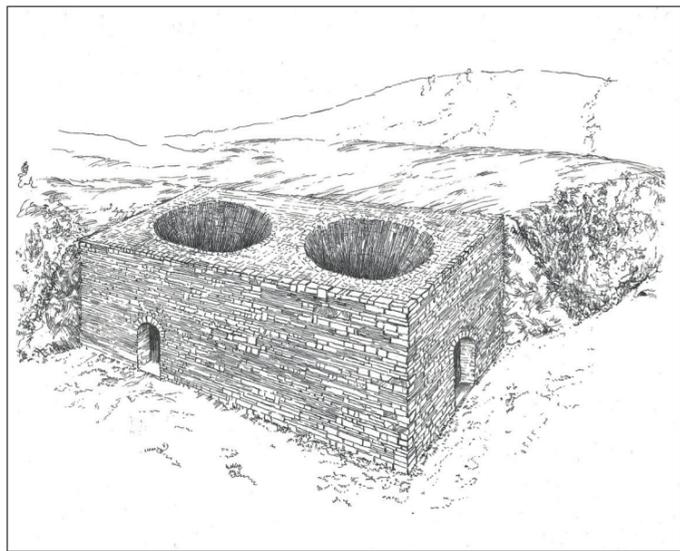
Let the doing begin. If human beings can be recruited for war, human beings can be recruited for peace. I have it on great authority.

'Tis the season.

Major Stephen Nolan, Retired

For the past six months, people from The Peace Center, the Human Relations Council and the Interfaith Committee of Lower Bucks lent a voice of reason to the conversation during the election. We still feel an obligation to be that Voice of Reason as President-elect Donald Trump takes office.

There is much division in the country, with a steep rise in hate crimes, intimidation and vandalism since Nov. 9, so our conversation with you, the readers, will continue. Our goal is to find common ground, bring about unity where possible, and speak up for peace.



Charles Dawson showed how a limekiln looked in a 19th-century installation in the publication "In the Vicinity of Limeport."

Bridget Wingert: Happy to Be Here A man-made landscape

Events that few remember have often reshaped the landscape of this history-drenched place.

About 20 years ago, a group of Solebury Township residents complained to the board of supervisors about a strange smell. They were worried about their water supply.

The concerned citizens were residents of Limeport, a development of houses built around the 1960s and 70s in an area between Centre Bridge and Phillips' Mill. Unlike other areas along River Road that back up to hills of stone, Limeport is an open area whose main road is a more gently sloping hill.

The wild vegetation that exists near the manicured lawns is relatively young and it hides an industrial past. The settled community shows no signs that it was once a quarrying hub with a canal dock for unloading coal from the Lehigh Valley.

"At this dock, Lehigh Coal & Navigation Company canal boats would stop to unload their cargo of anthracite, the fuel which fired the limekilns nearby and the many others which marked the neighborhood's exposed seam of limestone. The seam came to the surface here and stretched westerly for several miles, as indeed it does," according to "In the Vicinity of Limeport," published by the New Hope Historical Society in 1966.

George S. Havens wrote the paper, with Mary Ely Havens. Charles Dawson did illustrations – one showing how a limekiln operated. In the 19th century, Limeport had two quarries and six kilns to process lime, which was used in masonry buildings. The kilns were huge structures. An illustration shows a stone kiln 70 feet wide by 35 feet deep and 20 feet high. Two sandstone-lined pits are inside the structure.

The ground at the back of the kiln was used for loading the kiln with fuel layered beneath limestone. "The finished 'burned' lime, the white lump lime, was loaded into horse-drawn carts and taken to Limeport, where it was dumped into a canal boat for shipment to market," according to Havens.

One of Limeport's many changes came when kiln operators cut down thousands of trees for starting the fires, leaving an unsightly wasteland that has since filled in with vegetation. A broad swath of land between the Delaware Canal and the Delaware River was farmed until the flood of 1903, which washed the fertile soil away.

At the turn of the 20th century, lime was replaced in construction by the newly invented concrete. A farmer named William Ely, continued a modest operation, selling limestone from his quarry, for agricultural use. Several owners followed him but their quarry operations were not successful.

Then, in 1905, Standard Oil Company of New Jersey established a pumping station at

Limeport through a subsidiary, the Tuscarora Oil Company. Oil was transported through Limeport from western Pennsylvania to a refinery in New Jersey.

A pipeline was laid under the canal and the river. "This line had storage tanks on the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware, at Centre Bridge, and transported unprocessed oil. The route which the Tuscarora followed began, in Hunterdon County, north of Lambertville near the Alexauken Creek Bridge; thence northeasterly through Delaware and East Amwell townships to a point south of Ringoes; thence entering Somerset County near Clover Hill. The company was eventually absorbed by Standard," Mrs. Frederick Stothoff write in a history of transportation in Hunterdon County, N.J.

Havens said, in the Limeport history, "Another subsidiary of the Standard Oil, the National Transit Company, also had a station located here. The National Transit had six storage tanks located on land adjoining the Tuscarora Oil Company's holdings at Limeport."

The Tuscarora steel tanks held 100,000 barrels. The National Transit tanks each held 80,000 barrels. Hidden now, in the 1960s, they could be seen from River Road.

The power station was fueled by anthracite until the canal stopped operation in the 1930s. Tuscarora changed its fuel from coal to oil at that point. In 1938, a leak hit the main pipeline, which crossed under the road and the river. "The leak left its imprint on the neighborhood and must be included in our heritage from these companies," Havens wrote.

He said the leak went undiscovered and the subsoil was saturated sometimes with petroleum, sometimes with gasoline. The gasoline came to the surface, covered the canal and contaminated the water supply to the group of houses around Phillips' Mill.

The oil company tried to correct the damage.

"First they installed filters in each home," Havens said "When those were unsatisfactory, they tried digging each home's well much deeper. This also failed to eliminate the taste and smell of oil. Finally the company dug a new well located in the flat land about a quarter mile above the point of leakage. From this, they piped water to each of the homes. It runs by gravity. This arrangement solved the problem."

In 1953, the oil company allocated money to ensure the repair and maintenance of the well and supply lines, with the homeowners administering the contract.

Over the years, the legacy of the limekilns and the oil tanks resurfaces as it is doing today. This fall, excavations for the repair of a bridge over the canal have brought attention again to Limeport's past.

David Cuff: Short and Sweet Brief Biographies

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Was a childhood upstart
Now we can't find music finer
Than his famous *Eine Kleine*

David Cuff's book, "Brief Biographies," is a collection of light verse using the Clerihew, a challenging poetic form devised by Edmund Clerihew Bentley when he was a student at St. Paul's School in London.



Fire company's helper

GORDON NIEBURG

The Eagle Fire Department of New Hope delivered Santa by fire engine to the Giant Food Store in Solebury where he greeted children shopping with their parents. The Eagle firefighters were treated to hot dogs with all the trimmings and they accepted donations for the fire company. The company members lined up for a photo with Santa.