

"H. P. Gorsuch's Christmas, 1941"

Carroll County Times article for 30 December 2001

By Jay A. Graybeal

An early editor of this newspaper, H. Peyton Gorsuch, expressed his opinions in his First Page Editorial, a lengthy column that frequently concluded on an inside page. Sixty years ago, he wrote in the December 30 issue about the end of 1941 and the coming year:

"This is the last issue of the Times in the year of 1941.

It is an established custom of editors, in the last issue of their papers, before the advent of the New Year to write an editorial bidding farewell to the old and welcoming the new year.

There is always sameness in the editorials, whether written by an editor of a big city paper or by one who publishes a weekly in a small town. New Year editorials usually give a summary of the outstanding events of the old year and often venture predictions for the new year.

In the editorials this year 1942 there will be material for many outstanding events such as our country and the world has never known before, no editor, great or small will dare make predictions for 1942.

1942 will enter in the midst of the [most] destructive war the world has ever known. The picture is a dark one, filled with doubts, uncertainties, a year that will test the mettle of our citizens, our men in service, but there is no doubt that all will stand the test and unite in the defense of our country, our flag and our president."

Editor Gorsuch also took some time to ask his readers some "impertinent questions" about how they celebrated their Christmas holiday that included a touch of nostalgia for Christmases past:

"Some Impertinent Questions About Yesterday.

Did you get what you wanted or want what you got?

Did your Christmas shopping give your pocketbook a headache?

Did you need a Bromo Seltzer this morning to clear the cobwebs out of your noodle from too much egg nog or too many cocktails?

If your wife gave you a necktie you would be ashamed to wear at a prize fight or even when we have a Blackout, are you diplomatic enough to explain why you did not wear it and keep peace and harmony in the family?

If you bought your intended, on the installment plan, a diamond engagement ring do you know under the law in Maryland the 25 cent weekly payment won't do and unless all installments are paid in 18 months the dealer can slip it off your darling's finger?

Did you see any masqueraders or hear the explosion of any little red shooting crackers like Mary Wilson used to sell at 10 cents a pack or 3 for a penny?

Did you see any Christmas trees decorated with little clear candy, horses, sheep, pigs, cows, and fruits and pretty colored candles in tin holders?

Did you see any children playing with animals out of a 25-cent Noah's Ark?

Did you have the good old salty home made sauerkraut, strong enough to walk alone or did you eat the mild tin can brand?

Did you taste a mince pie with a lot of suet, apples, big fat raisins and plenty of prime white rum, like Mother used to make?

Did you find in the great variety of Christmas cakes a piece of old fashioned close texture pound cake like mother used to bake?

Did you eat in a safe, sane way or like a gourmand and gorge yourself until you had to let your belt out 2 or 3 holes?

Did you hear anyone wishing we would have snow for Christmas so you could hitch old Dobbin to the basket sleigh, put on the big strong bells, big as a grape fruit and have a sleighing party?

Are you glad that Christmas comes only once a year?

How many did you add to your Christmas card list this year?

When you were being pushed around and your corns trampled on by the rush of late Christmas shoppers did you make a resolution that you would shop earlier next year? If you did [I] will bet the first possum catch in trap next fall that you will not keep the resolution and next year you will be in the midst of the late Christmas shoppers.

Did Santa Claus laugh as usual this year when he filled your stocking or did he look worried as if he was thinking of the war and of next Christmas?

Well the 1941 Christmas is past history and trust the day brought some happiness to everyone, even if the merriment was different."

Editor Gorsuch also provided his readers with an amusing brainteaser:

"If you are resting from your arduous Christmas duties, work and worry, you may find time to unravel this mixed up relationship problem.

'Last year I asked her to be my wife and she gave me a decidedly negative reply, so to get even I married her mother. Then my father married the girl.

When I married the girl's mother, the girl became my daughter, and my father married my daughter, so he became my son. When my father married my daughter, she became my mother. If my father is my son and my daughter is my mother, who am I?

My mother's mother is my wife and must be my grandmother, and being my grandmother's husband, I must be my own grandfather. And there you are.' "

Happy Holidays!



*H. P. Gorsuch posed as Charles Carroll signing the Declaration of Independence during the 1937 Carroll County Centennial. Gorsuch was the colorful founding President of The Times Printing Company and Editor of The Times newspaper from 1914 until his death in 1944. Historical Society of Carroll County.*