

Christmas Wishes

Life is Good
Rita Speer



know, I volunteer I stopped to look mas Wishes" that outside one of the to die-cut snow-time I walked by glanced at a few.

As many of you at the gradeschool. at some "Christ-were on the wall classrooms, stuck flakes. The first the display, I just

The next time, I stopped and read the wishes.

The teacher shared with me that this was an outgrowth of a study of the difference between needs and wants. Because most of us are so blessed to have our basic needs, shelter, food, warmth and love, met, we don't even think about them; we seldom think to be grateful for them. As a result, most of us fall into making lists of our "wants" when Christmas comes. We want a cell phone; we want an upgraded cell phone. We want our own TV; we want a big flat-screen TV. We want the latest game for the Wii or X-Box we already have.

But this group of children was given a beautiful gift. They understood that there are people who have little or nothing. So they made wishes for others, and their teacher posted them. They wished for a home for homeless people, for a safe and loving environment for children who don't have that, that one grandmother would make it to the other grandmother's house for Christmas and for a wig for a child who is a cancer patient, among other things.

These children got it! They understand what Christmas truly means. Does this event mean these youngsters are ready for sainthood? Hardly. But I would wager their lives have been changed. Once we are put in a situation where we must think of others and reflect on how much we have and how little some others have, we are changed. We will be aware of the needs of others at this time of the year.

I heard a story about the Shoebox Christmas gifts that brought tears to my eyes. One youngster opened a box that only had a pair of shoes in it. When the volunteer offered to get another box, the child said an emphatic No! She then explained she had been praying for a pair of shoes so that she could go to school. (And I knew without even asking that the shoes were the right size.)

I hope you all received that one special gift you really wanted this year. But as you think of Christmas in the time of getting rid of wrapping paper and boxes and taking down the tree, think of these children who understood intuitively just what Christmas wishes are all about. Peace to you.



Remembering Christmas past

Insight

John Schlageck

Seems a long time ago my mother told me about one of her first Christmas celebrations. The Christmas was 1930, and she would have been 6.

As my mom recalled the events of this Christmas, she told of buttoning her winter coat and tying a scarf snugly over her ears. It was a cold evening, and the wind was howling out of the north on her family's Phillips County farm. The rest of the family was already waiting in the Model-T Ford, ready to head to Logan and midnight Mass.

Mom would go to Mass in the parish church in Logan that night. Later, after she and Dad married, she spent the next six decades attending Mass at St. Martin's in Sheridan County.

As she grew older, her step slowed from those youthful days, but her conviction about the true meaning of Christmas never wavered. Summing up my mother's thoughts about Christmas is an easy task: Mom believed the Christmas season and the rest of the year was simply about caring for one another.

Mom always told us, "That is the ultimate Christmas story - God's love for man and our own love for each other." Words she lived by.

Eighty years ago, church was the social center for life among rural Kansas people. Christmas was very much a religious festival, and the highlight of Christmas Eve was going to church.

Going to church was a family tradition for the Becker family. All the children would dress in their Sunday best, and unless you were sick in bed, you wouldn't have dreamed of missing church.

The trip to church in the Model-T was one not soon forgotten. As Mom used to tell us, the interior was outfitted with those cloth side curtains you installed during the winter to keep everyone warmer. The trip was still cold, and Grandpa Bert always threw a lap robe over the children.

Like every other child at the time, Mom could not wait for Christmas and believed the day would never arrive. While she was in church, Santa would visit her farm home.

Although Mom never actually saw Santa, she absolutely, firmly believed in the jolly old man. And while she always understood the Christ child was the most important part of Christmas, the Becker family did a good job of balancing the two.

After they returned from Christmas Eve services, her mother would light the kerosene lamp and the children would gather around to open Santa's gifts. No electricity back then. It was still just an idea country folks dreamed of.

Growing up during the difficult times of the Dust Bowl, money was scarce. Anything that cost money was rare at Christmas. Gifts consisted of something useful like clothing and one toy for each child. There were four children in the family.

Mom always remembered the first and only horse she ever received for Christ-

mas. She named the mare Dolly and as she told us, "I thought I'd died and gone to heaven. I rode her nearly all day long."

While some of her neighbors cut a red cedar and placed it in their houses at Christmas, the Beckers didn't have such trees in their pastures. Grandpa Bert erected some sort of stand with a pole and Grandma Rose, Mom and her brothers and sister would go out and cut branches from the evergreen trees they'd planted in the windbreak. They'd bring these inside and poke them in the stand to make their Christmas tree.

On most Christmas days, relatives would come to visit or the Beckers would jump in the family automobile and drive to see their cousins.

One of the special meals on Christmas day was always pan-fried chicken. Mom always said that was the best, and her mother cooked the best.

My grandmother and Mom always made the best peanut brittle and fudge with walnuts. These had to be hidden until Christmas so the children wouldn't snatch these yummy, tasty delights.

Yes, the toasty feeling of a wood-burning stove, the smell of frying chicken and the anticipation of Christmas are memories my mother always cherished. She always said you never grow too old to enjoy this magical time of the year.

As she grew older and these stories were told and retold, she always made sure we understood the joy in the eye of the child remains always in the heart of the man or woman dedicated to caring and helping his or her fellow man.



To the Editor of the Norton Telegram, From A&N Farms Inc. In reference to the article in the Telegram entitled "Norton County may be out of millings".

In order to clear Spencer Braun of all accusations of stealing, he is in no way "Of" A&N Farms.

I am concerned only with the statements made of the millings that were stored on our property at Reager in the SE of section 35-2-25.

In the news report, Mr. Miller stated that two-thirds of the millions had been taken by the Landowners. Mr. Miller denies that this was ever said. Mr Sebelius stated that this was and will be treated as theft.

Ms. Haynes, are you willing to testify that your newspaper report is, to the best of your knowledge, a true and accurate account of the meeting? If so, I want to thank you for bringing this to light. If maybe you mis-quoted, I would like a PUBLIC correction.

Respectfully, Allen E. Braun, Vice President of A&N Farms

Your political connection

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- ★ **U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774; fax (202) 224-3514
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Getting into the Christmas mood

I wouldn't say we are totally "bah-humbugs" this year because we've been to a couple of fun Christmas parties and I've been making candy like crazy. But, we haven't had the "umph" to put up lights or decorate. And, if you've ever seen Jim's light displays, you know it's not like him to set out a season. There's a few days left so we still have time to get in the Christmas mood.

We have to remember that not everyone loves the holidays. Especially when it seems like everyone else in the world is happy. It can be a sad time for some if they've recently lost a loved one; if they are far from family; or if financial issues put a strain on relationships. Some people feel very alone. There couldn't be a better time to reach out to someone.

-ob-

Jim's father lives in a long term care facility but, he remains alert and in good spirits. Our visits always seem to bring a laugh and he looks forward to the cheese we "sneak" into him. It's a little pleasure

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



he loves.

He still has that spark for a good joke, too. I was standing beside his bed when he said, "Come a little closer."

When I leaned over, he sat up and gave me a quick kiss on the cheek. Then, leaned back and had a good laugh like he had really pulled one over on me.

Jim said, "Dad, I don't think I got any of my orneriness from you 'cause you still have all of yours." I hope he never loses it.

-ob-

We finished the roofing job we were working on but, not before Jim vowed it would be the last roofing job he would

take. He had to admit his sixty-plus year old legs just couldn't handle the stress.

The good news is Jim found a young man to help finish the job. And, what a help he was. Earl scrambled up and down that roof, like a pro, putting in screws, attaching the ridge-cap and finishing the trim. Jim had nothing but praise for him and his work ethic.

Earl doesn't know it but Jim doesn't give out compliments like that too freely. It's not every day that someone can keep up with Jim when he's working. Earl's a hard worker and he gained Jim's respect.

-ob-

Here's wishing you a very merry Christmas. May it be all you want it to be. When you're seated at your family table, gathered 'round a card table or eating alone at a lunch counter, bow your head and say a little prayer thanking God for sending his son to save us all.

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