

Christmas Memories

by Bonnie L. MacFarlane

I have a lot of great Christmas memories. One of my earliest is going to my 5th grade boyfriend's house on Christmas Eve. His Mom was from Germany and his Dad was from Guatemala. They gave me a huge present and when I opened it, there was a smaller present inside addressed to a family member. The present went around to 5 people before coming back to me as a very small present. His parents worked at the local orphanage. Later on, Peter and his Dad played their accordions to entertain the kids, and I helped pass out the presents.

Christmas at my family's home was always special. We always helped Dad pick out a balsam tree which made the whole house smell like the holidays. The tree always reached the ceiling and Dad would sometimes make a hole in the barren areas and plugged in an evergreen branch. Mom would insist on putting the tinsel on one by one. Some of my favorite ornaments were antique German ones: a Santa and a paper angel face surrounded by what looked like angel hair. Mom would painstakingly wrap the presents and curl the ribbon as a last touch. The scene coming down the stairs on Christmas morning was magical. Half the presents were wrapped; the other half (unwrapped) were from Santa.

Mistletoe was always hung over the door between the living room and dining room. My family was not physically demonstrative, so I was always shy and embarrassed when a boyfriend tried to catch me under the mistletoe.

The Christmas songs and choral groups were always a favorite of mine. We sang old favorites i.e. "White Christmas" and "Chestnuts Roasting on the Open Fire" around the house. My sister and I were in the church choir and I loved the candlelight service where we sang "Oh! Come All You Faithful" and "Silent Night".

During my childhood, my favorite presents included: a globe, the invisible woman which illustrated the inner anatomy, a doctor's kit, and a big tangerine teddy bear. My sister received a white one, my brother, a blue one. We dragged those teddy bears all over the neighborhood to show them off.

Once I became a woman, giving became my focus. My first husband and I really surprised my Mom one year. We were half way through opening our gifts on Christmas Eve, when she finally noticed the larger, new TV that had replaced the old one. I can still remember her facial expressions of surprise and joy.

A most special part of the holidays is the cards. I love the letters and pictures from old friends and the variety of Christmas card designs. I also love the plays, concerts and specials on TV.

The most special Christmases have been sitting next to a significant other, watching the snow falling outside and admiring our very own Christmas Tree.