



HOLIDAY TRADITIONS

-Debbie Yost

In preparation for writing this month's column, I was discussing holiday traditions with a close friend. Tim Baker is the father of five grown children and grandfather of seven. Tim shared the following article with me and after reading it, I asked for his permission to share it with you. Happy Holidays from all of us at The Yost Group. ~ Debbie Yost

That time of year is approaching. If we lived in the Mountains or in the Northeast we would already have tasted the fruits of winter. Here in Arizona we can simply relax and put on that extra sweater or jacket.

Even with the difference in weather, we still have the traditions of the season. It is the time when we scurry around searching for just the right gift for friends or family. Priceless treasures and items from prior years are brought out from storage to make our home a nostalgic display of family history.

Christmas is "the celebration" in our home. Each year as the time got closer for the midnight deliveries our children would begin planning their devious methods to be used to outwit us, waking hours before we would rouse from our sleep. This would give them a chance to survey the landscape of what Christmas morning would be like.

Often there would be unwrapped presents sitting out. Amazingly enough there would be a few marks on them in the morning that had not been there the night before. There would also be the stockings. Ours would be creative in style but no smaller than hunting sock size. Each would yield a huge number of wrapped candies, gum, film for cameras, oranges, nuts, and the famous life saver "book" that would host eight of the long rolls of various flavored life savers.

Each year the children insisted upon a "Christmas sleep-over." Pillows, sleeping bags, and air mattresses were scattered around the bedroom chosen for this event. Seldom did they remain for more than an hour, because they were waiting to hear our bedroom door close. Once an appropriate time had elapsed, they rightfully determined that we had fallen to sleep. At this point the fun began. At first it would be quiet and discreet. It seldom ended that way as the excitement of the early morning dawned before the sun. Eventually even their excitement would ebb and the fatigue of the night would take over.

When everyone awoke in the morning there would be a short trip to someone's home that needed a family for Christmas. These guests would pile into the car and proceed to our home where, for a brief day, they became an adopted part of our family. All of their gifts would be under the tree with ours and their stockings were filled with the goodies of the

night before. Often these were elderly people we would know from church or the community. They typically did not have local family members who would be parading to their homes to bring them holiday cheer.

Our children learned to give and not just to receive. Christmas became a time for reaching out to others. We are delighted to see that the true spirit of the season still flows in their veins. Our oldest daughter inherited Santa's genes. It is her favorite time of year. Others are involving their families in the tradition of sharing. I watch as they leave boxes of food and gifts at doors that otherwise might not find the joy of the season.

Our family celebrates Christmas Eve at Amy's home. Laughter, food, and a few gifts fill the evening. Then all return to their homes to host the Christmas traditions of their own little clans. Later in the morning everyone gathers at our home where I make the traditional pancakes and scrambled eggs. There is sliced fresh fruit for those who want a lighter fare. We talk of the favorite toys and clothes received in their exchanges.

In quiet moments I reflect on Christmas Days from quite a number of years ago. My parents were not wealthy by any stretch of the imagination, but Christmas was my mother's favorite holiday. She had a Christmas Club Account at the bank to which she contributed the entire year. Her special purse in the closet held the rest of what she felt she needed. The decorated tree, presents spread into the room from under drooping branches, meals with friends and relatives, special times with those who needed some family at this time of year... these were all a part of that special time. As they look down from above I am sure there is a smile on their faces as they realize that generations already here and yet to come will be affected by their traditions they held dear and the love that enveloped those who shared these traditions with them.

It is our hope that the holiday season brings traditions cascading back into your home. Create the feelings of joy that last throughout the year. Celebrate your time and your life in your way so that for generations there will be a special glow that pervades this season of the year, filling the hearts of those who share it with you.

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