

DESERT CHRISTMAS



By Shirley Sargent

"We can't go home for Christmas," Bart Stackton scowled, looking from the checkbook out the huge window at the Joshua trees so he wouldn't have to meet his wife's eyes.

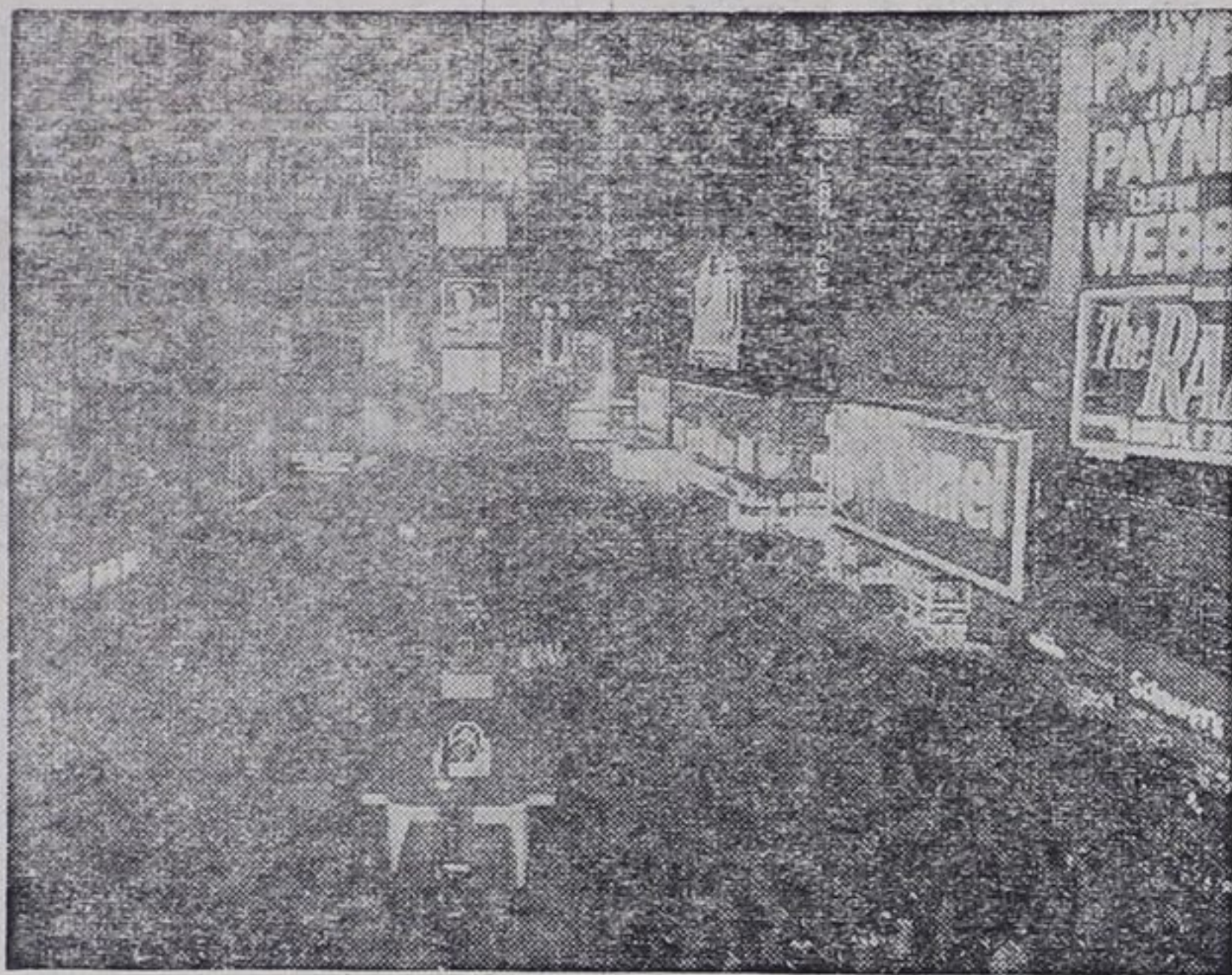
Peggy Stackton's eyes were a deep blue that contrasted with her short honey-blond hair. Usually her eyes sparkled, but now they reflected astonishment, sorrow and then welled with tears. "Oh, Bart," she cried, "are you sure we can't manage a trip to Wisconsin?"

Grimly he said, "I'm positive we can't even afford a holiday week-end in Los Angeles. Our first Christmas together will have to be right here on the desert."

Hard Luck

"No snow," Peggy was staring out at the hot sand. "No family, no fire in the fireplace . . . why can't we go by bus if we can't afford to fly?"

"Hon, look around you!" Bart



MAGIC HOUR . . . This is an old photograph, but it is a scene that is repeated year after year as thousands of merry makers jam into the streets of Times Square to await the magic hour when the old year passes and the New Year is born.

was tall, tanned, crew-cut and, at the bleak moment, careworn beyond his twenty-two years. "We're broke because we bought the air conditioner and the T-V and because I'm not a good manager."

The Stocktons had been married in September and came straight to the modern, cement brick 'hideaway' which constituted the manager's headquarters at the big desert trailer park belonging to Bart's father. They had swum, sunbathed, hiked and ridden horseback, weather permit-

Times Square Hails New Year Arrival

The question of 'who's first' - the United States or Russia - gets no argument insofar as the arrival of a New Year is concerned. When the first roar goes up in Times Square, the New Year is eight hours old in Moscow. But, don't fret, Father Time has already served up the New Year to a number of world citizens before he reached Russia.

Actually, New Zealanders, residents of the Chatham Islands, are first to see each New Year. Australia, Asia, Africa, Europe and South America follow before the New Year reaches the coast of Maine and makes its leisurely three-hour trip across to California, and two hours more to get to Alaska.

The New Year originates at the starting point of time - the Ad-

Once determined on a 'wonderful' Christmas to match the rest of their life, Peggy ordered a tree, greenery, lights and holly and told Bart how much it all would cost. "We can't do it and send home presents too," Bart exploded.

"We can borrow," Peggy said heatedly. "It's bad enough not to go home. At least, we can have a tree. Your father will understand."

"Oh sure he will," Bart said bitterly. "He'll understand his own son is such a poor manager he can't even live on a generous salary."

"Hush!" Peggy clung to him. "We're quarreling! You're right, we must economize even if we celebrate Christmas without a tree."

Visiting

That night she did some thinking about Bart's job, their future and the need for economizing. The next day she visited some of the trailers and then spent several mornings off on the desert.

Surprised

He came home early that afternoon to find Peggy on the patio surrounded by tumbleweeds, egg shells, pieces of manzanita and tin cans. "What's this trash doing here?" He sent a tumbleweed sailing with his foot.

"Don't do that! These things are our Christmas decorations, not trash!"

"Christmas decorations! Are you crazy?"

Peggy laughed. "I guess it looks like it, but one of the trailer women taught me how to scavenge. I'll just spray this tumbleweed white, then paint these egg shells blue and hang them on it. We'll make a picturesque candle holder out of crooked manzanita. Then I'll spray . . ."

Bart stopped her again with a kiss. "You've convinced me that we'll have the snazziest decorations and I have the prettiest wife on the whole desert."

"When we're through," Peggy murmured, "there'll be two good managers in our family, not just one, and we'll give Santa Claus a hand."

Bart sighed happily. "Hand me that can of spray."

miralty's date line, near the point, the line curves east and west of the 180th meridian in such a way that it lies always in the ocean.

But for us, of course, the New Year begins with the roar in Times Square. Sitting comfortably by TV sets, gathered with our friends, wherever we may be, it is the New Year-and who's to care if it is eight hours old in Moscow, six hours old in Paris, or two hours old in Buenos Aires?

Holiday History

In Norway, there is always an almond hidden in the Christmas pudding and the finder, according to tradition, will be married during the next year. In Sweden, the Yule table is laden with buns, cakes and loaves of varying shapes and colors. Roast goose is the holiday menu headliner for the Danes, who stuff the bird with apples and prunes, and serve it with cabbage and potatoes.



Once more the Christmas message is renewed in our hearts. May the spirit-lifting joys of the season be yours.

HUGHES GROCERY

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She clung to him. "Hush! We're quarreling. We must economize, even if we celebrate Christmas without a tree."

ting, reveling in the relaxing atmosphere of palms, Joshua's, endless sand, and week-ends at Lake Tahoe and Las Vegas. That and each other had been enough until they had begun thinking of family, friends and winter with a certain homesickness.

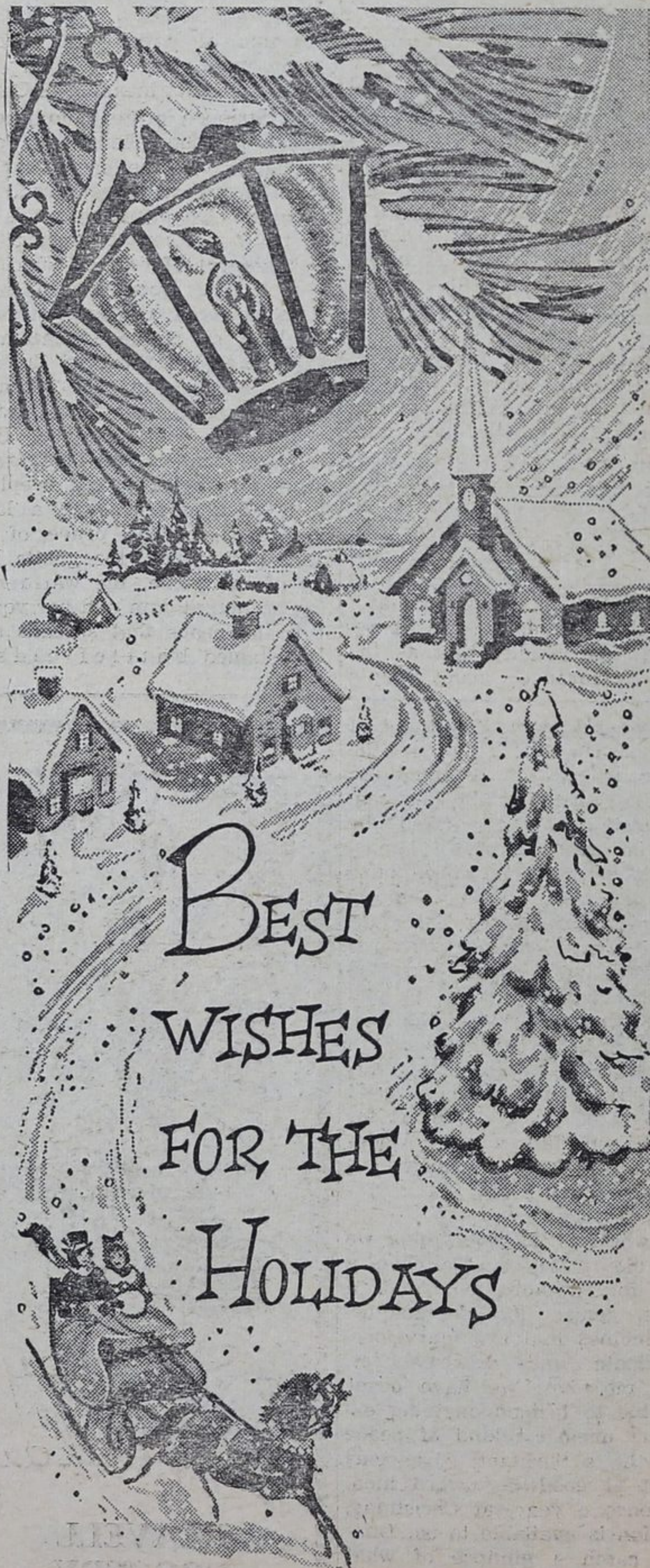


Add to the good things of Christmas - our wishes for a joyous holiday!

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