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NEWSLETTER No. 13

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NOVEMBER, 1980

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WVS/WRVS ASSOCIATION

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Editor of Newsletter

Mrs Doris Moss, O.B.E.

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NEWSLETTER NO.13

ROYAL VOLUNTARY SERVICE

Since the Association started in March 1973E it has gone slowly but surely from strength to strength and we feel is providing a useful bridge between the older members of WRVS and those still working, as well as forming this friendly link through reunions and the information conveyed in our Newsletters.

The emphasis today is on delegation in order to avoid unnecessary travelling and this means that in future the Association will be more and more working on a County basis and it is hoped every County will have a group of members who can meet more often and so enable members needing help to be more easily contacted and assisted. In this way the Association may be able to develop its welfare activities.

At the last Annual General Meeting several members asked about the "Good Companions" scheme and whether it was still operating. We have been carefully reading the Narrative Reports and find continual reference to the fact that a scheme of this kind is operating in most parts of the country, although the title may not be the same. We are including in this issue some reference to visiting and other Good Neighbour schemes. It is our hope that where possible local groups of the Association might make themselves available to their local WRVS to help when it is practicable.

GOOD COMPANIONS

Bedford has 350 Good Companions who visit regularly. One member goes to see an old gentleman twice weekly, taking with her his freshly laundered socks and helping him to bathe his feet, while they have a cup of tea together. Another Good Companion had a call from an elderly lady who had broken her hip and been taken to

hospital. She then took in the mentally retarded daughter and looked after her until the family rallied round.

Two unusual instances are of interest; one where the helper switched over to being helped. This was a farmer's wife, who on Doctor's advice was told to find an outside interest but who in the end had to have a friend found for her. Another, where the helped became the helper, was a widow who liked ballroom dancing and with a little coaxing was persuaded to attend an afternoon class; now she has got two other ladies to join her and they go to each others home for tea afterwards.

In Bedford the total home visits in the year coincides with the number of the year, namely 1980.

In Derby District the Good Companions scheme is called "A Visiting Service". There are 66 Visitors regularly visiting 93 lonely people, helping with shopping and generally keeping an eye on the welfare of these people and making monthly reports to the WRVS Office. This year an outing was arranged when some of the old folks and their visitors had a coach ride to the country.

An interesting story comes from Littlehampton. "Some three years ago a gentleman came into our office and asked 'Could we use another pair of hands?'. We introduced him to our Mr. B., who is blind, suggested he could help Mr. B. with shopping, etc. One day a week they spend doing all the things Mr. B. cannot do if he has to take his Guide Dog, Rover. This service and friendship continues to this day."

The Cotswold scheme seems to have had a number of emergency situations recently; the following were given as examples:-

"My next door neighbour was on her way to Oxford with her daughter, who had just been accepted into the University, when they were both killed in a car accident, leaving the husband and a younger daughter and son. Consolation being impossible, practical help was the only thing worth offering.

Another car accident involved an elderly gentleman seriously crippled with arthritis and living alone in the wilds with an eleven year old son. We offered support and help by changing library books, staying to chat

to him and doing the shopping for them both."

The Good Companions in Cornwall have once again had a busy year, in fact, quite hectic at times! They have had run of the mill jobs, relieving loneliness and distress, helping folk coming out of hospitals and preparing to go into hospitals and Homes, carrying out commissions for the elderly, to relieve depression, assisting the deaf, the handicapped and crippled. One woman to whom support was given, had lost her mother, her husband and son, all within the space of a year.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1980

The Annual General Meeting of the Association was held on the morning of Wednesday, 4th June when over 200 members from all over the country were present. Miss Halpin took the Chair in the absence of Lady Pike, the President of the Association. She took the opportunity to thank Headquarters for the facilities they give to the Association in so many ways and the value of being given a small number of copies of the WRVS Annual Report for distribution to members who were not in touch with their local organisation. This was an excellent way of letting people know some of the things which WRVS were continuing to do and the new projects now being undertaken.

The Hon. Secretary said it would be helpful if members, wherever possible, made use of a Banker's Order, thus saving postage on sending reminders. The number of Association members had risen through the year to approximately 1470, in addition to which the Scottish Section had 100 members.

The Hon. Treasurer presented the accounts which showed a good balance. She added, however, that this might not always be so as there were many life members who would not be paying any more subscriptions.

The Area Representatives present gave very interesting reports from their Areas; these will be reported fully in the Minutes of the AGM, which will be circulated prior to the next Annual Meeting, which it was agreed would be held on Wednesday, 3rd June 1981.

After a delicious lunch, prepared by the London Region, Mrs. Gordon-Spencer, one of WRVS Vice-Chairmen, addressed the meeting on "WRVS into the 80s" and the

shortened version of her talk is enclosed with this Newsletter.

One of the points raised during the discussion which followed was whether the Association had any men members. The reply was that there were none at the moment but it was hoped that probably by next year some men members would have joined the Association.

The Chairman thanked Mrs. Gordon-Spencer for her talk and said she was glad that she had come in uniform as it showed the older members how smart the new uniform looked.

This was followed by a film strip shown by Mrs. Kay Barker, Administrator, London Region. In answer to a question, she said it sometimes was asked what was the difference between the Good Companions and Family Support. The answer was that there was no essential difference. There were two main ways in which WRVS would continue to be needed - supporting people in their old age, particularly with rural transport and giving support to people in their own homes through schemes such as Victim Support and Home from Hospital. She stated that visual aids, including film strips, were used in training, some like those shown provided information and others explained how to set up projects such as a Mother and Baby Club and a Pre-school Library.

The Chairman thanked Mrs. Barker for her interesting commentary and Mrs. Wilkinson and her helpers for the splendid lunch they had provided.

Dame Frances Clode moved a vote of thanks to the Chairman, which was carried with acclaim.

REPORTS FROM AREA REPRESENTATIVES

London Region

Mrs. Kay Barker, newly appointed Regional Administrator, welcomed the 30 members who had attended and the meeting was addressed by Mrs. Janet Wier, Area Organiser for S.E. Division - Area 2 - who spoke about the development of the Victim Support scheme. There is no doubt that at these get-togethers many old friendships are revived and prosper.

Mrs. Sanderson

North West Division - Area 4 Cheshire and Merseyside

Owing to a number of Workshops and other meetings being held in the County Offices it has not been possible to arrange a get-together of members as had been planned. However, it is hoped that in 1981 small meetings will be held in various parts of the Area so that travelling will be easier and less expensive.

Mrs. Preston

Midlands Division - Area 1 West Midlands Counties

Warwickshire The membership of the Warwickshire Group grows steadily, if slowly. The lack of knowledge of the Association available to the older, retired members of WRVS, because the publication of the monthly WRVS bulletin has been discontinued, is the main reason for membership of these groups being comparatively low. So far Warwickshire members have had two meetings a year, at different venues; these were informal luncheons which have been well attended.

Mrs. Fenson
County Representative

Midlands Division - Area 2 East Midlands Counties

Derbyshire On Wednesday, 2nd June 1980, Miss Halpin, Chairman of the WVS/WRVS Association, attended the Annual Meeting and Outing of the Derbyshire Association held at Buxton. She explained the objects of the National Association against the background of what WRVS today was trying to do to help Local Authorities and the community in general to meet the ever-changing needs of the day. She said that the more legislation there was to help people, the more need for voluntary effort to integrate with the statutory bodies. After the meeting Miss Halpin presented medals to a number of both past and present members.

Home Counties/Anglia Division

Area 1 - Home Counties

Cambridgeshire is doing well. We have had two jolly tea parties, one in Cambridge and the second in Huntingdon, starting with a 'bring and buy' sale, followed by a film show of local interest and a super tea. Members from Huntingdon showed real interest and initiative by hiring a mini bus to attend the national AGM in London.

Mrs. Piers Currie

Hertfordshire membership has increased during the year. A reunion was held at the Area Organiser's home, 16 out of 24 attended and had a happy time in very good weather. Everyone enjoys talking about old times and hearing from the County Organiser what is going on now. County and District Organisers do all they can to encourage members to join the Association.

Mrs. Sewell

South East Division - Area 1 South East

The main meeting held in Mrs. Swingland's beautiful house and garden was a great success and members were interested in hearing up-to-date news of WRVS from the Area Organiser. It is hoped to have a Reunion for Kent and East Sussex members in Hastings early in 1981. Miss Heffer, a Hastings WRVS member who formerly served overseas has agreed to be the Representative for Hastings and has arranged a "round-up" of all Association members and others who might like to join. Miss.J.Barnard

Midlands Division - Area 3 West Midlands Metropolitan Counties

Our activities in Birmingham have been two coffee mornings in the Metropolitan District Office to discuss plans etc. As a result a Christmas Lunch was attended by 22 members and a theatre party by 18. Finally 12 of us went on a very successful expedition to the Ness Botanical Gardens of Liverpool University.

A very small party went up to the AGM, at which I accepted appointment as Area Representative for Area 3, West Midlands, comprising six other Metropolitan Districts in addition to Birmingham.

So far, I have sent a letter to each of the Metropolitan District Organisers asking for a meeting in each of their offices, of those who would like to join the Association, so that we can discuss how we are to work.

I hope that someone in each District will organise a local group, with which I would be associated, perhaps arranging one large combined effort. Distance makes close co-operation difficult and uncertain.

Mrs. Kenrick

South West Division

Avon On September 25th a 'Get-Together' for Avon County members was held at the Avon County Office.

Thirty one members were present and all were delighted to hear Mrs. Gordon-Spencer speak on "WRVS - into the Eighties".

The other highlight of the meeting was the presentation of a WRVS badge to Mrs. Helen Daniel, known as the 'Chip Queen' of Lancaster during the War. This because she was responsible for turning not one, but many tons of potatoes into chips for the troops. She is now resident in a nursing home in Bath, and on one of the regular visits made to her by the Area Representative, she bemoaned the fact that she no longer possessed a WRVS badge. Hence the presentation.

Mrs. K.M. Barker

Gloucestershire A well attended and successful Annual Reunion Garden Meeting was held in July at the home of the County Representative. The members were delighted to welcome Dame Frances Clode, Miss Mary Gray - former Regional Administrator of the West Midlands - and Miss Cicely Aymer, at one time the Organiser of the County of London and later Administrator at Scottish H.Q.

In the morning Dame Frances gave a comprehensive report of the National AGM; Mrs. K.Barker told of the news in the S.W.Region and Mrs. Morris described the work being carried out in the County. In the afternoon the new County Director of Social Services gave an interesting account of new developments in his field.

Earlier in the year a Gloucestershire member of the Association, Mrs. S.V.Hanson, attained her 100th birthday. On the great day she received in the Old People's Home in which she lived, a congratulatory telegram from Her Majesty the Queen. The District Organiser called on her and found her well and mentally alert, enjoying her many gifts of flowers and cards.

We have recently heard of her death.

Mrs. Littlewood

County Representative

Somerset

The delightful home of the Somerset County Organiser, at the foot of the Quantocks was the setting for the September meeting. The weather was good enough to allow groups to gather on the lawn, chatting vigorously, renewing old friendships and making new ones.

After tea, the County Organiser talked about the history of the house, especially the historic Georgian porch which at one time had graced the front of the former WRVS County Office in Taunton and had been 'rescued' and placed on its present site. Members were also told about the two rosemary bushes in the garden, grown from a cutting given to her by Lady Reading - the bushes were named Stella and Humility!

Mrs. Wigfield - County Representative

Wales

South and Mid-Glamorgan Groups have a good Autumn programme, working together.

August - Coffee and Chat; September - Visit to a Glass Factory; October - Meeting in a member's house; November - AGM and Light Refreshments; December - A Luncheon.

Dyfed Group are having luncheon meetings every other month at the Rugby Club and have been offered the use of a Committee Room there.

Clwyd-Wrexham Maelor Group have their next meeting on 24th October, with an illustrated Talk on China. This Group continues to hold regular meetings, one in Llangollen being arranged by a past Local Organiser. Members were invited to bring small antiques and an expert kept everyone interested by identifying and dating each in turn. In July members were invited to meet in Cefn y Bedd Community Centre, when the local members gave welcome help. Over 30 long-term WRVS members attended and enjoyed a talk by Mrs. F. Wells, lately the Organiser for North Wales. Mrs. Mowat

Scotland

60 members of the WVS/WRVS Association, Scotland met on 10th April 1980. In view of the numbers, the meeting was held in the Theological College, conveniently

situated close to Scottish Headquarters.

The AGM was followed by lunch and a very entertaining and much appreciated talk was given by Dame Susan Walker who has now joined the Scottish Branch, making the total membership up to 107.

It was generally felt that the day was an extremely successful and happy one.

Mrs. Crabbie has agreed to continue as Chairman of the WVS/WRVS Association, Scotland, for another year and the Committee was elected as follows:- Mrs. Bain, Miss Carter, Mrs. Hoy, Mrs. Grace Macdonald, Mrs. Grace Scott and Miss Underwood. Mrs. Daphne Thomson has replaced Miss Undersood as Secretary.

RANDOM REPORTS

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Training for emergencies has been intensified all over the country during the last year and the following reports show how some areas have had the opportunity of putting their practice into effect in the "real thing" and not just as an exercise.

Bristol City reports two major emergencies which the Organiser says gave the teams a testing time and showed their splendid response to any challenge. During the Riots in St. Paul's, 147 members served 6,000 meals ranging from coffee and sandwiches to curry and rice pudding to the policemen involved. The service was given for over 6 days, all 24 hours, and the members coming mainly from Bristol were helped by those from Bath, Northavon, Woodspring and Wansdyke. This emergency Call-Out was good training for the next calamity when there was a chemical spillage on the M5 at Junction 18. Two different Emergency Points were set up - the mobile canteen was called out by Avon Fire Brigade and ran for 24 hours at the motorway incident and another team ran a canteen for Avon and Somerset Constabulary at Avonmouth.

Warwickshire teams were called out in June, November and December - the first by the police in Nuneaton with a request for food and drink for 100 police and soldiers searching the railway line for explosives. This

also meant the preparation of 2 halls as Emergency Centres.

In November the police asked for refreshments for 150 firemen fighting a fire at Packington Hall. The District Emergency Services Organiser was contacted at 0200 hours and their emergency plan was put into action.

The teams had at first to work outside using car headlights until they moved into a small outhouse kitchen.

Floods in South Warwickshire brought a request for help with refreshments and clothing for a Rest Centre. Approximately 75 people, some stranded travellers, were looked after during the night and WRVS members assisted a School Meals Cook with breakfasts for the temporary homeless.

CLOTHING

As so many members of the Association will have worked with clothing, it is thought they would be interested in the following:-

(1) from Somerset County A missionary on leave from Zambia came to the County Clothing Store in Taunton asking for clothing suitable for children, particularly girls, in a hot climate. Fortunately we had a large quantity of cotton school dresses (discontinued school uniforms) in every size. He was delighted to accept them and a box was despatched by him to the Zambia High Commission in London to await collection. President Kaunda was in London at the time, and agreed that his Government would bear the cost of transport to Zambia,

(2) Emergency clothing for the "Runaways" The Director of Social Services in Gwynedd, Wales, has been concerned about the number of homeless young people being picked up late at night by the police and being handed over to the Duty Social Worker. The Social Worker has authority to book them into a hotel for the night, but more often than not, their appearance after being on the streets for several nights, is such that the hotelier is reluctant to take them in. WRVS have therefore an emergency set-up whereby bundles of clothing of various sizes are left in Residential Homes where the "runaways" may be taken for a bath and a change, to make them more acceptable.

NIGHT WATCH Two Districts have reported recently on the way their members are helping to meet a very real need as the following will show -

from Tonbridge and Malling, Kent

The team in East Peckham has been called out three times during the past quarter, in each case to sit with very old people, sick and living alone - one in his cottage, one in an almshouse and one in sheltered accommodation.

Two old people - one with pneumonia - had night sitters for three months, 10 pm to 6 am.

from South West Bristol

We have been approached to assist in finding volunteers who are willing to be called out during the evening and night to accompany volunteer drivers who operate through the North Avon Social Services and the police, in transporting distressed people and children from some domestic occurrence either to hospital or a place of shelter. Quite a substantial amount of interest has been aroused amongst members.

Items for Scotland's Information Sheets received in the last six months have been chosen to typify the lighter side of WRVS work:-

A Lion's Share During a visit to Regent's Park Zoo, a lion was fascinated by my husband who was in his wheelchair. Every time we moved down the lion house, so did the lion, and whenever we stopped, the lion did. He could not take his eyes off my husband. We all had to laugh when a man next to us said 'He thinks you are Meals on Wheels'.

Thumbing a Lift The Kirriemuir Local Organiser was delivering meals and gifts at Christmas when the hired mini bus broke down. Being a determined lady she flagged down a passing van. This turned out to be the local sweep and window cleaner who agreed to take her plus hotlocks and gifts on the rest of her round.

During the last two weeks three families whose homes were burned out were supplied with clothing. In one case the clothing was delivered to the Local Representative by the Butcher's van on his weekly round.

To very isolated areas in the Region clothing has been transported for us by Fish Lorry and Mobile Bank Van, as well as by Social Workers and Nursing Officers.

Clothing List! A lady client determined not to forget any article she might desire, had written a list of clothing she wanted. The Clothing Organiser had a look at it:- 'trousers, shirts, sheets, bits'!

WRVS in the year 3890? Comment from a WRVS member on beholding the Temple of Poseidon, Sounion, Greece: 'Just about jiggered myself in order to set eyes on this wonder and found it to be the embodiment of our Service - showing signs of age but likely to go on for another 2,000 odd years'.

THE WESTBURY RESIDENTIAL CLUB, SWANAGE

Recently, with money left to WRVS by a Swanage resident and with money added by the WRVS Trust, we have boosted our number of Residential Clubs by buying a hotel in Swanage which is in the process of being converted into a Residential Club for the Elderly.

The intention of the person who left the money was that the Club should be within Swanage's boundaries. First call upon its accommodation will be for residents of Swanage. However, people from other areas are not precluded from coming into the Club.

A great number of adaptations are being made to the original building and when everything has been completed there will be a small sea-front Club near to shops and other facilities which will make a very pleasant residence for the people who eventually live in it.

In the next Newsletter, we should be able to report further progress and by that time the Club will be established and open. If the Club is not completely full of local residents, then there would be an opportunity for members of the Association to consider making application themselves or to suggest to their friends that this would be a possibility.

Mrs. Beryl Maxwell

Letter to the Editor

The first letter to the Editor of the Newsletter arrived in July and came from Peggy Williams and Janet Jones of Poole District WRVS; we were very glad to have this and hope that others will follow their example by sending us some news.

They wrote as follows:- 'We were lucky enough to take part in the demonstration to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the Women's League of Health and Beauty held this year at the Royal Albert Hall; a moving tribute was paid to the Founder, Mrs. Bagot Stack, by her daughter Prunella, and shared by the 1,200 performers who filled the Hall.

In the labyrinth of dressing-rooms, there was an air of excitement, costumes, tissues and talc. In a chaos that bore no resemblance to the timing and precision of the performance in the arena, one splendid item was given by members who had been active since early days. We joined known friends and made new ones - all with a common bond and pride in belonging to the family of the League, another great organisation whose inspiration lay in the 1930s.'

Heard in Ealing London Borough's Clothing Department recently: 'Nowadays mothers do not want nightgowns for their children - they put them in growbags!'

A small incident was included in the Narrative Report of Runnymede District, Surrey - 'if only to show that the elderly may be slow in body but not necessarily in mind. On being asked for the name of his next of kin, one new recipient replied, Why, are the meals that bad?'

A hospital porter in Kent raised more than £100 during a 2½ hour sponsored whistle, during which he whistled his way through more than thirty tunes without a break. The money is to be donated to the Borough Green Club to pay for their annual coach trip.

ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVES

LONDON REGION

Mrs. J. Sanderson,

NORTH WEST DIVISION

Mrs. M. Preston,

Area 4

NORTH EAST DIVISION

Mrs. M. Jones, M.B.E.

Areas 3 and 4

MIDLANDS DIVISION

Mrs. E. Kenrich,

Area 3

Area 2

Mrs. S.M. Lowe,

Mrs. H. Cooper, M.B.E.

HOME COUNTIES/ANGLIA
DIVISION

Mrs. Piers Currie,

Area 3

Area 1

Mrs. E. Sewell, M.B.E.

SOUTH EAST DIVISION

Miss Joanna Barnard, O.B.E.

Area 1

SOUTH WEST DIVISION

Mrs. K. Barker,

WALES

Mrs. K. Mowat, M.B.E.

SCOTLAND

Mrs. V. Crabbie, C.B.E.

Where there is no Association Representative at present, correspondence should be sent to the relevant Area Organiser.

OBITUARIESMiss Rita Lewis, M.B.E.

Members throughout the country will be sad to hear that Rita Lewis died in hospital on October 28th after a short illness. Rita joined WVS in 1951 after serving in the WAAF during the war and later as a Land Army Organiser. She was Assistant Regional Administrator in the North West Region from 1951 to 1957 and after a short period in the London Region she transferred to Headquarters where she served in the Civil Defence, Training and later in the Regional Departments. After a short gap when she was helping her sister in the running of a School of Dancing in the country, she returned to HQ as a member of the Premises Department. Rita will be greatly missed by all her friends and colleagues as well as by members throughout the country who remember her with affection and gratitude for her help and encouragement.

We are sorry to learn since the publication of our last Newsletter of the deaths of the following members:

Mrs. B.L.Baguely, Nottingham.	Miss Diana Hornby, London.
Mrs.J.Carley-Read, Warwickshire.	Mrs.R.Massey,B.E.M., Manchester.
Mrs.E.Griffiths, Essex.	Mrs.E.L.Picton, Sussex.
Mrs.E.L.Haggard, Essex.	Mrs.G.M.Tankard,B.E.M., Chesterfield.
Mrs.F.V.Hanson, Cirencester.	Miss E.Ulyatt, M.B.E., Nottingham.

A new idea for "granny" holidays - recorded in the Bognor Regis Post in July - with grand-dads included - was of special interest. It was explained that families were found who would offer hospitality to an elderly person at a reasonable charge, thus giving a welcome respite to those who might have the constant care of an elderly relative. Equally the scheme provided an opportunity for an older person to have a break away from the younger, livelier members of their family.

QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS

Congratulations are extended to the following:-

- M.B.E. Mrs. Jane RAWLINSON - WRVS Headquarters Travelling Organiser.
Mrs. Christania Vera SMURTHWAITE - Met. District Organiser, North Tyneside.
- B.E.M. Mrs. Betty Evelyn BALLANTYNE - Local Organiser, St. Boswells. Secretary, Border Region, Scotland.
Mrs. Vivien Laura BRENNAN - Deputy County Organiser, Devon County.
Mrs. Ethel CLARK - WRVS Clothing Store, Whitley Bay, North Tyneside. (services to the community)
Miss Elizabeth Catherine GIBB - District Organiser, Enfield London Borough.
Mrs. Margaret KITCHIN - Deputy Meals on Wheels Organiser, North Wealdon, East Sussex.
Mrs. Jean Mary MATTHEWS - Meals on Wheels Organiser. Bury, Lancs.
Mrs. Jean Lucy PEARSON - District Organiser, Gainsborough, Lincs.
Mrs. Marjorie Mabel POPE - District Organiser, Copeland, Cumbria.
Mrs. Barbara Elfrida TONKS - Deputy Organiser, Met. District, Walsall, West Midlands.
Mrs. Joyce Mary WHITE - District Organiser, Gosport, Hants.

STOP PRESS

From Home Counties/Anglia Div. - Area 3 - Essex County

In May a very successful luncheon was held at Hadleigh organised by Mrs. M. Purvis the Southend-on-Sea Representative. 29 members attended from all parts of South East Essex and Miss Halpin came from Headquarters and gave a short talk on the work of the Association. 4 members from Southend attended the Annual General Meeting in London.

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - 1981

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Next year's Annual General Meeting and Reunion
will take place in London on Wednesday, June 3rd at
Holy Trinity Church Hall, Brompton Road, SW3

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A HAPPY CHRISTMAS

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and

EVERY GOOD WISH FOR 1981

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