

Winter Solstice

12-03-2012 by Harry Zirkelbach

The European Continent north of the Mediterranean nestled hearty tribes warring with one another relentlessly. A land of many gods. They paid tribute to nature and strength. Record prior to the invasion of Rome is scarce. Then recording began as retiring Legionaries returned to lands they had conquered, settled there, remembering the beauties of those lands, and its women.

Winters were difficult. Clans and their families survived with difficulties, aided by celebrating mid-winter. With the arrival of the Christian era in Rome, the winter pagan celebrations merged into a recognition of the birth of Christ, mid-winter in these lands. And its emphasis on the child, the center of families everywhere. Little changed with the arrival of Luther and the conversion of parts of Europe to Protestant.

With the discovery of America and its inviting fertile land, a trickle of migrations from Europe to America began. Then the 19th Century tumultuous migrations. Each country brought their traditions to wherever they settled. America, the great melting pot, had no trouble in adapting to these varied traditions.

And the harsh winters of Europe mellowed with the industry of the emigrants, their better shelter, clothing and plentiful food. Winter solstice was still celebrated. Yet the season was more likely to be called Christmas, centering on the Christ Child, with no regard to whether the Americans were Christians or not.

With the rapid accumulation of conveniences in America, families decorated their home in December, with special attention to the well being of the children. Gifts of various value were given and exchanged. All may recall the story of the child receiving boxes of gifts on Christmas day, and after each is opened ignoring all, playing for hours with a big box that contained one gift.



Fifty-five years ago our family instituted a party on December 6, the birth of St Nicholas, allegedly bestower of gifts in Turkey during their Christmas season.



The idea was to have the children and adults share a few hours, decorating cookies, having a light meal, visiting one another without other material intrusion. We invited relatives' children and their parents the first years. It was popular. It was then expanded to neighbors in Congress Park. Then the day was split, only children in the afternoon. In the evening, parents. In one form or another it continues, as a single moment.

This December first, the gathering was held in Windsor Gardens' Centerpoint where several hundred shared four hours, cookie coloring, in conversation, reacquainting, eating, concentrating of having a good time.



1700 cookies were made a week earlier by the adults. Most cookies were manhandled that day, decorated with frosting of many colors dispensed from the nozzle of plastic catsup bottles. Then sprinkled with assorted small sweets.

All who come, engage in cookie coloring.

There, each becomes a child again, bow their head, concentrating on coloring the cookie shape chosen. To make it into their image of beauty. All witness creativity. For the child, often the first thing ever made, taking pride in transferring the image in their mind onto a

cookie.



Across all age, each is a child before the cookie, concentrating of creativity.

It is a fitting opening for the celebration of family, friendship, the creativity within all.

Those four Winter Solstice hours this Saturday satisfied all who came, painted, ate, renewed friendships. Took home their creativity on cookies.

