

Santa Claus is coming to town ... in 37 days!

With all the hustle and bustle of moving home for the holidays and preparing for and taking finals, it's easy to put off your Christmas shopping and preparations. It's often a shocking discovery to

those who realize, as they walk out of their last final on Dec. 17, that Christmas is only eight days away. Why not try something new this year — be prepared, plan ahead! In this week's issue of At Ease we've

attempted to set the holiday mood by recalling Christmas traditions. We also have provided ideas for inexpensive and creative gifts you can make yourself. Merry Christmas!



by Bonnie Langford

Battalion staff

It's Christmas Eve. In Russia children eagerly await the arrival of the Christmas grandmother. In Mexico families in the nativity procession are looking for the home that will welcome them. In France the children have put out their shoes, awaiting the Magi.

While the reasons for the celebration of Christmas may be the same, the customs and traditions surrounding them long ago took a colorful detour from culture to culture.

Although Christians celebrate Christmas because of Jesus' birth, many customs revolve around a man known to Americans as Santa Claus. The character of Santa Claus is based on a real person.

Saint Nicholas, who was Bishop of Myra during the third century, is a saint whose feast day is Dec. 6.

The bishop was famous for his kind heart. He is credited with helping three maidens without husbands by throwing purses filled with gold into the women's homes. Soon after, the women were married. After that, any unexpected gift was attributed to Nicholas. He later became the patron saint of children.

Many European countries celebrate Saint Nicholas Day on Dec. 6. Children hang their stockings in honor of his day and he deposits small gifts. If a child gets sticks, he has only 19 more days to be good before the *Weihnachtsmann* —

the German equivalent to Santa Claus — comes on Christmas Eve.

The legend of the saint eventually grew into the American Santa Claus, but not all cultures have the same Santa Claus.

In Holland, *Sinter Klaus* is the patron saint of Dutch ships. On Christmas Eve his ship supposedly appears with gifts. He comes ashore mounted on a white charger, visiting homes.

The Russians have a female gift bringer. *Babushka* is the legendary old woman who misdirected the Magi when they were searching for Bethlehem. To repent for her sin, she now goes around the world on Christmas Eve, looking for baby Jesus and distributing gifts to children.

The Italians also have a woman for Santa Claus. She gives gifts on Dec. 6 while children roam the streets blowing paper horns.

Legends say that she delayed setting out for Bethlehem when the shepherds told her about the child. Every Christmas since then, she has wandered the world looking for the baby.

In Spain, children don't receive presents until Jan. 6 from the Magi. The gifts are said to be left by the three kings who are passing on their way to Bethlehem. Parades honor the kings on that day.

Even the Orient celebrates Christmas. Japanese children learn early of *Hoteisho* — a

god who always carries a pack and has eyes on the back of his head, so he can see children at all times.

The *Posada*, which is the Mexican enactment of the nativity, lasts for nine nights. Each night neighboring families join in a procession carrying images of Mary and Joseph. At the door of each house they beg for admittance and are refused. But at the last house they are admitted to a party.

Baking sweets is another Christmas tradition. In England, Ireland and Scotland, a cake is baked for each person in the household. If anyone's cake breaks, he will have bad luck.

Plants are also an important part of Christmas. In Mexico the poinsettia is the flower of Christmas. According to legend, a young boy knelt sadly outside a church on Christmas Eve because he had no gifts to leave at the altar. He tearfully proclaimed his desire to offer presents to the baby Jesus. When he arose, a beautiful red flower was at his feet. He joyfully entered the church to lay his gift at the manger.

Cherry trees are used in Czech celebrations. People break a branch off a cherry tree at the beginning of advent, place it in a pot of water in the kitchen. The twig should blossom at Christmas time. The branches that flower on that day are considered omens for good luck.

Christmas trees

by Lauri Rees

Battalion Staff

Big trees, little trees, skinny trees, pitiful trees, lie Brown's, or majestic Grandma's.

Just drive around Bry Station and you probably see whatever kind of tree your heart desires for sale for

Organizations including the Forestry Club and Lambda Chi Omega, the sophomore honor society, sell Christmas trees on campus year.

The Forestry Club will be cutting 375 Virginia pines on Nov. 28.

The trees cost \$20 for a six-foot tree and \$22 for a tree over six-and-a-half feet.

Forestry Club members will be cutting the trees next to the Forestry Building, across the street from Commons.

The club will buy the trees on the Sunday after Thanksgiving from private Christmas tree farms near Navasota and Kountze.

Joe Rogers, president of the Forestry Club, said the money from selling the trees will be used for food, travel expenses when the 40 club members meet at the Conclave, a lumberjack festival in Louisiana.

At the annual competition will be at the end of March. Trees are judged in log-cutting, knife throwing, tree identification, and other contests.

Members of Lambda Chi Omega are selling 800 Douglas fir, spruce trees, and by Rudder fountain street from Sbisla Dining Hall across the street from Commons.

The trees cost \$7 and \$9 depending on the size of the tree.

Both the \$7 and \$9 trees are three- to four-feet tall, which is big enough for a dormitory apartment.

Pam Chin, the treasurer of the Sigma Chi chapter, said the money made will finance the induction banquet.

Some of the money will be used to attend a regional conference in Auburn, Ala., Christmas

