

Christmas church services

■ Church of St. Alban the Martyr, Glen Williams presents Lessons and Carols on Dec. 22, 7:30 p.m. Christmas services (Holy Communion) Dec. 24, 7 p.m. and 11 p.m. The Festival of the Christmas Day, Dec. 25, 10 a.m. Everyone welcome.

Line, Eramosa Township. Info: Pastor Bill Lewis, (519) 763-6147.



■ Ballinafad United Church holds a Christmas Eve service at 7 p.m.

■ St. Andrew's United Church holds a Christmas Eve service at 9 p.m.

■ A Christmas Eve Candlelight Service will be held Dec. 24, 7:30 p.m. for an hour of worship, carols, children's nativity and a Christmas mime at Everton Community Church, Seventh

holds Family Christmas Eve services at 5:30 p.m. and Holy Communion at 9 p.m.

■ Norval Presbyterian holds its Christmas Eve service at 7:30 p.m.

Holiday Memories



Merry Christmas stories from members of a group of creative writers under the direction of Nora Savage

The Christmas Gift That Couldn't Be Wrapped

By Ruth Michasiw

In 1950 I was taking my grade twelve at the Musquodoboit Rural High School, and for the first time ever was not at home to help Mother with the Christmas preparations. I did return each weekend as Dad would pick me up on his way home from work and we would both leave again on Sunday for another week away.

Having just turned sixteen, I was working hard at getting my driver's license. During the car trip from Musquodoboit to our home in Mooseland and again some time during the weekend Dad would supervise my driving practice. That particular weekend in early December as I drove the car home we chatted about our week and duly noted that there were only two full weeks and a couple of days left before Christmas. The weekend sped by and the next thing I knew it was late Sunday afternoon and time to go again. As I started to pack, I had to admit that I was not feeling well. Dad decided to delay leaving until the morning.

By daybreak it was most obvious that I was down with the mumps. As we discussed this turn of events, I quickly realized that Garnet my eleven year old brother had not had them. Then I learned that neither Dad or Mother had ever had the mumps. Mother was certain that she would not get them, as she had been exposed to them on many occasions in the past. Dad, well that was another story, decided that it was far too late to worry about that now, so off to work he went.

I really did not feel too sick that week so was able to help Mother with some Christmas preparations after all. The fruit cake and carrot potato pudding had been made weeks before. Together we now made the short bread cookies, date squares, chinese chews, and other Christmas goodies.

The following week I was back in school. That weekend when Dad and I arrived home all was well with our family and the excitement of Christmas was mounting. Soon it was Sunday evening with only a couple of day's work and school left, and we were on our way again. On Wednesday 23rd when we arrived back home we found that Garnet was down with the mumps and banished to the upstairs bedroom over the kitchen. He was not a happy brother or son. He was annoyed with me for bringing the mumps home, and with Dad for not having had them as a child.

The next morning, when Dad and I went out to cut our Christmas tree, we were feeling bad about Garnet having to spend Christmas in his bedroom. Then and there we decided to get him his own tree. In no time we found the perfect spruce about eighteen inches high, and headed for home with two spruce trees instead of one. Dad made a stand for both trees and they were brought into the house.

I took the small tree to Garnet's room and set it on the bedside table. Mother soon arrived with spruce boughs, red bows, tree decorations, and we proceeded with Garnet's help to decorate the tree and his room. By this time Garnet was beginning to think that maybe Christmas in his bedroom was not going to be so bad after all.

Down stairs the only decorating left was the big tree, so Mother and I did that. Garnet and I then spent the remainder of

Christmas Eve playing cards or board games. At times Mother and Nan (our Grandmother) joined us for a game or a chat. Garnet and Dad talked and joked with one another through the kitchen stove pipe. There certainly were easier ways to communicate but not one that was as much fun. As the evening went on, Garnet and I discussed just where we would hang our stocking in his small room. He certainly didn't want to be wakened by Santa. With our stockings safely draped over a chair we wished each other good night, and went to bed.

I got up just before daylight and headed for Garnet's room. He was awake and waiting for me. With the light from the hallway we found our stockings, and were just starting to investigate when we heard Mother's footsteps coming up the steps. After hugs, kisses, and a Merry Christmas she said, "Would you both like to bring your stocking down stairs? so we can all see what Santa has left. Your dad has the mumps and there is no need for Garnet to spend Christmas up here."

If the windows had been open, I am sure Garnet's excitement could have been heard at the far end of the village. He grabbed both stockings and headed for the living room. There sat Dad with a half grin on his face and a slightly swollen jaw. "I just couldn't see Garnet spending Christmas upstairs by himself," he said. Garnet and I were both laughing as we tried to tell him how sorry we were, but it was hard to be serious.

Uncle Guy, Aunt Myrna, and Cousin Max arrived on time and Christmas progressed as other years -- well -- almost. Dad and Garnet were not able to do their usual justice to Mother's fabulous Christmas dinner.

Later in the afternoon, Garnet not feeling in top form, went quite happily back upstairs to his bedroom. Saying as he left that he was going to keep his little tree company for a while. In no time he was sound asleep.

As Christmas 1950 drew to a close, we all including Garnet had to admit that it turned out to be a very special Christmas. We were always a very close family but that Christmas knit us just a wee bit closer. None the less, I was given a stern warning by everyone present, that I had better not bring anything home for Christmas next year unless it could be wrapped.

A Family Tradition

By Rita Christensen

The year was 1960. The dark years of the Second World War were gradually becoming a memory. The young men who had valiantly served their country were eagerly carving out their niche in society. Life styles were changing. Technology provided time saving electrical appliances for busy Moms. Every evening the family gathered around the black and white television set.

Early in October of that year the Ontario Hydro in our district encouraged homeowners to light up their outdoor Christmas decorations. Prizes for different categories were offered as incentives.

With a bit of cajoling and flattery the children and I convinced Daddy to participate. What theme should we choose? With last years Christmas cards (saved for a rainy day project) spread out on the kitchen table we began to have visions:

Daddy, a keen bird lover was partial to

snow topped bird houses. They probably reminded him of the swallow house he just never found the time to build last spring. The girls were enchanted by the majestic angels. The boys just hoped jolly old St. Nicholas remembered to drop in on Christmas Eve. The Christ Child in the manger symbolized the real meaning of Christmas for me. Where to begin.

We assured the boys we had it on good authority that Santa would drop by. Satisfied, they volunteered to help Dad if necessary. The girls and I could agree that angels were very much apart of a Nativity Scene. Dad, then took up the challenge of transforming the bird house into a manger.

In the weeks ahead the Christmas Creche took on a life of it's own. Two angels appeared, followed by Mary and Joseph and the Wise Men. We discovered that Dad was an accomplished artist and wood worker. The letters P E A C E, over the doorway symbolized our thanks and hope for the future. We knew our tableau was complete.

On that cold crisp Christmas Eve so long ago, while our small daughters laid the Babe in the manger we were unaware that a Christmas Tradition was born.

Each year, one of our children or their children has continued to place the Babe in the manger. One year Grandma was even asked to knit a warm cap and coat to keep the Babe warm.

May I just add; our Christmas Creche was awarded first prize that year, and for several years there after.

Christmas Preparations

By Una O'Callaghan

"At Christmas, play and make good cheer," wrote Thomas Tusser in the sixteenth century, "For Christmas comes but once a year." And what a blessing that is! For surely, nowadays, we could not survive more frequent attacks of that frenzied getting and spending with which we lay waste our days for a good three months before December 25th. Each year, more and more Christmas bazaars rivalrously select earlier and earlier dates, even starting in October, yet still they coincide with each other. Ever larger and more alluring illustrated Wish-books and Christmas catalogues tempt tots and teens, and torture their penurious parents. The threat of "ONLY UMPTEN MORE SHOPPING DAYS TILL CHRISTMAS!" hangs over our heads for an ever longer countdown.

Fortunate are the families who have decided to put a lid on the amounts to be spent, per head, on presents. Thus, they free-up any surplus cash for donating to charities, and gifts can be chosen simply for fun, not as major investments in the competitive giving of lavish tributes. For just as someone suffering a personal tragedy may wonder "Why me?", so do many folks ask themselves if they altogether deserve the good fortune of their comfortable lives, and sharing more equally within the community can comfort tender consciences. Such moderation also reduces wear-and-tear on wives and mothers, who are then left with enough energy to write proof-of-continued-existence Christmas cards to their old acquaintances, hunt out seasonal linens for use at festive meals, bake the special cakes and pies not found at bazaars, co-ordinate church-going with turkey-timing on The Day itself, and yet still find time to "play and make good cheer." A Merry Christmas to all!

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Thank you Ruth, Rita and Una for sharing your Christmas stories. The "Memoirs" writing group meets at the Georgetown Seniors Centre. For more information please contact the Georgetown Senior Centre at 877-6444 or Acton's Seniors Centre at 853-5951.

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