

Memories of Christmas Past *by Kay Mauser*

Long before Christmas we children would dig out our toys from the last Christmas and clean and polish them. They were put under the Christmas tree to show Santa that we appreciated and took care of the gifts he had given us. If a toy had been broken it was placed with the others in the hopes that Santa's elves could fix them. Our dolls were always cleaned and laid under the tree and Mrs. Claus never failed to have them dressed in new outfits on Christmas morning.

The Christmas memory that lingers longest for me is the tradition of leaving our stockings out to be filled on Christmas Eve. Now my stocking was short and small where my older sister's was long and big. I talked her in letting me borrow one of her stockings in place of mine to leave for Santa to fill. Christmas morning I found that sly old Santa wasn't fooled. He had tied a knot in the end of the stocking I had laid out and I only received my rightful amount of goodies.

After breakfast we would gather around the kitchen table and empty our stockings. The stockings usually contained an orange, an apple, some hard candy, nuts and chocolate creams, each wrapped in tissues, and in the top was a candy cane. We would put the candy cane aside and begin our exploration of our loot. First would be a tissue that contained some hard candy. My father would reach in his stocking and unwrap his tissue it would contain "clinkers." (Clinkers are the hard stony matter formed when the furnace fire burned the impurities from the coal.) Dad would make quite a fuss about Santa not liking him. We'd uncover some nuts. Dad would get an onion followed by much bemoaning that he really was good and why had he received an onion. And so it would go – as each of us uncovered a goody, Dad would uncover such gems as a potato or a piece of coal. And we would giggle and laugh as he would make a great deal about what might be hidden in the next tissue wrapped item. Of course, secretly we wondered if our next item might be a turnip instead of a rosy red apple. But Santa always relented and tucked in the toe of Dad's sock was a treat for which he would praise Santa and say, "He's not such a bad old geezer, after all. Everything was useful except many the "Clinkers". And we would all agree as we looked over our bounty.