

THE SANTA CLAUS MYTH

Mildred J. Loomis

Twenty-months old Becky tipped over a slender vase of flowers on the coffee table. "Did you do that?" the young mother accused sharply. Was it fear or guilt that crossed the little face? "No," she said firmly.

Her mother caught and shook her. "Do you know that Santa is watching and won't bring you any nice presents if you lie to your mother?" To me the mother said, "It really seems to mean something to her when I tell her that."

Would the young mother have understood what I wanted to say to her? Did she half-believe in Santa Claus herself? How shall parents deal with this old myth? Will an adult Becky be pursued by a nameless guilt? Will she always turn from a 'Big Brother' watching her? Will she some day ask a psychiatrist, "Why do I hate myself?"

In a friend's home, David, nearing four, had never heard of Santa until his third Christmas. Neither his parents nor their friends believed in Santa; they thought it neither wise nor amusing to perpetuate the myth. Unfortunately, at his third Christmas, David was encountering Santa in pictures on billboards and in store windows. Real men, in costume, smiled at David on the streets. Neighbors and playmates asked David what Santa was going to bring him? Had he been a good boy? Did he think Santa was really coming?

Repeatedly his parents, Ralph and Rose, explained to friends that David didn't know what their questions meant. They did not want him to learn--in a few years-- that they had lied to him, so they never 'taught' David about Santa. It wasn't that they didn't believe in holidays. In December, they decorated their home, baked goodies, welcomed visitors and packages. They cut a small pine from their hillside and let David decorate it.

Shortly before his third Christmas, David was in confusion. Santa masks stared at him. A neighbor gave him a Santa book. One day, tired and hungry, David put his head in Rose's lap and cried, "There is a Santa Claus! There is a Santa Claus! Troubled and disturbed, Rose held him close.

How tell a little person that it is a myth, a delusion, a lie? How imply it is a fantasy for adults who refuse to grow up? and good business for shopkeepers to keep this sentimentality alive? How tell a little boy that millions of people are mistaken -- that life does not reward us for being "good", and that one does not 'get something for nothing'?

Rose explained over and over that Santa was something like a story. David has books with stories about animals and trains. He knows that they exist. But he has no experience on which to tie the words "make-believe" and "fairy-tale". So how could he understand what he heard? But she would try again this year, and next year, to substitute "pretend" for the pernicious myth of Santa Claus. -- From Dec. 1959 School of Living Press.

1983 address: RD 7, Bx 388, York, Pa. 17402

Position Open. For directing School of Living, a Committee would like to interview soon, a man or woman (possibly an early retiree) who is relatively free of family responsibilities and a large financial return; who has energy and commitment for carrying on the work envisioned and practiced by Ralph Borsodi. (See brief summary on Borsodi.) Study and training would be part of the first six months of 1984. Residence in School of Living headquarters available.--Staff Committee, School of Living, RD 7, Bx 388, York, Pa. 17402
717.755.2666

RALPH BORSODI, ACTIVIST FIRST, WRITER SECOND

Mildred J. Loomis

Ralph Borsodi's fifteen books and a score of research bulletins were published after he had experienced and dealt with his subject matter. He described a project after he had brought it into reality, in some cases, on two continents.

After counselling large N. Y. firms on marketing, Borsodi wrote National Advertising and Prosperity, (1926) showing that advertising was the strongest (from his view negative) educational influence in our culture.

After noting that heavy sugar consumption increased his children's colds and flu, he discarded white flour, white sugar and packaged cereals from the family diet, in 1918.

After building his Dogwoods Homestead, his Ugly Civilization (Macmillans 1928) was America's first critique of modern industrialism, supporting modern homesteading and the family farm.

After assisting Dayton, Ohio establish unemployed families on to Liberty Homesteads, he described it in Flight from The City, 1933.

After he had set up a School of Living, 1936, on cooperatively held land, via a cooperative lending agency and cooperative labor guilds, he wrote Education and Living, 1948. He prescribed an adult education defining and dealing with universal, major problems of living.

After research in the time-and-labor cost of producing food, clothing and shelter at the School of Living homestead, he published twelve bulletins (1932-1945) on building homes, gardening, preserving, milling and baking at home.

Having lived through two World Wars, Ralph Borsodi traveled in China, Thailand and India. His Challenge of Asia, 1956, showed the roots of national and international harmony instead of violence.

A Borsodi trilogy appeared in 1943: Inflation Is Coming; a unique Global Peace Plan, suggesting that the unearned economic rent of mineral, oil and fuel deposits be placed in a world trust fund for peace making; and the first of a monthly journal, Green Revolution, interpreting current events from the viewpoint of decentralization.

After initiating from 1936 to 1945, six intentional communities, Ralph Borsodi and Robert Swann developed The International Independence Institute for extending the use of the community land trust and cooperatively, privately issued money. He registered I. I. I. in Luxembourg in 1966.

After a year's experiment, 1972, in Exeter, N. H. with issuing and circulating Constant Currency, based on staple commodities, he reported it in Let's Stop Inflation.

After decades of action and writing, he called for clear and agreed-on terms in the social sciences -- Definition of Definition, 1966.

After 50 years in humanizing Western culture, at the request of a Gandhian University, Ahmedabad, India, he wrote A Decentralist Manifesto and a curriculum for adult education in Major, Universal Problems of Living.

In 1965, Ralph Borsodi established Melbourne University (Fla.) which until 1970, held significant seminars integrating a search for a good life and a good society.

In 1976, Ralph Borsodi delivered "The Moral Law By-Passed" at the annual conference of The Fellowship of Religious Humanists in St. Louis.

Ralph Borsodi died at his Exeter, N.H. home, October 26, 1977. Memorializing him Dr. R. Dewey of the Uni. of N. H. said, "Borsodi exemplified for the modern day, Socrates' declaration that 'ethical action rests on knowledge.'" Dr. Gordon Lameyer, Fay Schools, Ma., said, "Ralph Borsodi was the best teacher I ever had."