

A Girl's Christmas Memories

Jeanne Lee

When my season of disbelief began, my parents had Santa phone me on Christmas Eve. He knew so much, like he was watching me. Christmas morning my doll was in a box with my name written in crayon using my favorite color. Unbelief got shuttled to a future date after that! Later I learned our neighbor Bill had made a particular call that Christmas Eve.

Christmas Eve was always spent at my in-laws with Grandpa's siblings. The boys would be begging to open their presents. They were told that as soon as Grandpa fed the dog we'd open presents. All of a sudden there was a lot of noise in the back yard and we knew it had to be Santa. While the boys ran to the back door, the front door opened, Santa's presents appeared under the tree and Grandpa was back in the living room. Once the celebration was over, we packed presents and exhausted children and headed home.

As parents of toddlers, we opened gifts, tucked most of them back under the tree, packed into the car for the two-hour trip to my parents. When we got home, the boys' father decided this was the last year that was going to happen because the kids needed to be at home Christmas day. WELL, we spent Christmas Eve with his parents, so that didn't set too well with me until I talked with my mother. She solved the issue as she frequently did. She said no matter when we got together it would be Christmas at their house. So Christmas Eve remained at Grandma and Grandpa's and the weekend between Christmas and New Years became Christmas at Grammy and Granddad's house.

The first Christmas in our new home was one I'll always remember. We never got out of our PJ's all day, ate leftovers from Christmas Eve and put together the cardboard grocery store that Santa had brought. How hard can it be to put tab A into slot B? VERY challenging and a few paper cuts from the cardboard along the way. Christmas night we watched *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*.

When the grandchildren numbered six plus parents at Grammy and Granddad's house, the living room was full and the present went far beyond just under the tree. There were rules for opening presents. We each took turns so everyone could see what the present was and who it was from. A large number just had "From G & G" on the cards, but there were Santa gifts too. The second rule was Granddad had taken up his seat on a kitchen chair in the doorway between the kitchen and living room with a large black trash bag at his feet. Once a gift was opened, the wrapping paper MUST be put into the trash bag.

Christmas is not as festive these years now that the family is gone and I live alone. I have a miniature tree one of my WG neighbor gave me and insisted I needed. There is my snowman collection, door wreaths and the Christmas village my parents bought me over the years.

Though the family festivity is not here, the memories are treasured. Above all the joy of Christmas to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ and then His *Amazing Grace* and sacrifice on the cross makes the words MERRY CHRISTMAS sweeter each time I hear them.