

## What Matters Most *by Vera Blaine*

From my fourth floor window on this cold day in early December I see tall trees with dark branches outlined and across the street evergreen trees are beautifully decorated with snow. The outdoor Christmas decorations are partially buried in snow, and the figures of reindeer pulling Santa and sleigh are quite appropriate. It's all too early to get in the mood for a White Christmas when my mission this morning is to write something about what matters most in life.

Everyone has his or her own sense of what is important, and it often depends whether you are young or old, rich or poor, in good health or poor health, and even where you were born. When you are a child you accept the family and the conditions where you were born. As a teenager you are most conscious of your own appearance, how others approve or disapprove of you. Being able to drive and own a car is more important than doing well in school. When you are a young adult, married and raising a family, what matters most is to have a job and pay the bills.

The older generations are most concerned with finances and maintaining good health. In my observations of other people, I sense that the majority of my acquaintances, friends and family are practical and strive to lead good lives. In my own life, which reflects that I was fortunate to be born here in the U.S. with a loving family in an area where life was simple and no one was really rich or poor. Religion played an important part for everyone in the small town in Wisconsin, population 500, with two churches, one Lutheran and one Catholic. There never was any conflict as most everyone just practiced his own faith. Many in town were related or had aunts, uncles and cousins living on small dairy farms surrounding the town. This was a sheltered environment for me and formed my own values.