

## HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS by Anne Sloan

So many images come to mind when I think about Christmas, it's difficult to sort them all out. Of course, Christmas is my very favorite holiday. When I was little and still a believer in you know who, I asked my Grandmother how Santa really got around and how did he get all that stuff done. Well, I was told, he gets here in a little airplane. If you listen on Christmas Eve, you'll always hear the sound of the engine. By the way, that was the same grandma who told me I had a little brother and I asked her how she could tell and she said babies come with tags on them. I, of course, was satisfied with the Santa Claus explanation and actually thought I heard that plane.

Most children can't wait for Christmas morning. We couldn't wait for Christmas Eve at Grandma's house. All the presents were opened on Christmas Eve. When we arrived for the festivities we were escorted past the parlor into another room and then Grandpa would close the pocket doors between that room and the rest of the house. I really can't remember what my siblings and I did while we waited for Santa. Finally Grandma would announce: Santa's been here. The pocket doors slid open to reveal stacks of presents under the tree. We all bought that story until the day it dawned on us that the Santa we thought we knew didn't really exist. I think Grandma had more fun than we did and I'm sure she was sorry when she couldn't fool us any longer.

Christmas to me is still a wonder. I love the sights and the sounds and the smells, the hustle and the bustle. Now I'm Grandma and I have to come up with some kind of a tale for our great granddaughters who are 4 and 5. Christmas Eve is at my house now and we still open our gifts then. Julie is 5 going on 15, so it's difficult to put something over on her, but I'll try. Little Alison is just 4, so she should buy my story. A new great grandson is only three months old, so he won't really care one way or the other. I'll have a couple years or so to come up with a tale for him.

We always have a buffet on Christmas Eve before the gifts are opened, so it was difficult to contain and restrain our children when they were little. That is even more difficult with 8 grandchildren and three greats.

I still love to put up our big tree that's trimmed with glistening pears and apples and a partridge on the tree top. (My apologies to the angels!)

It really is a time when faithful friends gather near to us once more and family seems more special than ever. We always take time to remember whose birthday it really is and the younger crowd takes its leave to go off to midnight mass.

James Barry said God gave us our memories so we could have roses in December. I believe the most priceless memories are those of wonderful Christmases past and perhaps Christmases yet to come.