



Birthdays In December

Yinka Aremu	December 8
Judith Morrow	December 11
Ramsey James	December 14
Anna Sabarese	December 15
Bernard Bailey	December 17
Debbie Caudill	December 17
Tony DeCerro	December 23
Brooke Scutt	December 31



Anniversaries In December

Robert & Leonor Richards	December 1
Moses & Judith Morrow	December 21

HILLENDALE BAPTIST CHURCH



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Dr. David T. Hottel, Pastor
Edna Scott, Church Secretary
Garry Scutt, Music Director
David Critchfield, Administrative Assistant



- Sylvia and Gary Newport and all who brought food for the Thanksgiving breakfast.



Making a Difference in the Lives of People Through the Power of Jesus Christ



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Hillendale Herald



December

THE ORIGIN OF THE CHRISTMAS TREE

It's difficult to pinpoint when and why Christians first began to use evergreen trees at Christmastime. There are many legends and myths regarding the origin of Christmas trees. For example, the ancient Romans brought greenery into their homes in winter to symbolize life in the midst of bleakness and death.

German Christians in the early part of the 16th century may have been the first to use evergreen trees during Advent and Christmas. Those trees had no candles on them, but were decorated with items at hand: colored paper, gold foil, apples and dolls. German immigrants brought the custom to America around 1700 when they settled in Pennsylvania.

Some scholars say that evergreen trees represent Christ, because they, too, are everlasting. Others say that Christmas trees remind us of salvation which came to us through Christ who died on a "tree." St. Peter wrote: "He [Christ] himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed" (1 Peter 2:24, RSV).

The forbidden fruit of the tree in the Garden of Eden, when eaten, brought guilt and death. On the other hand, the "tree" on Calvary was the instrument by which God through Christ ushered in salvation, new life and hope. The Christmas tree can remind us of those wonderful gifts.



A Second Chance

Sitting up in the hospital bed, Buddy smiled and reassured his wife, Ruth, "I'll be waltzing you across the dance floor again soon." Ruth nodded and squeezed his hand a little tighter. Looking at the man she loved, she knew this ordeal had frightened him much more than he would ever show. But Buddy was not the kind of man to let a thing like a mild heart attack dampen his spirits. Instead, he was making a concerted effort to put everyone at ease. Besides, the doctors assured him that he could go home in a few days. So Buddy's mood was even more jovial than usual, joking and winking at his wife.

That changed in an instant as Buddy's expression suddenly went blank. He called out, "Ruth, everybody, come closer -- quick!" He then quietly began to recite his confirmation verse, and continued with the Lord's Prayer, asking everyone to say it with him. Then, Buddy looked up at his family and said, "This is it -- I love you all. Good-bye..."

Ruth cried out, "Help him!" as she felt his hand go limp in hers. The room was immediately filled with doctors and nurses, and the panic-stricken family was pushed from the room. Ruth watched helplessly from the hall.

Buddy was watching, too, but not from the hall. Floating above all the commotion, he was looking calmly down at the frantic scene. Suddenly, he felt himself being pulled through a tunnel of brilliant light. He could see the most beautiful view up ahead. It was like nothing he had ever seen before, and he knew it was not a dream.

Ahead, he saw a mountain covered with flowers from the foot to the peak. Each bloom exploded in brilliant color, and not even the tiniest blossom was hidden from view by leaves or stems. At the bottom of the mountain, Buddy saw a figure cloaked in pure light at the center of a group of people. Buddy knew he was in the presence of God.

Buddy's eyes fluttered open. For an instant the light still filled his hospital room, but then it was gone. Past the e his worried family, and he smiled. Ruth blew him a kiss, looked up and whispered, "Thank you."

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"It was a massive heart attack." That was the doctor's diagnosis the day all Buddy's vital signs had indeed stopped. Triple-bypass surgery was successful a week later, and in time Buddy regained his strength and his health.

But from then on that vision was never far from him, and neither were those words: "Stop, it's not time. Go back."

Ruth and Buddy knew more than ever that each day they had together was a special gift. Dozens of family members and friends were invited to a golden celebration for their forty-fifth wedding anniversary instead of waiting for a fiftieth anniversary to celebrate their long marriage. At the toast, Ruth told everyone, "Buddy and I believe that as long as you are celebrating together, every year is golden."

Buddy enjoyed each day with renewed appreciation. The smell of fresh-cut grass, the taste of iced tea on a hot summer day, the laughter of a friend, offering comfort by letting someone cry on his shoulder -- these were things far too precious to take for granted.

Twelve years later, while he was resting in the shade of his favorite tree, Buddy's spirit left his body again. Without a doubt, that shining figure spoke to him in a strong, reassuring voice, "Come with me. Now is the time," and welcomed him home with outstretched arms.

I remember walking in at my dad's funeral and seeing more people in that church building than I had ever seen there before. People were standing in the aisles and outside the doors of the sanctuary. Everyone spoke of the glimpse of heaven Daddy had seen for a moment more than a decade before. The thought was comforting in facing the awful pain of his death, but I noticed something more about life, too.

Although I knew my dad was a special person, I had no idea until his funeral how many other people felt the same way. I realized that a successful life is measured by how you live and love in the time you are given. Daddy was given a second lease on life and made the most of it, not by getting busier, but by enjoying it more fully. And spending it on people. That's why we are given second chances.

God sent Jesus to give us second chances. Merry Christmas.