



The Christmas I Remember Best

(Eighth of a series by prominent Charlotteans)

The Bambini

By ROBERT H. LAMPEE



MR. LAMPEE

In many ways, the bambini were hard to take. Their bodies were covered with ugly sores. Their stomachs were distended from malnutrition. Their clothes were filthy rags. They labored in a strange language. They stole and soiled the streets.

But a warm relationship sprang up which found its most eloquent expression at Palermo on Christmas Day, 1943.

This was no directive from the Navy brass—it was the spontaneous action of sailors rushing to their canten and buying the ration of candy bars and dumping the lot in a special barrel—for the bambini. It was the Navy SeaBee carpenter shop using the jigsaws to cut out Donald Duck and Popeye toys—for the bambini. It was the sailor rummaging through a seagull for old dinghies and then taking them to the tailor shops for conversion to little dresses and pants—for the bambini. It was the Navy bake shop working late to cook up huge cookies—for the bambini. It was Boatwain's mate organizing the volunteers to fill the stockings with oranges and candy and cookies and toys—for the bambini. It was the Navy tailor sewing the red suit for the bearded sailor who was the lucky Santa Claus—for the bambini.

On Christmas Day it rained cats and dogs. In the morning, the long, flat Navy trailer was backed up to the administration building. Ladders were rigged on each end and railings were nailed into place. The big, colorful Christmas tree was lit up. More Navy trucks backed up and unloaded tons of Christmas gifts.

In the distance, at the gate of the naval base, you could hear them—hundreds and hundreds of them, all over the town, squealing, yelling, laughing, singing, clamoring—the bambini.

In the demerol in the gloom of that murky day, through the sentries at the gate, came the spirit of Christmas. Throats choked in home-sick U. S. sailors as the bambini sprinted through in their bare feet to find the American Santa Claus. Young ones rode, piggy-back on their fathers or were carried wrapped in dirty shawls in the arms of their mothers.

One by one they climbed the ladder to the trailer, passed through lines of rain-soaked sailors, were patted by the nautical Santa and emerged with their arms laden down with gifts of affection.

The pace quickened. The screams of delight and of cold slowly subsided. The white powder on Santa's beard was washed away and his wilted cap curled over one eye. The piles of gifts disappeared. The sailors returned to their duties and the Christmas Party for the bambini was over.

Next morning in the Navy ship repair shop, a machinist working on a diesel engine for a landing craft to be used in the next Allied landing, turned to a shipmate and said: "You know, that party for the bambini—damned if that wasn't fun!"

(Mr. Lampee, advertising director of The Charlotte News, was a naval officer during World War II.)

20 CARDINALS TAKE OFFICE IN SPLENDOR

Church Princes Include Pair of Americans

VATICAN CITY (AP)—Amid glittering and moving medieval pageantry, Pope John XXIII today placed the red hats of their high office over the heads of 20 of the 23 new cardinals of the Roman Catholic Church.

More than 35,000 cheering persons filled the vast basilica of St. Peter for the glittering public consistory, the climactic event in the ceremonies this week which have increased the College of Cardinals to 74 men.

The new cardinals approached the papal throne singly, their hands folded in prayer, their bright scarlet trains trailing nine feet behind across the green velvet carpet.

Tenth in order was one of the two new American cardinals, Archbishop Richard James Cushing of Boston. The other, Archbishop John O'Hara of Philadelphia, was 13th.

Each of the new princes of the church knelt quickly, kissed the pope's slipper and then his hand. Each time the pontiff bent low to touch cheeks with the new member of the sacred college.

HATS OVERHEAD

While the pope spoke, two assistants held one of the broad-brimmed, flat-topped hats—the galero—over the head of the new cardinal.

Each cardinal moved away without his red hat. They will be delivered later in the day and will never again appear in public until the owners are dead. When a cardinal dies, his hat is placed on his catafalque and then suspended from the ceiling of his cathedral.

Seated nearby, in a row before the cathedral chair, were 23 previous members of the College of Cardinals now in Rome, among them Archbishop Francis Spellman of New York. It was they who met with Pope John in secret consistory to give their assent to the new cardinals, the first event in the week's program.

THE ABSENTES

The three new cardinals absent today were Fernando Cento, papal nuncio to Portugal; Joseph Bueno Y Monreal, archbishop of Seville, Spain; and the Vatican's nuncio to Italy, Giuseppe Fietta. They will receive the insignia of their office from the chiefs of states of Portugal, Spain and Italy.

The day's ceremonies began with the new cardinals' taking their oath before the dean of the college, French-born Eugene Cardinal Posaert.

The week's ceremonies increased the sacred college—the senate of the church—to its largest size in history and expanded it for the first time beyond the limit of 70 members set by Pope Sixtus V. in 1586.

CONDITION CONDEMNED

But the condition at the other two schools was condemned by local fire and building inspection officials.

The state building code says: "All interior stairways, including moving stairways and elevators, shall be enclosed or their floor openings otherwise protected," with these exceptions:

Stairways in buildings not over two stories in height.

Stairways and elevators in buildings not over four stories high where the stories above the second are used for storage only.

Stairways and elevators in buildings with automatic fire sprinkler systems when such buildings are not over four stories in height.

Stairs and elevators in sprinklered buildings of any height that are used only for storage.

DOORS PROPPED

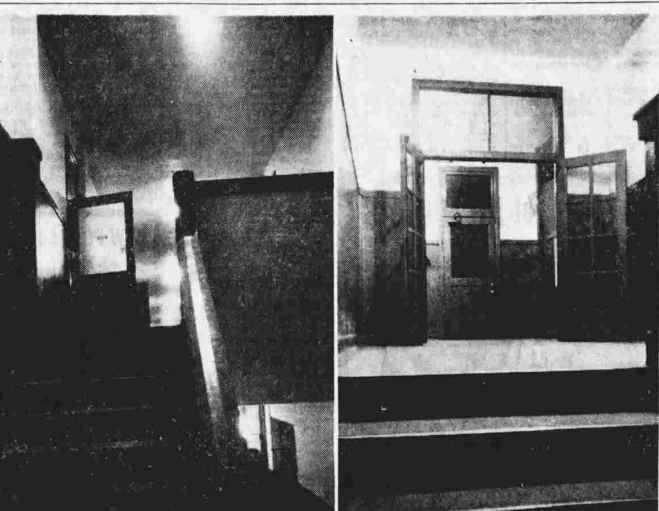
At Central High School, the reporter found doors on the third floor that separate the corridor from the stairway had been propped open.

Principal Ed Sanders said the doors are not usually allowed to stand open. "They were probably pushed open and they jammed. They do that a lot," he said.

In the Chicago fire, the second-story stairway door was left open and the fire flashed down the corridor.

The fire killed 92 persons.

EAL Strike Confused By U.S. Board Ruling



Two Fire Hazards: Unenclosed Stairway (left) And Open Doors Leading To Stairway

—IT CAN HAPPEN HERE—

School Fire Safeguards Found Lacking

By JOHN KILGO News Staff Writer

The same condition blamed for the disastrous Chicago school fire was found in four Charlotte schools today.

A Charlotte News reporter checking eight local schools found doors leading to stairways in every school—Central High—there is a stairway which does not even have doors.

Open doors were discovered at Central and Harding High Schools, Myers-Cirene Negro Elementary School, and O'Donoghue School.

The open door condition at Central and O'Donoghue, both of which are three stories in height, is in violation of state law.

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In the Chicago fire, the second-story stairway door was left open and the fire flashed down the corridor.

The fire killed 92 persons.

If the stairway doors are kept shut, the fire will have a hard time getting into the halls, fire officials say.

But if the stairways are open, fire shoots up the stairs and spreads quickly into the rooms.

NOT ORDERED

Harding Principal James R. Hawkins said the fire department has never told him to keep the doors closed.

"I'm not going to get into a newspaper controversy," he said. "If the fire department wants us to keep the doors shut they can tell us to do it."

SCHOOL FIRE

Capt. E. W. Ryhme of the Fire Prevention Bureau said he has told school officials in every school in Charlotte to keep stairway doors closed.

"The doors at Harding should be kept closed," Capt.

Ryhme said. "If they weren't to be kept closed, they wouldn't be up there."

A second floor stairway door at Myers Street school was propped open this morning.

DOOR WATCHED

A spokesman at the school said the door is watched closely most of the time and it is kept closed.

"We had a Christmas program this morning," he said, "and I guess one of the children forgot to close the door."

C. W. Edge, building inspector, said today it's "extremely dangerous" to leave stairway doors open.

"The doors are put there for a purpose," he said, "and they are to be kept closed."

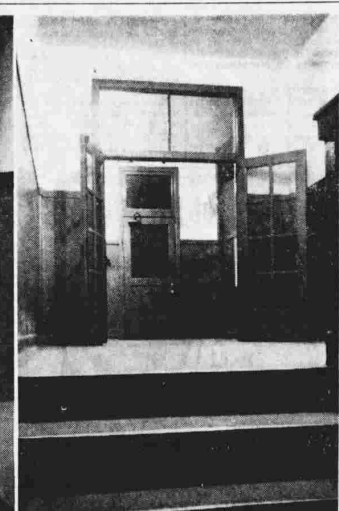
"The Chicago school fire was able to spread like it did because someone left the second-story stairway door open."

"We ask that they be closed, and we'll put notices on the doors telling people to keep them shut if we have to."

The stairways on the inside of O'Donoghue School are not enclosed.

EVENING PRAYER

O God, we thank Thee for the coming of Thy Son into the world. How grateful we are that we have accepted Him as our Redeemer. Use our words to proclaim to others the good news of redemption, through Jesus Christ our Lord. In His name we pray. — Amen.



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Non-Pilot Engineers Called OK

WASHINGTON (AP)—The Civil Aeronautics Board ruled today that flight training is not a required safety qualification for the engineer-third man member on America's new jet passenger planes.

The ruling complicates the current labor dispute between the pilots' and engineers' unions and the airlines over whether the third man in addition to the pilot and co-pilot should be pilot-trained.

The issue is a key one in the current flight Engineers' union strike against Eastern Air Lines and is also an issue in the strike threatened for Friday midnight on American Airlines.

The Flight Engineers Union maintains that the third crew member aboard jets as aboard prop planes needs no flight training but should be a skilled engineer to maintain equipment in flight and quickly spot any mechanical troubles.

EMERGENCY HELP

The pilots' union claims the third man should have pilot training so that he can help guide the fast jets through the skies in the event of inability on the part of the pilot or co-pilot.

The CAB, in response to a letter from Gov. LeRoy Collins of Florida, said that it saw no reason to change present crew complement requirements for jets from those presently required for big, four-engine propeller-driven planes. Present requirements for these do not include a pilot-trained man as the third crew member, but the third man must be a licensed engineer.

The board said it was ruling simply from a safety standpoint and that it had no responsibility, in the event of inability on the part of the pilot or co-pilot, for resolving issues in airline labor disputes.

Both unions base their arguments primarily on safety considerations, but they also are concerned by the fact that the bigger and faster jets will mean much employment as possible for their members in the coming jet age.

LAWYER UPSETS POLICE CAMERA

TARBORO (AP)—An attorney's complaint that he was "treated like a common criminal" after being arrested has resulted in the police department's police being retrained and Police Chief Otley Levy being placed on probation.

H. D. Harrison, 71-year-old Tarboro lawyer, made the complaint after being arrested on a charge of driving without a license. He stated that before he was permitted to post a \$100 bond he was taken to the police department, fingerprinted and photographed.

Harrison said an officer took him into a police photo room, hung a numbered card around his neck and took his picture. The attorney added, "I asked him if he had to do it and he told me he did."

He later wrote the state attorney general for an opinion of the incident and Malcolm Sewell replied that in his opinion the practice was illegal.

The law stipulates that no officer shall photograph a person arrested and charged or convicted of a misdemeanor unless the person is a fugitive, or is suspected of having stolen goods in his possession, or is wanted by another law enforcement agency.

BETTER HURRY

He took an imaginary telephone from the tree. "Hello, Charlie, you'd better hurry if you're going to catch us this time... we're about to finish the run."

He hung up the telephone, laughed, started to turn back to the still. A hand came from around the tree and clutched his arm. "I got your message," Charlie Felt said.

REVENOOR KING GETS MESSAGE

GREENSBORO (AP)—Officers and court personnel were chuckling over one this during the past few days.

Up in the hills of North Carolina, a song set to the tune of "Davy Crockett" tells of one of the most famous and respected "revenue" men of all time. Charlie Felt, whose office is in Wilkesboro.

Around the whisky stills, the workers sometimes join in singing "Charlie, Charlie Felt, king of the revenoors." Officers keeping stills under surveillance

have heard the singing.

Not long ago, some officers were keeping just such a surveillance. The still workers were preparing to "make a run" and jar the whisky.

They fell to laughing and joking. "If old Charlie Felt is going to get us he'd better hurry," they said, "it looks like Charlie is going to miss this one."

One of the workers expressed the thought that Charlie would be mighty disappointed, and that it would be the right thing to

do to give over to that big tree and slip him a call.

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