



ALL EARS!!

THE LITCHFIELD FUND WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

"OUR EARS SPAN ALL FIELDS"



AS ALL OF OUR REGULAR READERS know, *White Christmas* (1954) is our favorite Christmas movie. The reasons are simple: some special childhood memories for me with my WWII generation parents, & knowing what the song itself meant to their generation. The song, released in 1942, stayed at the top of the charts for more than a year; returning to #1 every Christmas for decades. For young men far away, *fighting their generations' evil*, & for their loved ones here at home, the song yearned for a simpler, happier time. This week, I was asked about my other favorite Christmas flicks. There are many, but among my favorites is 1944's home front classic, *Since You Went Away*.

SINCE YOU WENT AWAY: Despite being nominated for nine Academy Awards (winning one), *Since You Went Away* is far from producer/screenwriter David O. Selznick's most remembered film. Mr. Selznick, who won best picture awards for *Rebecca* & *Gone with the Wind*, made movie classics like *King Kong*, *Dinner at Eight*, *Nothing Sacred*, *A Star is Born*, *Intermezzo*, *Notorious*, *Spellbound*, *Duel in the Sun*, *The Third Man* and many more. He launched the career of director George Cukor & brought Alfred Hitchcock to Hollywood to make *Rebecca*. *Since You Went Away* begins at Christmas, 1942, as Anne Hilton (Claudette Colbert) sees her husband Tim off to war. Her tidy middle-class life is about to change, as she & her two teenage daughters Jane & Brig (Jennifer Jones & Shirley Temple) face life with husband & father away at war. The movie is actually somber in tone, as it takes the Hilton family through what many Americans were facing on the home front. Needing money & with a housing shortage, they take in a demanding & rascally boarder, a retired military man called back into service by government, Col. Smollett, played by Monty Wooley. They have to let go their beloved, wonderful housekeeper, Fidelia (Hattie McDaniel), who takes another job but returns to live with the Hiltons & help with the girls. The Hiltons face rationing, participate in scrap drives & plant a victory garden. They take the train to see Tim before he ships out. But they miss him, hit by the typical travel troubles of the day: overcrowded trains & delayed for higher priority troop & supply trains. In the train they meet refugees who have lost loved ones & escaped lands ravaged by the war. The Colonel's estranged grandson, Bill (Robert Walker), having enlisted after being kicked out of West Point, shows up, trying to make amends with his grandfather before being shipped off. While he fails with his grandfather, he & Jane fall in love. They become engaged in a tearful goodbye at the train station. The bad news begins to pile up for the Hiltons; a young family friend dies in a training flight at a nearby base, Bill is killed in action & Tim is missing in action. Jane graduates from high school & goes to work in a military hospital, helping with boys whose war wounds don't show. She tells off her mom's snooty, hoarding, black-market using friend (played devilishly by Agnes Morehead); her mother only embarrassed that she herself did not kick her friend out of her life long ago. The family is frequently visited by Tim's best friend, Lt. Tony Willett (played by what I consider one of the most under-appreciated actors of Hollywood's Golden Era, Joseph Cotton), who has always had a crush on Anne, but stands by her & the girls. On Christmas Eve, 1943, Fidelia sneaks presents, that Tim had left with her, under the Christmas tree. Seeing the presents, Anne bursts into tears. The telephone rings. It's Western Union, which during WWII, usually meant bad news. The message? *Tim is safe*. Yes, it's a sobering movie, a constant tear-jerker, with an almost soap opera quality. For that generation, WWII, especially 1942 & into 1943, was a desperate time of constant bad news. But throughout that year, the Hiltons begin to realize that they have many blessings. They have faithful, loving friends like Fidelia & Tony. From the refugees on the train, they hear stories of death & separation, they realize they have more in common with strangers than they thought. They win over the cranky Col. Smollett, yet unlike him, they themselves live with no regrets, surrounded by the warmth of family & friends. The Hiltons lived the Christmas spirit & message all year long, reflecting on themselves, their blessings & bringing charity into their home & hearts. Yes, 2020 has been a challenging year, but challenge is not new to the human condition. History tells us this is *not*

the best of times, nor the worst of times. So to all of our readers, count your many blessings & keep the spirit of Christmas in your heart throughout the new year! May you have a happy, healthy & Merry Christmas!

INDUSTRY NEWS: Baby food brand *Serenity Kids* raised \$3 million in convertible notes. Israel-based alt-dairy start-up *Remilk* raised \$11.3M to fund USA expansion from *fresh.fund*, *OurCrowd*, *CPT Capital* & *ProVeg*. *Turtle Tree Labs* raised \$6.2M for its lab-grown milk; *Green Monday Ventures*, *KBW Ventures*, *Eat Beyond Global* & *Verso Capital* participated. *Planet FWD* raised \$2.5M to grow its regenerative food platform, led by *Emerson Collective*; *Concrete Rose*, *MCJ Collective* & *BBG Ventures* participating. *Mable*, digital wholesale ordering platform for independent grocers, emerging brands & regional distributors, raised \$8.5M from *Venrock*, *Accomplice*, *Founder Collective* & *Underscore*. *Gorillas*, fast growing German online hyper-local fulfillment grocer, raised \$44M led by *Coatue*. *iUNU*, greenhouse computer vision, raised \$7M, co-led by *S2G Ventures* & *Ceres Partners*. *Beta Hatch*, meal worm insect farm, closed on \$9.3M, co-led by *Cavallo Ventures* & *Innova Memphis*; *Brighton Jones Investment Partners*, *AccelR8* & *SeaAhead* participating. *TerraCycle* raised \$25M for its reusable CPG packaging platform, *Loop*, from *Procter & Gamble*, *Nestlé*, *SUEZ*, *Aptar*, *Sky Ocean Ventures*, *ImpactAssets* & *Quadia*. *My/Mo Mochi Ice Cream* & majority owner *Lakeview Capital* closed on financing from *Bregal Partners*. *Egg Innovations* acquired *Sonoma Brands* incubated brand *Peckish*, egg with extras, for an undisclosed amount. Canadian cannabis company *Aphria* will merge with *Tilray*, creating the world's largest cannabis company valued at \$3.8B with \$685M in combined revenue. *Whole Earth Brands* is buying *Wholesome Sweeteners*, the top organic sweetener brand in North America, for \$180M, with an additional \$55M in payment in 2021. *Post* will acquire *Almark Foods*, hard-cooked & deviled egg products. *Temasek* acquired an 85% majority stake in Israeli micro-irrigation tech company *Rivulis*.

Costco reported 1st QTR increases in sales (16.9%), comparables (14.6%), eCommerce (86.4%) & net income (37.9%). Earnings rose 5.2% for *Sobey's* in 2nd QTR as sales grew 8.4% & comparables rose 8.7%. *National Beverage Corp.* (La Croix beverages) announced that 2nd QTR sales rose 8% & net income was up 44%.

Farmstead has plans for 14 new markets in 2021. *Walmart's* pilot using *Gatik's* multi-temperature autonomous box trucks will go fully driverless & expand into Louisiana. *Robomart* launched a beta pilot with an app that enables consumers to tap a button to "hail" a store on wheels within 10 minutes to shop at home checkout-free for daily essentials. *Freshly* plans to kick off 2021 with new lower-carb, protein-packed lunch & dinner entrees called *FreshlyFit*. *Blue Apron* will launch *Wellness 360*, a showcase on the wellness benefits of home cooking. *Green Spoon Sales*, food & beverage brokerage, will partner with *The Stable*, a commerce agency that supports consumer brands across brick & mortar, eCommerce & DTC channels. *Sprouts* is working with *L.A. Libations' SoCal Incubation Program (SIP)*, to pilot seven emerging brands with special attributes such as plant-based, keto-friendly & paleo. *Kroger*, *Hy-Vee*, *HEB* & *Albertsons* are among grocers who have finally settled class action suits filed against *Chicken of the Sea* for price fixing. *Ahold Delhaize's Food Lion* has invested \$212.5M in remodeling more than 10% of its stores, hired nearly 2,300 workers & expanded its local & fresh offerings. *Coca-Cola* will reduce 2200 global employees as it restructures operations & divests certain portfolio offerings.

Per *NBJ*, CBD/Hemp sales are down 75% YOY as overall impulse sales have fallen. From *IFIC*, 33% of consumers ate healthier in 2020, while 19% ate worse, with more women seeking indulgent foods than men. Consumers (28%) increased their intake of caffeinated & energy drinks while 22% (driven by men & younger consumers) drank more alcohol. Per the *Retail Feedback Group*, nearly half (47%) of on-line grocery shoppers are choosing *Walmart*. Also, *RFG* reported that consumer satisfaction with grocery stores is on the rise, as shelves are better stocked. Grocery sales rose 1.9% in November (after falling slightly in October) & 10.5% higher YOY.

MARKET NEWS: Markets rose to new records. Initial jobless claims rose. Housing starts & building permits were higher. Retail sales fell. The PMI manufacturing & services indexes continued to show expansion.

SEEDS, SPROUTS, GROW, HARVEST!

THE LITCHFIELD FUND – *Tom Malenjo*

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