CHRISTMAS BRIDGE

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(photo by Turner)

Celebrating Christmas around the world

by Tina Luers

Many of us celebrate the Christmas holiday the same way year after year; turkey dinners, decorated evergreens and gift exchanging are found in almost every American home. Very few of us know of the different ways Christmas is celebrated in foriegn countries.

For example, how many people know that Christmas in Austria is celebrated on two days, December 25 and 26. On Christmas Eve, the family gathers around a fir or pine tree which the parents have decorated with cookies and candles, in addition to conventional ornaments. Underneath the tree lies a beautiful manger scene. Music from the main church steeple can be heard throughout the whole town.

In France, family celebrations begin a few days before Christmas when the tree is decorated. On Christmas Eve, when the children are asleep,"Father Christmas" leaves little toys, fruit and candy in their shoes, which sit by the fireplace.

Germany's Christmas season is full of advent wreaths and candles. Usually, the mother does the trimming of the tree and provides the table on which the gifts are set. Children receive their gifts from the "Christ Child." He is often represented as a figure in white robes, wearing a golden crown, and having big, golden wings.

Italy's Christmas season lasts for three weeks. During the novena, the eight days before Christmas, Children go from home to home reciting Christmas poems.

All the families that can afford a presipio, miniature creche, center their celebrations around it, guests kneel in front of it, musicians sing before it, and around it at Early twilight on Christmas Ere candles are lighted.

Before the "Noche Buena", or Good Night, the streets of many Spanish cities are brilliantly lighted. Tiny oil lamps are lighted in every home. Also, among all the devout Roman Catholics, the image of the Virgin Mary is illuminated with a taper. Santa Claus does not visit the Spanish children, instead, they wait for the "Three Wise Men" to arrive on January 6. Children place their shoes on the balcony so that the wise men will know where to leave their gifts.

No matter where and how Christmas is celebrated, the feelings are the same, feelings of gaiety, of kinship, and most important...that of Brotherly love.

A feast for the stomach as well as the eye

Holiday Butter Cookies

1 cup (2 sticks) butter
½ cup sugar
1 egg
½ teaspoon almond extract
2¼ cups sifted flour

In a large mixing bowl cream butter; gradually add sugar and beat until light and fluffy. Beat in egg and almond extract. Gradually blend in flour. Divide dough as desired, and add food coloring. Fill cookie press and form into desired shapes on baking sheets. Decorate with colored sugar and candies. Bake in preheated 350°F oven, 8 to 10 minutes. Remove to wire rack to cool.

Yield: About 4 dozen.

Note: Don't chill dough. Use at room temp.

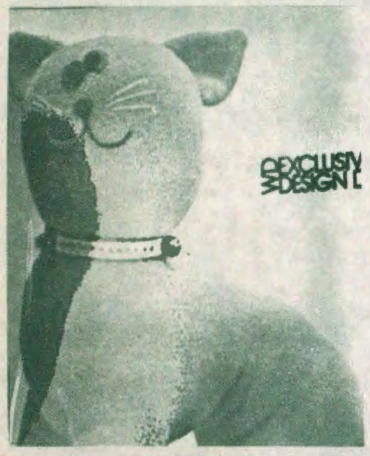
Gingerbread Men

In large bowl with mixer at low speed, beat 1 cup packed brown sugar, 1¼ cups molasses, 3 eggs, 1 cup butter or margarine, softened, 1 tablespoon baking soda, 1 teaspoon (tsp) salt, 1 tsp ground allspice, 1 tsp ground cinnamon, 1tsp ground cloves, 1 tsp ground ginger and 3 cups all-purpose flour until just mixed, constantly scraping bowl. Increase speed to medium, beat 2 min., occasionally scraping bowl. With wooden spoon, stir in 5 to 6 cups all-purpose flour to make a stiff dough. Divide dough in half and wrap with wrap. Use dough immediately or refrigerate to use within 2 days.

Preheat oven to 350°F. On lightly floured surface, with lightly floured rolling pin, roll dough 1/8 inch thick. With gingerbread man cookie cutter, cut as many as possible.

With pancake turner, arrange cookies on greased cookie sheets. Bake 12 min. until edges are firm; immediately loosen cookies from sheet and remove to cool on wire racks. Decorate

Fabricating a fabric cat for Christmas



(photo by Turner)

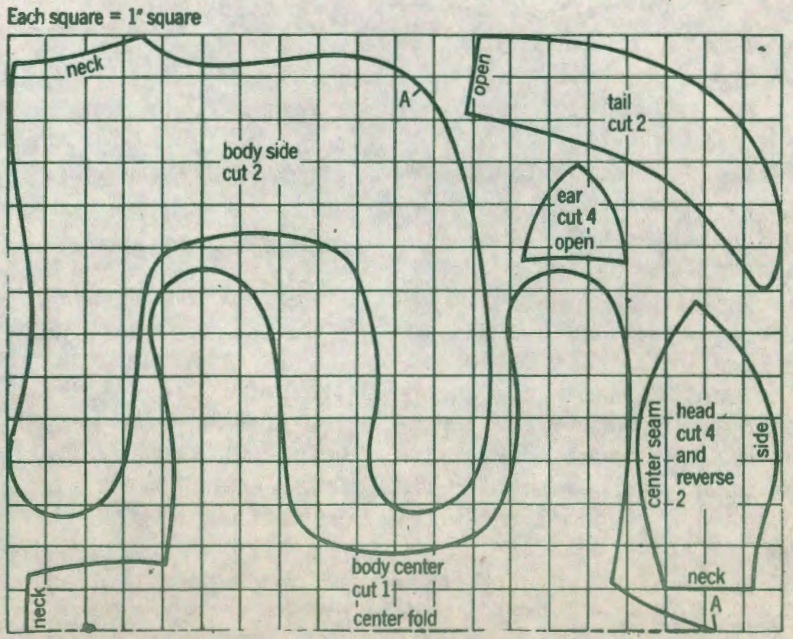
MATERIALS-3/4 yard 45"-wide stretch terry cloth; matching polyester thread; polyester fiber stuffing; scraps of black, blue and green felt; blue and yellow embroidery floss; yellow 13" cat collar.

Enlarge 5 patterns and cut cat from terry, adding 1/2" seam allowance. Cut felt heart-shaped nose and oval eye pieces.

Right sides together, stitch body sides along back seam from neck to A. Stitch center body to sides from neck, along legs, to A. Trim and clip seams. Turn and stuff through open neck.

Seam 2 head pieces at center for front and 2 more for back; join at side seams. Turn and stuff. Pin to neck; turn under head edges and sew to neck, adding stuffing if needed. Seam ear pieces, leaving base edges open. Trim and turn. Turn in raw edges and sew to head about 1-1/4" from center seam. Stitch tail pieces, stuff and sew at A.

Glue pupils to eyes; sew on eyes and nose (choose the cross-eyed look or the straight-eyed look). Outline-stitch blue floss mouth and make 1 long stitch for each yellow whisker. Add collar.



The Awful Truth

by L'il Mac

I leaned over the railing of the shopping center mall and looked down upon the lower level. There was a long line of jittery little kids and impatient parents waiting to see Mr. Christmas himself-Santa Claus.I smiled as I saw the faces of the children, some beaming, others afraid. I thought back to when I had found out the awful truth about Santa Claus.....I sat in Miss McClenny's second grade classroom with a set of big, thick Crayola crayons in my hand. In front of me was a huge sheet of blank white paper. I stared at the paper and finally decided what to draw- a picture of Santa Claus. It was nearly Christmas,so maybe when I was done, I could take it home and my Mom would hang it up for decoration. So I set to work. When I was almost done, the little girl next to me looked over at my paper.

"Who's that?" she asked.

"Santa Claus, stupid."

The girl giggled and said, "Don't you know?"

"Know what?"

"There is no Santa Claus."

"There is too a Santa Claus. I've seen him in stores and I sat on his lap and everything."

"That wasn't a REAL Santa Claus. It's only someone's Daddy dressed up as one."

"How do you know he's not real?" I asked.

"My big brother told me so and he's in sixth grade."

I was shocked. A sixth grader should know such things. But still I couldn't quite bring myself to believe her.

"How do you know your brother's not a liar? Maybe he made up the whole thing."

The little brown haired girl seemed to question her position, but only for a second. Then her face grew red with anger.

"My brother's not a liar. His friend told me too, and he's in the same grade as my brother."

Now I was beginning to feel panicky. Two sixth graders saying the same thing. What if they were right?

"Then where do all of the presents come from?" I could think of such a good question.

"Your mom and dad put them there."

"Then who eats the cookies," I asked with a sick feeling growing in my stomach.

"They do that too," she explained. "They only pretend there's a Santa Claus so that you're good at Christmas time."

The little brown haired girl seemed to have all the answers. I still wasn't absolutely sure though. I poked the boy in front of me on the back and he turned around.

"What do you want," he grumbled.

"Is there a Santa Claus?"

"Santa Claus is for babies!"

With that he turned around.The little brown haired girl was right, there really was no Santa Claus. I looked down at the Santa Claus picture that I had drawn so proudly. I grabbed it and crumbled it up into a little ball. I got up out of my seat and threw away Santa Claus forever.

Christmas is a time of giving,
So the saying goes,
Christmas is a time for living
And letting feelings show,
Though thru, the year feelings remain
hidden deep inside
Christmas brings out all the love that
Christ felt when he died.

Fat Old Men

Fat old men, some are jolly,
Some are also fat and strange,
We all know one like this,
We call him Santa Claus.
He's a jolly old man,
He sings all night while he rides in
a sleigh pulled by eight tiny reindeer,
All of them led by his voice cackling out
their names,
Leaving all of the good little children
presents and candies,
But for the bad ones he leaves a
bundle of switches and a special
little elf to use the switches on
naughty childrens' rears.

Milford Murphy

The Coopers' Christmas

Anonymous

On Christmas morning at seven o'clock, Tommy Cooper gradually woke from his sleep. He gazed out the window, opposite his bed,at the Christmas snow falling duly earthward. He gave a yawn and a sudden toothless smile. His eyes lit up as he realized the special day."Billy, wake up," he chirped to his older brother. "Billy it's Christmas. We have to open our presents. Let's go wake up Suzy, and mom and dad." Billy mumbled as he climbed out of bed rubbing his eyes.

The two boys scurried across the halt to Suzie's room. In their excitement, Billy tripped over Tommy onto the floor.Suzy laughed at her brothers' antics and quickly jumped out of bed. All three children tip-toed into the master bedroom, where their parents were deep in slumber. Janet Cooper, sensing she was being watched, blinked open one eye to see three small faces grinning exceedingly. She sat up. "Good morning kids. Merry Christmas." She got out of bed and kissed each of them,then walked over and kissed her husband on the forehead. "Merry Christmas, Ted." The kids swarmed into his bed grabbing blankets and tugging at their pop."Come on dad. It's Christmas Day.Let's open our presents," Tommy cried. The happy family entered the livingroom where a towering tree stood in its stand. The lights had been left on and were twinkling brightly. The children excitedly began grabbing multicolored presents and ripping them open. Ribbons and bows were tossed in every direction as laughter filled the air. The parents watched, beaming.Billy tore open a large package with green and white striped paper. Suzy wrestled ously with a red and pink box wrapped excessively with tape. Tommy opened an oblong package and pulled out a Super Joe. "He's got a hard one-two punch" he said,proudly showing his doll to the others. Billy held up his present. "Mine's got a deadly destructive ray that shoots from his gun."Suzy got a cowgirl hat and a cap gun. "Hey can I borrow that?"asked Billy. "Jimmy has one too and we could really kill each other." The children opened several more boxes containing toy pistols, plastic knives, cop and robber equipment(complete with hand cuffs, night stick and pretend can of mace) and assorted clothing.

"Now?" asked Billy,looking at his mother. She smiled and nodded. The children ran to the back of the tree and produced a heavy oblong box. They handed the box to their father. "The kids went with Uncle Bob to buy it. It was all their own idea. They wouldn't even tell me what it is," Janet told her husband.

Ted smiled and ripped at the paper in anticipation. He quickly opened the box, but stared stupified."You kids go get dressed now," he told his children. "But daddy, Suzy whimpered,"don't you like our present?" "It was very nice of you kids. Now go get dressed. I want to talk to your mother."

The kids ran upstairs and Janet turned to Ted. "What's the matter sweetheart?" "They bought me a gun," he replied pulling the rifle from the box. "I think it was very nice of them."she told him. "Honey, we can't be raising our children to be so interested in violence. They see murders, rapes, and muggings on television all the time. Then the presents we buy them are used for the same purpose.""I understand," Janet told him. "Then when they react by giving us tools for violence as a token of love..." Ted inplied.

Janet stood up.She started throwing all Christmas presents into a large bag. "Let's take them back to the store and show our children how much we really love them," said Janet. Ted agreed by giving her a kiss under the mistletoe.

A letter

Dear Mr. Sandy Claws,

How is Mrs. Claws? i hope she is fine. i want to thank you for what you sent me for last year. the doll was suposd to cry but Oscar chewed her face off. Oscar is the little boy next dore. i tried to fix it with tape but when i left her out in the rain instead of getting her clene it made the tape all wet. This year i wanta puppy. But i wont let Oscar play with it this time. Well, Bye.

love all the time,
Ronda.

P.S. Have a Merry Christmas

With eyes open wide children stare,
at colorful presents wrapped with care,
as Christmas nears their anticipation grows,
but what is inside them no children know.
They wait for the magical morning to come,
So they can open the presents and see who they're from.

CHRISTMAS CAPERS

by
Sue Rodriguez
Kathy Carlson

"I HEAR THEY'RE GIVING EXTRA PORTIONS OF RAT POISON FOR CHRISTMAS."

"He looked like this after his Calculus test, so we decorated him."

"WE WOULD LIKE TO PRESENT YOU WITH THIS GIFT FOR X-MAS."

"DO YOU REALIZE WHAT YOURÉ GETTING FOR X-MAS?"

"SINCE IT'S CHRISTMAS, I DECIDED TO LET YOU STEP ONE CENTIMETER OVER THE LINE."

Yes, students, there really is a Santa Claus

by Laurie Choules

Christmas is for gift giving, singing carols, and waiting for Santa Claus. Everyone has heard or grown-up with the story of how Santa, also known as St Nick, brings gifts to all the good boys and girls on Christmas Eve. As children grow-up Santa Claus becomes a vision of the past and a joke to claim belief in him. But not many know that there really was a Santa Claus.

St. Nicholas was a Christian Bishop during the fourth century. He was born to wealthy Christian parents in Patara, Asis Minor. His parents died of an epidemic when he was young, leaving him all their wealth.

At about the same time the bishop in Myra had died and the eldest official had a dream that told him to stand at the cathedral doors the next day. The first man who entered who's name was Nicholas would be the new bishop. Nicholas having moved to Myra happened to be that man and he became the Bishop.

Nicholas was remembered for his miracles that he performed. These miracles and good deeds gave us many of our Christmas traditions. For instance: Three sons of a rich Asiatic were killed by an innkeeper. The innkeeper hid the dismembered bodies in casks of brine. St. Nicholas stopped at the same inn and the crime was revealed to him in a dream that night. He forced a confession out of the innkeeper and by making the sign of the cross over the casks and praying earnestly the boys were restored to life. Thus, St. Nicholas became known as the patron of children.

On Christmas Eve stockings are hung on the fireplace in hopes of presents. This tradition began with the kind-hearted St. Nicholas. A nobleman with three daughters had lost his fortune so didn't have any money for doweries; and in those days, there was little chance of marriage without a dowry.

St. Nicholas prevented this from happening by throwing a bag of gold through the window when each girl was of age for marriage. Thus, the girls married well. It has been said that one of the bags of gold fell into a stocking hanging by the chimney to dry. This incident resulted in the Christmas custom of hanging stockings in hopes of receiving gifts.

The Dutch seamen spread the story of St. Nicholas' generosity to the rest of the world for Nicholas was a patron of all seamen because of his ability to calm the sea. The Dutch also changed Nicholas from his churchly robes into a tubby man in short breeches. Writers and cartoonists created the rest of his modern-day image.

So, the next time a person says he believes in Santa Claus, don't laugh at him for there really was a Santa Claus.

(photo by Turner)