

VILLAGE VIEW

ANDREA LEONARD

Christmas is many things: to children, it's the wonder-world of gift-getting when wishes come true; the excitement builds for weeks ahead. Fantasies of Santa Claus, elves, reindeer, and rewards for good behavior really do float through their heads. The anticipation of possible dream-fulfillment is in a tug-of-war with the anxieties that revolve around small infringements of rules. The pressures balloon as December 25th approaches.

The Christmas tree, strung with lights, hung with baubles, and festooned with tinsel, is a symbol all children, of whatever age, associate with this happiest of holidays. The collection of brightly-wrapped and be-ribboned gifts grows larger with each passing day of Christmas week. Greeting cards crowd the mantle, and on Christmas Eve empty stockings hang limply from their hooks over cookies and milk ready for Santa's refreshment.

For young people, Christmas is a time of emotional fervor. Romance blossoms and love blooms. Home for the holidays—from schools and colleges, from distant jobs—means long journeys for thousands. For couples with children still in the home, Christmas culminates months of preparation and planning. Gifts for loved ones are purchased far in advance and saved for this special occasion. Grandparents whose children have homes of their own knit sweaters, mittens, caps, scarves, and socks or make bookends, carve boxes, and paint wooden blocks and toys. They choose books, and shop carefully for the right colors, fabrics, and brands of favorite personal items.

For all (except the very young who have yet to grasp the full significance of the holiday) Christmas carries religious meaning, a message of peace on earth and good will to men, that touches the hearts and spirits of all humanity, including those of non-Christian persuasion.

Yet there is no escaping the intrusion of the mundane. For merchants in retail trades, the Christmas season is a make-or-break period; some depend on December's business to provide half their total sales for the year. The fine line between dollars spent for stock, operating expenses, and promotion, and dollars received from sales, is a balancing act between profits and losses.

Across America, this year, concern about those statistics steals into our consciousness, invades our pleasures in subtle ways, and adds an unwelcome anxiety to holiday preparations. No matter how hard we try to bury our worries, they surface again and again as we throw ourselves into the final preparations for the joyous celebration.

Together with economic problems come the troubles of a shrinking, over-crowded, and angry world. The Middle East, El Salvador and Nicaragua, Afghanistan, Poland, Ireland, and the emerging nations and pressures of Africa, cannot be wiped from our minds like chalkmarks from a blackboard. Neither can we erase the haunted and frightened expressions that flash onto our TV screens on the faces of people whose numbers are swelling the unemployment rates. Peace on earth and good will to men may be our deepest and dearest desire, but the realities are a far cry from our yearnings.

We long to smother our awareness of the sufferings of our fellowmen and to enjoy our Christmas cushioned in the safety and security of our families, enveloped in the love and nearness of those we cherish. We trim our trees, hang out our wreaths, light our candles, attend our services, exchange our gifts and cards, join with our neighbors at the community singing, welcome our guests, go to parties, prepare our sumptuous meals, and give ourselves over to this holy day. Yet all the while, there's a nagging awareness that millions of the world's people are heaving and struggling for mere survival.

Christmas is a season of merriment and joy, but it's also a season of sadness and sorrow. Who, at Christmas, surrounded by the dear faces of those we love, can completely forget the other suffering millions who share our planet but not our lot? We can immerse ourselves in preparations to bring joy to our immediate family circle, shut out the horrors of wars and revolutions, close our minds to the realities of brutality and

famine, disregard the homeless, the terrified, and the hopeless. Yet the fact of them remains within our intellects, and who among us can deny that, "There, but for the Grace of God, go I."?

Before modern science brought us the miracles of worldwide instant communication, adults the world around could celebrate holidays selfishly. Their own circumstances and that of their immediate neighbors were the only reality they knew. News of catastrophes beyond the seas would not be received for many weeks; knowledge of aching hearts and grievous wounds in other parts of the world might never reach them.

Bells jingled as horses drew sleighs through the drifted snows, flames danced behind hearths in rooms warmed by friendly fires, candles gleamed against window panes, and delicious aromas escaped the kitchen to fill the house with promises of good food and happy reunions. People gathered to worship, to rejoice, to sing praises, to share, and the world's troubles were truly far away. Today, the world's troubles blare into our homes over the radio, troop into our midst from the television, and rob from the carefree spirit we work so hard and spend so much to establish and enjoy to the fullest on Christmas.

Is there no escaping the harsh realities? Is there no way to completely sponge away the fact of our violent species? Is there anywhere on this planet a way to recapture the innocences of Christmases past? Can individuals do anything to change the ways of the world?

Peace on earth cannot come if we hold hatreds in our hearts and minds. Brotherly love that encompasses all mankind cannot come if we are fearful of our neighbors, whether those people live next door, in another city, or in another land. Good will to all men cannot transcend fear and distrust as long as differences in color, creed, ideologies, or traditions are our basis for judging others. Prejudices against those who disagree with or are somewhat different from us blind us to understanding.

Peace can come only if we refuse to do battle, only if we refrain from hurting and harming even the strangest and

most foreign of other humans. They, too, want harmony among neighbors far and near; they, too, love their families, want health, happiness, and good things for their loved ones; every one of them shares with each of us the hopes and dreams we, ourselves, find so elusive.

Brotherly love for persons unknown can exist only if we recognize how insignificant are our differences and appreciate the multitudinous ways we are the same. All humanity walks erect, bears live young, nurtures its babies, finds itself beset with good and evil influences and impulses, shares the same emotions and physical drives, knows hunger and thirst, and feels heat and cold. Among all of us, all six billion of us, there are leaders and followers, realists and dreamers, rich and poor, strong and weak, young and old, tall and short, fat and thin, smart and stupid. Differences are minute, balanced against samenesses.

Should there ever dawn a Christmas when our differences carry no weight with individuals, and likenesses are recognized and honored, the deepest and finest meaning of Christmas can be celebrated around the world in myriad ways, by believers in a thousand different faiths, by peoples of every color and nationality. Only then can there be peace on earth and good will among all men. And only through individuals can it come to pass.

May our prayers this Christmas include a fervent plea for the spirit of understanding, love, and charity to grow in the hearts and minds of all men and women. And may that spirit grow in each of us, individually, and flourish throughout every day of the year, so that we may, without reservation, know Merry Christmases.

Christmas isn't so many different things, after all.

ComElectric files lower power cost charge

Commonwealth Electric Company has filed a lower power cost charge (PCC) for the first quarter of 1982 with the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities (DPU). According to R.F. MacDonald, company vice president of customer services, the lower PCC will mean savings of \$.67 for each 100 kilowatt hours (KWH) used.

"Non-heating customers using 410 KWH will save \$2.73 a month. Customers who have electric heat and use an average of 2166 kilowatt hours a month will save \$14.45 on their monthly bill," MacDonald said.

The reason for the reduced charge is the return to service of two large and economical power plants that were down for scheduled maintenance during the last quarter of 1981.

"Canal Electric's generating Unit #2 is operating now, and we expect Boston Edison's Pilgrim #1 nuclear plant to be back in service during late January," MacDonald noted. "These two units, both of which supply lower cost power, are the major reason for the lower PCC."

Due to the relative stability of the price of oil to generate power, the company expects the cost of oil to have no measurable impact on the PCC during the first quarter of 1982.

The filing of the request for the lowering of the PCC is subject to the approval of the DPU following a public hearing and thorough examination of extensive data concerning the cost of fuel and purchased power which Commonwealth Electric submitted with the request.

If the request is approved by the DPU, the new PCC will take effect with January 1982 billings.

Commonwealth Electric Company supplies electricity to 223,000 customers in 40 cities and towns spread across southeastern Massachusetts, Cape Cod and Martha's Vineyard.

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