

CHEERS!

*By Joan Black*

No matter whether "Home" is a grungy tenement building in a grimy city, a ramshackle cabin in a rural area, a hovel on the edge of the desert, a modest 2-bedroom in a residential neighborhood or a mansion on a mountain – I venture that there is a universal conception of the ideal setting for the perfect “arrival home for the Holidays.”

Starting about the second week in December, I hear on TV a vaguely familiar, haunting little melody that starts out very softly and builds into a joyous crescendo. A choir sings in the background but the words are indistinct. A somewhat fuzzy snow scape appears on the screen and as the music gets louder, the picture clears and a team of eight Clydesdale horses pulling a sleigh emerges and trots over a humpty-back bridge, their huge furry feet schlip-schlopping through the snow. Sitting up front driving the team are two men warmly dressed in colorful scarves and bobbly hats, and between them sits a well behaved Dalmatian dog. Riding in back is a family (everyone's imaginary Family), Dad, Mom, the children, their arms laden with beautifully wrapped gifts, and tied firmly on the tail gate is a large Blue Spruce – the absolutely perfectly shaped Christmas Tree.

A large house slides into view, a nice family home, the windows ablaze with warm yellow light. A wreath graces the front door, which is flung open as the visitors come to a stop at the white picket fence. Streaming from that warm interior come elderly parents, aunts, uncles, cousins by the dozens, friends and neighbors. The occupants of the sleigh jump down and into their welcoming arms. There are hugs and kisses and back slaps and handshakes and the Dalmatian leaps from the driver's seat to romp with the family mutts. Willing hands untie the tree and the bigger boys carry it up the walkway as the horses' breath makes mini clouds in the cold, frosty air and their harness bells jingle as those big feet stomp – impatient to be led to the warmth of the barn. The people all disappear inside, the music fades and the animated scene morphs into a Christmas card as the words "Have a Happy & Safe Holiday" appear.

This little cameo is the epitome of "Coming Home for The Holidays." Yes, Budweiser has done it again – evoked memories and wishful thinking of all those many Christmases we have celebrated in our lifetime. Our own particular family reunions were probably far different from the one depicted in the commercial, but no matter, it's the sentiment that counts. Just humming along with that nostalgic little tune and vicariously enjoying that 30-second sleigh ride through the snow, pulled by those magnificent Clydesdales, reminds us of the spirit and the warmth and the JOY of the Season.