

Christmas also for others

As I sat down to write this Christmas message, one thing returned to me... what joy is there at Christmas for "others"?

By others, I remembered folks who have known tragedy in 1986: families who have lost a mother or father; couple who have seen their lives ripped apart by a separation or divorce; those among us who have become unemployed and face an uncertain future.

More who have suffered from gossip mongers; those who are prisoners; those experiencing severe mental or physical illness; those trapped by alcoholism or drugs; those in families split apart by the generation gap; those who are lonely, the alienated young and the forgotten elderly.

Somehow our tinsel and candy canes become trivial beside the pain of those others, who cannot anticipate a joyous Christmas.

Even our carols lend a festive air which seems bizarre for those who feel anguish and sorrow.

Somehow, we add to the pain of these others by expecting them to be merry and happy... when their hearts are heavy and laden with guilt. What about the others?

Well, perhaps we need to re-examine what is the true joy of Christmas, beyond the carols, manger scenes, carol services, Ho-hoing Santas....

Luke 2:10-11 gives us the focus for the joy of Christmas. the angel proclaims a joyous message: "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all the people. For unto you is born this day in

the City of David, a SAVIOUR who is Christ the Lord."

Behing this proclamation is a timeless statement about joy for the others, whose Christmas bay not be as bright and fulfilling as that of their neighbors.

The Babe of Bethlehem- the Eternal Word- enters our world fully as the incarnate Chrst. His arrival is joyous because it embraces the whole of our human condition.

Jesus came into a world of Darkness, shrouded in apin and sorrow.

His mission was to permeate the loneliness, the sorrow, the depression, the evil of troubled hearts.

He- the light of the World- came and left this Earth in a state of vulnerability.

The helpless child in a manger would grow into manhood to be rejected, condemned, abandoned and left to die on a simple cross.

He lighted the way to tough gladness and resolved hope- not by sugar coated platitudes of isolated Faith, but by the betterness of knowing that humanness is often painful, sometimes bewildering and always uncertain.

The power of Christ is the power of transformation- making possible a change in our perspective through growth.

We often cannot grow by making Christ less than He is... a kind of holy sedative swallowed at Yuletide to make us feel good inside.

No, the real Jesus Christ is an everyday companion, a person who is truly alive and present in all of our experiences.

Best of all, His power of transformation works! In spite of His destruction, despair, helplessness and loneliness on a rugged cross, He rises above the human condition of pain and trial, to give us the hope of the Empty Tomb.

Christ's resurrection is ours to claim, if we can accept Him at His Word- a loving Saviour who saves us by His Healing Presence in our lives.

The Baby Jesus of Christmas is, like ourselves, vulnerable and human... and points to Easter. Between these two events resides a life of struggle for Jesus, where He comes to embrace a holistic view of what it means to be human.

Because Jesus Christ, as our Incarnate Lord cares for each on of us. He acts and He suffers for us.

He conquers with us and for us... not simply at Christmas, but on each day of the year.

Our joy should be full in this festive season for all of us- regardless of what point we have achieved in our spiritual journey.

But this joy is not simply bottled up in a sentimentalized infant Jesus in a manger... this joy is pervasive in the awareness that the Star of Bethlehem points to a realistic life, which will

bring sorrow and sadness to accompany the happiness, mirth and wrnth of a Christmas celebration.

This year, let us show Christ's love to those others who feel alienated by our celebrations.

Supporting them in seeing the toughness of joyousness, will

strengthen them to seek out "The Light of the world" in their time of Darkness.

May God's Blessing be upon all of us this joyous Christmas, especially those others who feel low and cut off from our parties and carol singing.

Bill LeGrand.

Greetings for Christmas

May the Christmas gifts of joy and peace be yours always.



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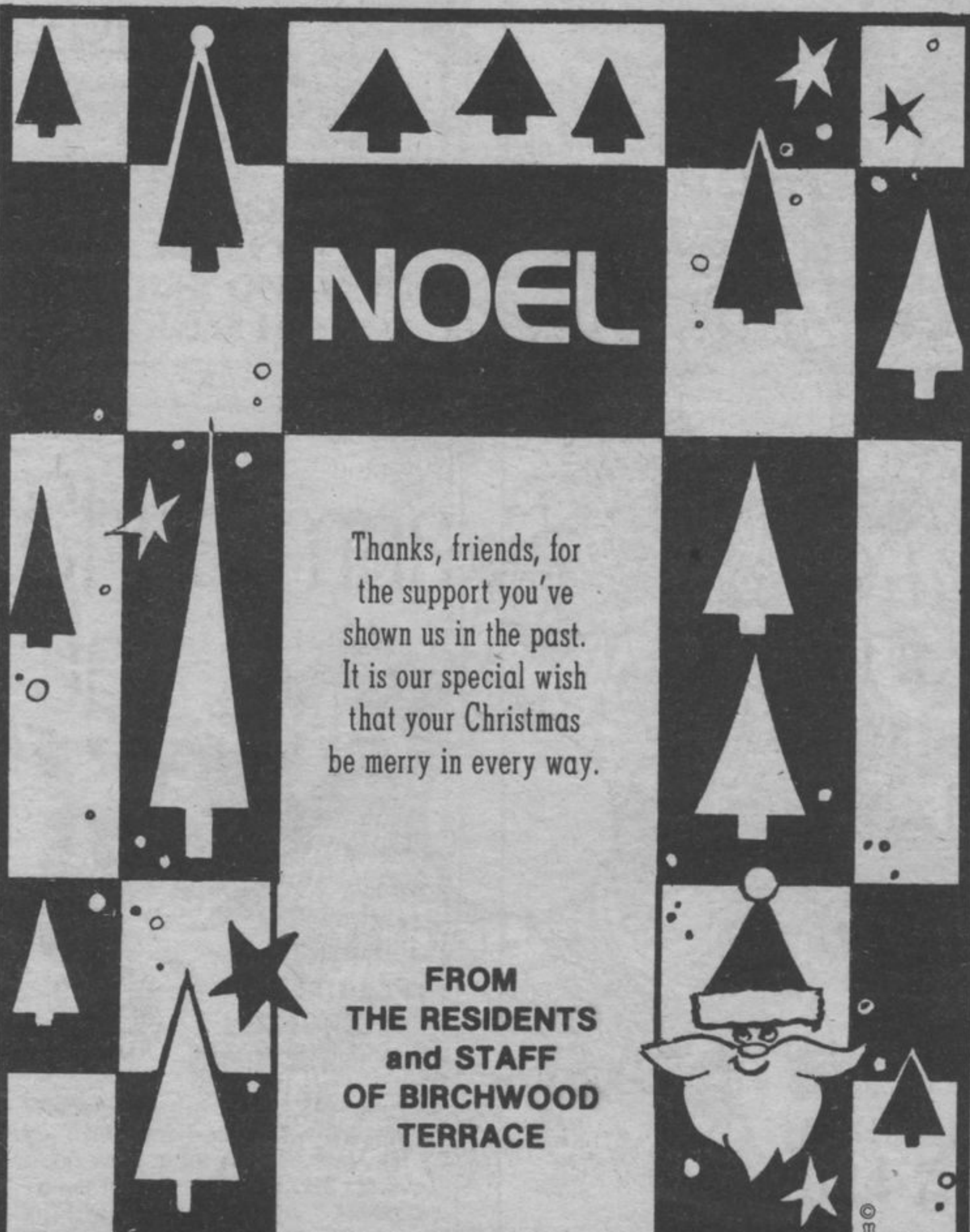


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