

Christmas, Then and Now, and the Art of Aging

by Bob Taylor

When I was a kid, way back in the Roaring Twenties, Christmas was the most wonderful day in the year. Everyone I knew was rich, some richer than others. I knew no poor people and nearly all Christmas dreams came true. Then in 1927, my mother died and Christmas became just another day because much of the Spirit of Christmas, the visible Spirit of love and caring, died with her.

Until 1929, when the stock markets crashed all over the world and prosperity drowned in a sea of debt, the toys and other gifts from Santa continued to arrive. But Christmas was not the same. Without Mom, demonstrations of love and happiness were few in number, and the new sled or bike lost its luster. It was then I learned that it is neither Christmas nor "things" that make me happy: it is the presence of the Christmas Spirit, and the expressions of love and caring that create happiness.

Then as I got a little older I learned that what made my mother happy was giving, not receiving. So, when my kids were little, I determined Mom was right again, because I felt the same happiness when I gave to my kids that she felt when she gave to my brother and me. Life is a learning experience. The laughter and other expressions of joy at Christmas time have become the "gifts" I treasure most.

I still believe in Santa Claus, but I don't believe he works only at Christmas time. I think the miracle of Santa is giving gifts to people 24/7 and 365 days each year, including Christmas.

Santa and God work hand in hand, and never take a vacation. The gifts are seldom "things." The gifts are generally attitudes and intelligence offerings, because as we age, God and Santa try to guide us to the Promised Land here on earth.

This year, for example, I learned to eliminate the words hate, resentment, envy and fear from my thought processes and vocabulary. I no longer use those words because they do nothing to improve my life or the world we live in. Eliminating fear does not mean I take foolish risks or throw common sense out the window. I find that if I live my life with the Christmas Spirit all year round, I have little or nothing to fear. Who could ask for anything more? The results of this thinking reinforce my beliefs that all we old dudes and dudettes deserve a Merry Christmas. Life is good.