

Down Memory Lane

By
Bernice Jensen

Dear Friends,

This Christmas 2008, our family gathering was held at the Senior Citizen Center. It is a wonderful spacious kitchen and dining room and I enjoyed a great meal and visiting with children, spouses, grandchildren and great grandchildren. All too soon it was time for those that came a long distance to depart for their homes. Craig and Pam gave me a ride through Gary and drove me around the State School for the Blind campus. My family was so pleased to see the progress there. They carried my gifts up the steps to my apartment, had a little coffee, and then it was time for everyone to leave.



I am 81 years old, and many people my age have enjoyed Christmas gatherings and it's so lonely and quiet when everyone leaves. I pushed the button on my lift chair, leaned and relaxed, shutting my eyes and went back into the archives of my 81 years, and getting in touch with the best Christmas times I remember. That Christmas I was about 3 to 4 years old. The house smelled so good with an unfamiliar smell which I soon realized was the Christmas tree. We had a real Christmas tree and the decoration was so beautiful. Mother opened a box and laid back the tissue paper and she took out a beautiful wine colored dress, velvet with bolero and white pongee blouse with a little lace. Then she put a beautiful necklace around my neck and I stood in front of the full length mirror on the closet door with my white long stockings and patent leather shoes. I looked very pretty, I thought. Mother showed Henry his new outfit for the holidays, but he was not impressed and went on playing with his truck and wagon.

Then I remember the Christmas at Uncle Joe and Aunt Ida's. It was a Norwegian meal and my father's family was German. He thought the table had some strange looking food. The potatoes looked like rice. Lutefisk and lefsa was on the table too, and poor Dad didn't know how to handle this food. He watched Jake Jorgenson, a big man with big hands, and Dad kept watching him, as he was a well seasoned Norwegian, and he picked up a lefsa. It was rolled up and dad thought they were napkins rolled up and stacked high on a plate. Watching Jake he realized it was not napkins, but after watching Jake take a roll in his left hand and spread butter on it, he figured out that was how to handle it and everything else fell into place. Then came the lutefisk and when the ladies brought it in the wall paper slide off the wall, my dad's brother Freddie commented. Another substitute was provided for those that didn't have a taste for the fish. Then there was the Christmas in the drought and money was scarce. That Christmas eve after supper, the tree looked like Santa ran out of gifts. Mother gave Henry and I a small box wrapped in colorful paper. Mother had tears in her eyes. Henry received a very small caterpillar tractor and dominos and I received two small animal figures painted gold and they were very sweet. I had them for many years.

A few years later Jackie and Viny joined our family. The relatives were there for Christmas Eve supper and gifts would be opened when the dishes were done. Jackie's tricycle and Viny's doll buggy was hid in the bedroom. They asked to be excused from the table and a short time later, they came in the dining room, with Jack on his tricycle making a noise like a motor. Viny followed pushing her doll buggy with her doll. She was all smiles and Mother said with a shocked look on her face, where did you find those? Oh, they were back in the closet and there's more, but we liked these real well. Everyone laughed. What a beautiful memory!

In the 50's, my husband Richard and I had our first Christmas with our little son Craig. He was 8 months old and the joy of our life and of both grandparents. There were 3 more children born, Reid, Paula, and Christal and 8 more Christmas's with both the Bindert and the Schaefer family. In August of 1958 our life changed as we knew it as we lost Daddy Richard and Christal. The Grandparents, family and friends helped us through.

Later three little men joined our family. My name is now Jensen and Jim, Joe and Brian and I moved to Montevideo. Oh what beautiful memories. The Pamida store was a great shopping center. There is one memory I must share with you. In the 40's I was cleaning up stairs. I opened Mothers trunk and there were gifts for everyone, mixed nuts, and candy. I went downstairs and told Mother I found all the good stuff. What do you mean? We came up stairs and she looked with in the trunk with a worried look on her face. That looks like Jackie's work. When he came in he was put on the hot seat. He was about ten years old, and he had purchased a defense stamp and when you filled a book it was worth 27.50, I believe. Jackie looked so pitiful with tears in his eyes. He looked at Mother and said, what would you rather have, 27 dollars or good memories. The next Christmas brother Henry was not with us. He passed away the October before. When we opened out gifts, it was quiet. Mother turned to Jackie and said, Jack, you were right, memories are better than money. Remember how pleased Henry was over his gift. You gave him a new billfold. That's enough of digging up old bones. Cherish your beautiful memories and forget the bad ones.

I wish everyone a Happy New Year and especially good health.