

Christmas Surprises

by Liz Gibbons

When my brother and I were young we had a surprise from "Santa." My Father had seen a life size cardboard display of Santa sitting by a fireplace in a shop window downtown. He asked the owners if they were going to get rid of it after Christmas. They said yes. My Dad asked them if he could come by at closing time on Christmas Eve and have the display as they would not need it after Christmas day. They agreed. Christmas morning my brother and I liked to sneak down the stairway early and view what was under the tree. Once you reached the lower half of the stairway you could peak over the banister and see the living room. My brother was ahead of me and when he looked over toward the fireplace he thought Santa was really sitting by it. He was so surprised that he said "Oops" and immediately ran back up the stairs. Our Dad was at the top of the stairs with a big grin on his face amused at my brother's reaction. I continued on down to the opening where I could see Santa and realized it was a cardboard display. Had Santa left that?

A tradition related to Christmas dinner was my Mother always perked a pot of coffee for her and my father to enjoy with Christmas dessert. We were eating Christmas dinner when we heard a loud pop. Startled, my Mom rushed out to the kitchen. She saw that the spout on the percolator had broken off, and surveying the damage she realized that she had forgotten to put water in the percolator. The heat had melted the spout. My Father tried to solder the spout back on but was not successful.

A surprise we looked forward to at Christmas was the gift from Aunt Ellen Ann, my father's sister. She was head of the Test Kitchen at General Foods Corporation. Each Christmas the company offered a gift box that the employees could buy to give to friends and relatives. The box included the company's products such as Log Cabin maple syrup in its cute cabin shaped can, Jello, Swan Downs cake flour, Minute Tapioca, Maxwell House coffee, that vile tasting Postum, and several other products plus a special gift. We looked forward to discovering what the special gift would be. It could be a kitchen gadget, cutting board, a cookbook, or some item related to cooking. It was always fun to pull the products out to get to the special gift.