

## **Detaining Santa Claus and other holiday ‘traditions’**

(As published in *The Oak Ridger’s Historically Speaking* column on December 24, 2013)

*Part one of a series:*

Some things that happened in Oak Ridge became a “tradition” quickly in the early years. In 1948, Santa Claus was attempting to get to the first annual Oak Ridge National Laboratory Christmas Party held in the Center Theater (now the Oak Ridge Playhouse), when he was detained at Elza Gate and searched.

Photographer Ed Westcott, who was recently awarded a Muddy Boot award by the East Tennessee Economic Council, took a photograph of Santa at Elza Gate on December 14, 1944. It has become one of his many famous images. This one evokes laughter as it depicts poor Santa, doing his best to convince the guards that he is harmless, but they are insisting that all his Christmas gifts must be searched...sound familiar? Some things seem to never change...

The Carbide and Carbon Chemicals Corporation had taken over the contract to manage and operate the newly designated “Oak Ridge National Laboratory” on March 4, 1948. By Christmas time that year, they were obviously building the laboratory, starting the Biology Division and expanding research in other areas.

The political fight to create a national laboratory in the South had been won, thanks to folks like Dr. William Pollard, who led an effort that formed a consortium of 14 southern universities to support that goal. Not only did he succeed there he also formed the Oak Ridge Institute for Nuclear Studies which evolved into Oak Ridge Associated Universities that today is a consortium of 100 universities and has a variety of missions as well as managing Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education in support of the Department of Energy.

Now back to the detained Santa Claus. Here may be the rest of the story of how the earlier photo in 1944 established a tradition of delaying Santa...thanks to Tim Gawne of ORNL who found the story in the January 7, 1949 *THE NEWS*, an employee newsletter of the Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

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### ***Children’s Christmas Party Acclaimed a Grand Success***

Lending verity to the ancient proverb that “one picture is worth a thousand words,” the pictures above more aptly tell the story of the grand success of the first annual children’s Christmas Party than could columns of news print. The party, sponsored by the Carbide and Carbon Chemicals Corporation and coordinated by the Lab Recreation Department, was attended by 435 children of ORNL personnel as well as by 175 accompanying adults.

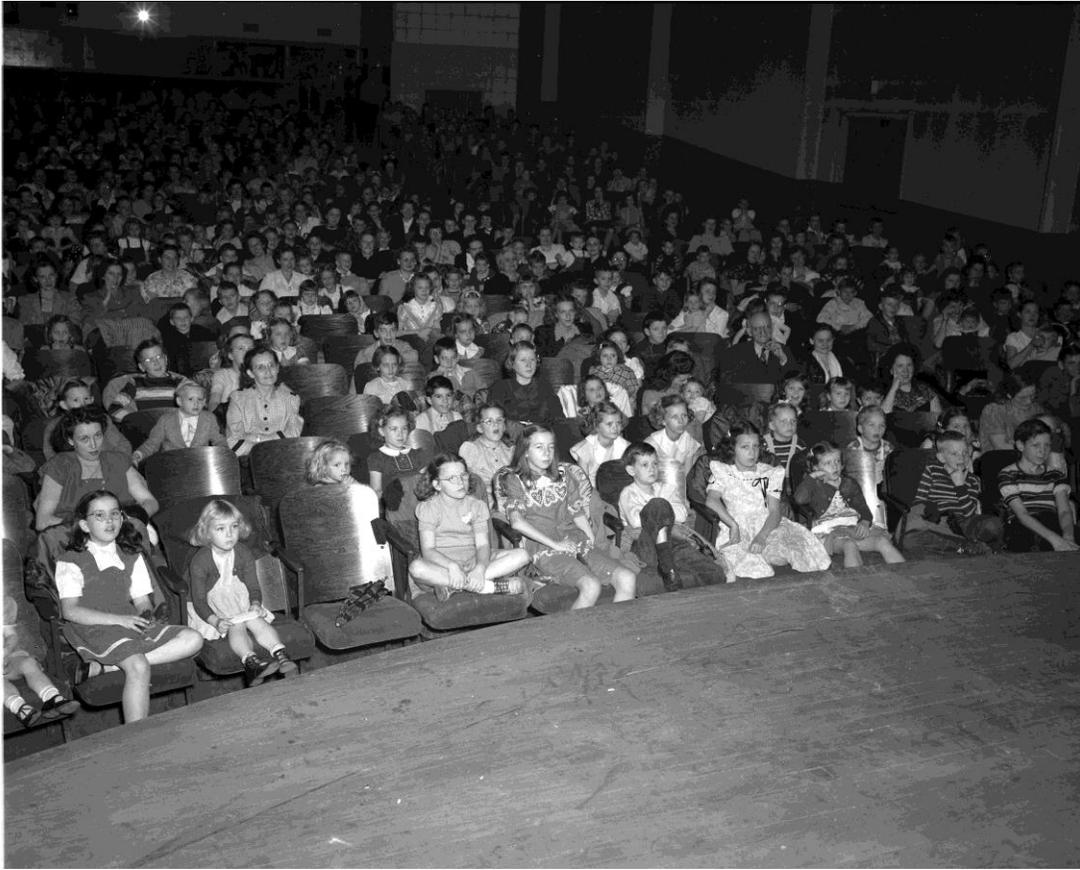
The program began at 10 a.m., Wednesday, December 22, at the Center Theater, with a half hour showing of movie cartons. Then came the children’s program in which sons and daughters of Laboratory employees played the leading parts. Sandra, eight year old daughter of Fred Eggers, a carpenter in the Maintenance Department, did a specialty number with her excellent tap dancing. Next on the program were two songs, “White Christmas” and “Silent Night,” both sung by Sylvia Hurt, nine year old daughter of S. S. Hurt, an electrician of the Electrical Maintenance Department.

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Santa Claus is detained and searched at Elza Gate entrance to Oak Ridge in this picture taken by famed Manhattan project photographer Ed Westcott

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The crowd gathered in Central Theater (now Oak Ridge Playhouse) for a children's Christmas party



Sylvia Hurt, nine year old daughter of S. S. Hurt, an electrician of the Electrical Maintenance Department, sings Christmas songs "White Christmas" and "Silent Night"

# Detaining Santa Claus and other holiday 'traditions'

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## Santa Claus Enjoyed His Visit at the ORNL Children's Party

—Photographs by Fred Williams and Dave Peirce  
—Layout designed by Artist Glen Williams

## Dr. Snell Member Of Scientifically Prominent Family

Continued from Page 1

From Ammonium Nitrate Solution in the Chain Reacting Pile," *Science*, March 7, 1947.

Dr. Snell's participation in the affairs of professional societies is made chiefly as a Fellow of the American Physical Society. His avocational interests outside of his research in physics, are in music, photography, and gardening.

He was married in 1939 to the former Miss Ethelyn Towner, of Daytona Beach, Fla. They have one son, Arthur Towner, age 2.

In tracing the genealogy of the Snell family it is found that numerous ones of its membership have contributed much to various fields of science and industry. Dr. Snell's immediate family certainly bears this reputation. An article appearing in *Industrial and Engineering Chemistry*, April 10, 1939, entitled "Fathers and Sons in Chemistry," briefly sums up the achievements of Dr. Snell; of his father, Dr. John F. Snell; and of his brother, Dr. John M. Snell.

Dr. John F. Snell, who received his education at the University of Toronto and at Cornell University, taught chemistry for three years at Wesleyan University (Connecticut) and for six years at the University of Cincinnati. From 1907 until his retirement in 1936 he headed the Department of Chemistry at Macdonald College, McGill University. Toward the end of his incumbency in this position, he acted for several months as Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture at McGill. Throughout his connection with Macdonald College the senior Dr. Snell took a keen interest in the maple sugar industry of the Province of Quebec, which has an importance in the agriculture of a considerable area comparable to what it is in the State of Vermont. He has done much writing on the subject and has served in various official capacities in representing the industry.

Dr. John M. Snell, who died in 1940, received his education at McGill University and at the University of Wisconsin. For a short period he taught chemistry and engaged in research at the University of Wisconsin and at Macdonald College. Later he served on the research staffs of the United States Rubber Products Co., the Niagara Sprayer and Chemical Co., and the Eastman Kodak Co.

LOST: Silver penknife near Metallurgy building with initials D. K. S. Reward. Call Mr. Bridges, 6528.

Great appreciation has been expressed for the work members of the ORNL Wives Club accomplished in assembling the host of stockings and filling them with fruit, nuts, and gifts for the children. Various Laboratory personnel and members of the Recreation Council did yeoman duty in pushing the affair to its happy conclusion. Hal Mate thanked the News for Christmas Party publicity which stretched over a period of several preceding weeks. An appreciation on the part of the Recreation Department has been voiced for the financial aid which had been given by C&CCC.

## Take Medicines As Prescribed, Doctors Advise All Patients

Here's Health . . . by J. S. Felton, M.D.

It's a funny thing about people and how they take medicine. Haven't you all seen those individuals who swear up and down that they simply cannot take capsules, but can they take pills—and love 'em? Then there are those who say that "Bare" aspirin disagrees with them, but "Squid's" is just right.

The other thing that we docs wonder about is why people don't take a lot of the medicine that has been prescribed for them—and that they've paid good cold cash for? We used to have an aunt who, when you asked her how she was, always answered: "Well, I'm better now" —never fine, or real low down sick, but always better. She used to collect medicines, and never, never threw away old prescriptions or partially used bottles. A trip through her medicine cabinet would reveal the oddest collection of bottles, tubes, boxes, atomizers, and tins, that would make any drug store look like a feeble facsimile, model size.

The fables and stories about the shake-well-before-using, the two-three-times-a-day, or three-two-times-a-day tales, and the wheezes about "do I take the after-meal pills if I don't eat," have appeared in the cartoons for years. But there is a serious side to this business about taking medicines that we feel everyone should know—for his own safety. For example, don't share your prescription with anyone else, no matter how generous you are. Your cure may be

the other fellow's cure. Don't keep medicines after you have recovered and they are no longer needed. Some will deteriorate, the purpose of others will be forgotten and the labels may fade. Keep poisons, habit-forming drugs, sedatives, and strong antiseptics clearly labeled, high up on a shelf, and out of the children's reach, apart from household bottles.

Always read the label in a good light, and never take medicine in the dark, no matter how sure you are that you know what it is. When you pour your liquid medicine, pour away from the label side to keep the label clean. Let all the grownups know where you keep the medicine bottles—and it's a good idea to have your doctor's name and telephone number pasted inside the medicine cabinet, along with the number of the hospital nearest you.

With children, be sure that they are old enough to understand how to take a tablet or a capsule. A good idea is to crush the pill in a teaspoon of sugar, and give it to the youngster, or dissolve it in a little water. Many drugs come in specially flavored tablets for the youngsters now; ask for them.

Remember that there are a few drugs that you can get only with a doctor's prescription, and the druggist isn't being onery if he refuses to refill your prescription without your doctor's say-so. Several years ago we had a patient who came in to the office because of her nerves. She said she had been taking a nerve medicine for years, and when we talked with her about it, she said she was supposed to take one bottle only, and that was then years past! She had gone on repeatedly demanding refills. When a little bit serves the purpose, a whole lot won't build up any health credits.

## Children's Christmas Party Acclaimed A Grand Success

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Then eight year old Balinda Baker, the "Martha Graham" of Oak Ridge, thrilled the overflow crowd with her ballet, "Dance of the Flowers." Balinda is the talented daughter of Juanita Baker, a Laboratory employee in Central Files of the Security Division. Last but not least on the fun bill of fare was a midget exhibition match in the manly art of self-defense. The young fry boxers and contenders for the 1960 title of "Mr. Big" in the fistic world

were Jimmy Klemski and Stevie Pennington, both proteges of the Carbide-Oak Ridge Boxing Academy. Jimmy is the three year old son of Henry Klemski, General Foreman in the Maintenance Division. Stevie is the four year old son of Herb Pennington, a supervisor in the Chemistry Division. The battlers, Jimmy weighing 30 pounds, and Stevie weighing in at 32 pounds, fought a draw by unanimous acclaim of the entire audience of some 600 wildly cheering people.

During the entertainment, the program was interrupted when a message was received from the Oak Ridge Police Department that Santa was being slightly delayed at Elza Gate but would hasten on to the theater as soon as he could be properly cleared. Only a short time had elapsed until Old Saint Nick came bustling down the aisle of the theater and just as fight fan cheering had just about died away, Santa presented gifts of appreciation to each of the children who took part in the entertainment program. He then said a few words of cheer to everyone and was soon on his way to visit other Oak Ridge parties. However, Santa Claus who is never camera shy, stayed long enough to get himself photographed a number of times.

Judging by the reports received in the Recreation Department the entire program was a huge success; and Hal Mate, Recreation Supervisor and coordinator of the event, wishes to thank everyone who took part in making the first annual event the success it was.

The full story in the January 7, 1949, edition of ORNL's employee newsletter, *THE NEWS*