

Hot Cross Bun

There's More to It Than Meets the Eye

Wondering how Lenten traditions are faring in the absence of strict Lenten regulations of fast and abstinence, the Courier-Journal asked staff writer Barbara Moynihan to do a little research on one, namely that long-popular delight, the hot cross bun. Her sometimes surprising report follows.

By BARBARA MOYNEHAN

After consulting the unabridged Random House Dictionary of the English Language, and learning only that a hot cross bun is "a bun with a cross of frosting on it, eaten chiefly during Lent, of British origin," the public library's information service seemed the likeliest place to turn for such unlikely information.

There we were informed of a marvelous little book called, "How Did It Begin?" and from it, to our own dismay, we learned that the hot cross bun is a survival of a pagan custom!

If we are to believe what we

read, it all began with the ancient Saxons. At their annual spring festival, they ate such buns in honor of the god, Eostre, and long before that, Egyptians Chinese and Greeks baked and ate the same sort of cake in honor of their gods.

The cross on the bun originally symbolized horns. The word "bun" is derived from the archaic description of a sacred ox or "boun", which used to be sacrificed at the time of the spring equinox; so a symbol of its horns was stamped upon celebratory cakes.

The fathers of the early Christian church realized that it was almost impossible to wipe out ingrained pagan customs, so they absorbed them.

The ox-horn marks were reinterpreted as the sign of the cross, and the buns were kneaded from the very dough used for the baking of the consecrated Host. Priests distributed them to the communicants attending early Mass, enabling worshippers to break their fast

even before getting home.

After learning the very rich history of the hot cross bun, we consulted the local experts, bakers, for some current information.

The five bakers visited agreed that the buns are definitely still a Lenten tradition, and as proof, they cited the fact that they bake them only in Lent and people buy them.

Jean Gerould who has worked at McCurdy's bakery downtown for the past 14 years noted that "they are not selling like they used to. We are selling about the same as last year but when I first came here we sold a tremendous lot of them. Things have changed," she continued by way of a justification of the decreased interest in the bun. "I guess people don't fast as they used to so don't need the break the hot cross bun used to be."

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Hot cross buns receive the finishing touch, a cross of frosting, by Norman Weichbrodt, production manager of Sibley's bakery. He squeezes the warm frosting out of a paper cone with the end snipped off.

Sickle Cell Anemia... a Major Woe

By BARBARA MOYNEHAN

Mrs. Rufus Rivers of Cady Street recounts the "nerve racking" time she had after the birth of her fifth child, Harry, almost seven years ago.

"Right from birth he had the swelling, especially in his arms and feet, and he didn't have the energy of a normal baby. It was a puzzle I just couldn't put together," Mrs. Rivers said.

Then, three and a half years, many doctors' diagnoses and much money later, a doctor ran a blood test on the child and recognized sickle cell anemia.

Looking at Harry now you see a healthy active boy, unless he has over-exerted himself in play or hasn't been drinking enough liquids. Then his eyes turn yellow and look very sleepy; and it's time for his medicine.

"He has had three such attacks since December. The cramps and swelling return and he must stay in and rest for usually a week," his mother explained.

"But now I know how to work with him, how to tell when he is going to get sick and what to do about it," Mrs. Rivers continued. "For the first three and a half years I didn't know and it was nerve racking to listen to him cry and know he was in terrible pain and not be able to do anything."

Sickle cell anemia was first mentioned in medical literature in 1910, but until the past two years, little attention has been given to it. So Mrs. Rivers' experience is sadly not an isolated case of uninformed local doctors, but an example of neg-



Mrs. Rufus Rivers and her son, Harry.

lect of a disease that afflicts one out of every four to five hundred Afro-Americans. It is found also in Latin Americans, Puerto Ricans, Indians, Asians and people of the Caribbean, according to information compiled at the University of Rochester for a Senate sub-committee hearing last Fall.

Mrs. Naomi Chamberlain, assistant professor in preventive medicine and community health at the U. of R., described sickle cell anemia and sickle cell trait as the most neglected public health problem in the nation.

"We use it as an example of neglected diseases, so it is an educational entry into greater concern for blacks' health programs," she added.

Sickle cell anemia is one of many hereditary blood condi-

tions known to be caused by an abnormal hemoglobin, which is the substance in the red blood cells that enables the cells to carry oxygen to the tissues of the body and to transport carbon dioxide away. It is responsible for the color of the red blood cells.

Normal red blood cells are disc shaped. When the red cells of a person with sickle cell anemia receive less than the normal amount of oxygen, the cells assume a sickle or crescent shape.

Cells with the abnormal shape also tend to congregate in the small blood vessels and to block circulation. Any organ system can be involved in a blood clotting crisis, but it is the bones, abdominal organs, lungs, brains and kidneys that are most often affected.

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Response 'Poor' In Special Census Of Handicapped

A diocesan census of the handicapped is going badly because of a "very poor response."

So says Father E. Charles Bauer, head of Bosco House at 1150 Buffalo Road in Rochester. Bosco House is the recently established diocesan center for religious education of physically and mentally handicapped Catholics.

The census, intended to find out who has handicaps, where they are and what kind of handicaps they have, was begun Jan. 5 with distribution of forms to the parishes. The form also was printed in the Courier-Journal Jan. 12.

"There seems to be some confusion about what the census form was meant for," says Father Bauer. "Some people are still calling it an application," but, he stressed, the questionnaire was solely for informational purposes.

"The main purpose" of the survey, according to Father Bauer, "is to find out where the mentally retarded are located, so that we can set up centers for their religious education."

When the survey began, it was expected that 4,000 replies, or 10% of the estimated number of handicapped in the diocese, would be received, said Father Bauer. Only 350 responses have come in so far.

"This spotty response," according to Father Bauer, "is

sort of useless. It means we are faced with finding some other method of attacking the problem."

Bosco House does not yet have its full staff. "We need to get and train the staff for our pilot project, which won't be set up until January 1973," said Father Bauer.

The census was intended to determine the form the pilot project would take.

A beginning on the staff has been made, however, with the appointment of Sister Sheila Kennerson, RSM, as supervisor of religious education at Bosco House. She will start work in August after completing her MA at Manhattan College.

Sister Sheila's first job, Father Bauer said, "will be to gather and train religious teachers for the retarded."

"Although Bosco House is for the benefit of all the handicapped," said Father Bauer, "it was decided by the board of consultants at the beginning that it would be impossible to deal with all areas at once. We agreed to concentrate initially on work with the retarded, which is my field, and with the deaf."

Census forms are still available at Bosco House and at parish rectories.

Bosco House presently offers special Sunday noon liturgies for the retarded and their families.