



Season's Greetings



from the **People** ^{Plus!} Write On Writers

SHOPPING FOR CHRISTMAS

by Elizabeth B. Bates

I've got my bag and my coat,
my wool hat and my notes,
as I go out the door
to the big dollar store.
Find the toys for the kids,
big pots with tight lids
and six pie plates for Mom.
Now for Dad, what is new?
One ice skate or two?
An axe to cut wood
to keep us warm!
And for me, a box of chocolate candy
smelling just dandy
will do me no harm!



CHRISTMAS PRESENTS

by Gladys Szabo

My Christmas presents
These gifts not to be wrapped
Peace love caring hugs



A TIME FOR FAMILY

by R. Neil Laughlin

Holiday times are of beginnings and endings,
time of outward celebration, and inward reflection.
We marvel at the past, wishing somehow it would last.
The light of the world recedes then begins to ascend again.
So in this festive season, let us apply some additional reason
by reaching out beyond ourselves, to those that are less fortunate:
to those displaced of home and/or country through no fault of their own,
to those whose worldly possessions are but the clothes on their back,
to those who may worship differently, but whose desires are the same;
A world free of wars filled with Peace in which to live, love and know.
An existence that is free of hunger in which lives can grow.
Reach out to all people, in our town, country and beyond,
because giving of ourselves will help others belong.
Freely offering support, how can that be wrong.
For lest we forget, we are need to remember
We are residents of our one and only planet.
Let us deeply hold true,
we are all part of one family,
The Family
of Man.

Christmas Gold

by Nonie Moody

There is a gold mine in our thoughts
To be expressed at Christmas time.
Of clever ways of showing love
Without the clinking of a dime.

Big smiles may seem a small gesture
But smiles can make one's day brighter
Snapping a weary soul alive
Makes his world a little lighter.

Delightful encouraging words
Can demonstrate how much you care
Not making it look obvious
But assuring words that are rare.

A simple note to an old friend.
This year been treating you okay?
The weather here has been pleasant.
How was your special birthday?

The art of giving from the heart
Has been destroyed year after year.
The joy of giving something made
Is offering gold of Christmas cheer.

MY HOUSE

by Bonnie Wheeler

Come to my house on Christmas Eve
The smell of cinnamon cake fills the air
A sparkling tree with gifts galore
Grandchildren sitting around it on the floor
Who could ask for anything more?

CHRISTMAS: IT MUST BE MAGICAL

by Ruth Foehring

It is November. The days are shorter and light fades early. The leaves hang on the trees with a quiet desperation for all too well they know what is in store for them. There will be no time to run around accomplishing the gigantic list of things one must do before Christmas, so we must start preparing NOW!!

My husband and I have been Christmas shopping for weeks and now the stack of presents must be wrapped and some made ready for mailing. Christmas cards must be written, almost two hundred of them, and a nice, newsy little letter must be enclosed, so that those who live far away will know what has been happening this past year in our busy world. Panic has hit me and I must talk to myself and convince myself that all will be fine and somehow it will all get done.

THEN, I remembered a Christmas past where doing everything seemed quite impossible too. I had begun my teaching career much later than most graduates. I had four young children, a big house and now a career and it was my first Christmas working.

Now, Christmas in my house was a magical occasion. It could not be otherwise just because I was working! The

day after Thanksgiving the children and I would always start our Christmas baking and so we began according to plan. Everything was going fine and we were right on schedule. Decorations began appearing in the house as well as in my classroom. There was no stress...yet! Excitement hung in the air and grew with each passing December day. Then it happened. Time was short and the list of to do things seemed much longer than usual. The road ahead looked very rocky indeed.

How was I to help make red and green paper chains and hang them all over the house? I couldn't paint the windows with poster paints as I did every year. Santa and his little elves and all those cute reindeer would not be looking at us and cheering us on. The baking list seemed unusually long as there was no time to even light the oven. Cards could be scribbled but what about the newsy little letters!! It was all overwhelming! What about the magic!

It just so happened that I had a student teacher. She was so competent and so organized that a great idea hit me and I found my solution to the whole dilemma. I marched into the principal's office ready to propose my ideal plan. Nelson, sat behind his desk and listened quietly while I told

him my wonderful plan. Susan, my outstanding student teacher, could teach my class while I stayed home and did what I must do. I would pay her right out of my salary. She would have a wonderful teaching experience and I would return after Christmas and really no one would even miss me. I could not possibly work before Christmas because Christmas must be magical at my house.

There was a cough and then the chair he was sitting on revolved around three times. I got dizzy just watching it whirl. Then with a strange expression on his face he said, "You have got to be joking. One look at my face told him the opposite was true. Then very, very softly he said, "Get out of here!" While the chair began revolving again, I made my fast get away.

I somehow got through that first Christmas. My family rallied around me and we carried it off in spite of all the difficulties. When I retired twenty- one years later Nelson told that story and everyone laughed and I did too. So, now having remembered this time in my past this Christmas seems like a nit. Have a nice, peaceful holiday season! Make it magical too!



LATKES

by Winnie Silverman

The traditional food for Chanukah is Latkes. (laht-kuhs). Why? As Tevya proclaimed in "Fiddler on the Roof", TRADITION! The exact reason for this tradition is that these latkes (potato pancakes) are fried in oil. Potatoes are shredded and mixed with egg and matzo meal to make the batter and dropped by spoonfuls into hot oil. I don't know what they use in other cultures where there aren't any potatoes, but frying in oil is probably observed by frying another ingredient. As we stuff ourselves with these delicious pancakes, we are to be reminded of the reason for the Chanukah celebration. Briefly, over 2,000 years ago when the Jews entered the destroyed holy temple, it was discovered that there was only enough oil to keep the eternal light burning for one day. The miracle is that this oil kept the flame burning for eight days until more oil could be made. Therefore, we indulge in yummy fried potato pancakes to symbolize the miracle of the oil. With us, there's always certain food connected to any holiday celebration. That's our tradition.



Winter Overture

by Charlie Payne

Soon Jack Frost will be nipping at your nose.
 You might even feel a tingling in your toes.
 The cornstalks shiver with a clatter.
 The barred owl says you make my beak chatter.
 The red fox gives a cough and covers its nose with its bushy tail.
 Hens on their roosts put their heads under their wings.
 They dream of summer things.
 The cat and the dog are toasty warm stretched out on the hearth.
 Bring Winter on us Mainers are tough.
 We survived "The Great Icestorm".
 The moon slides down so I'll go to rest.



WINTER SOLSTICE

by Patty L. Sparks

Nature
 dreams
 in shades of grey
 ...resting...
 neath drifts
 of unspoken
 white



HAIKU

by Patty L. Sparks

first snowflake
 falling out of
 no-where

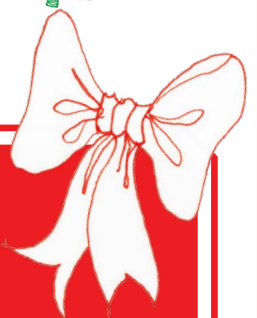
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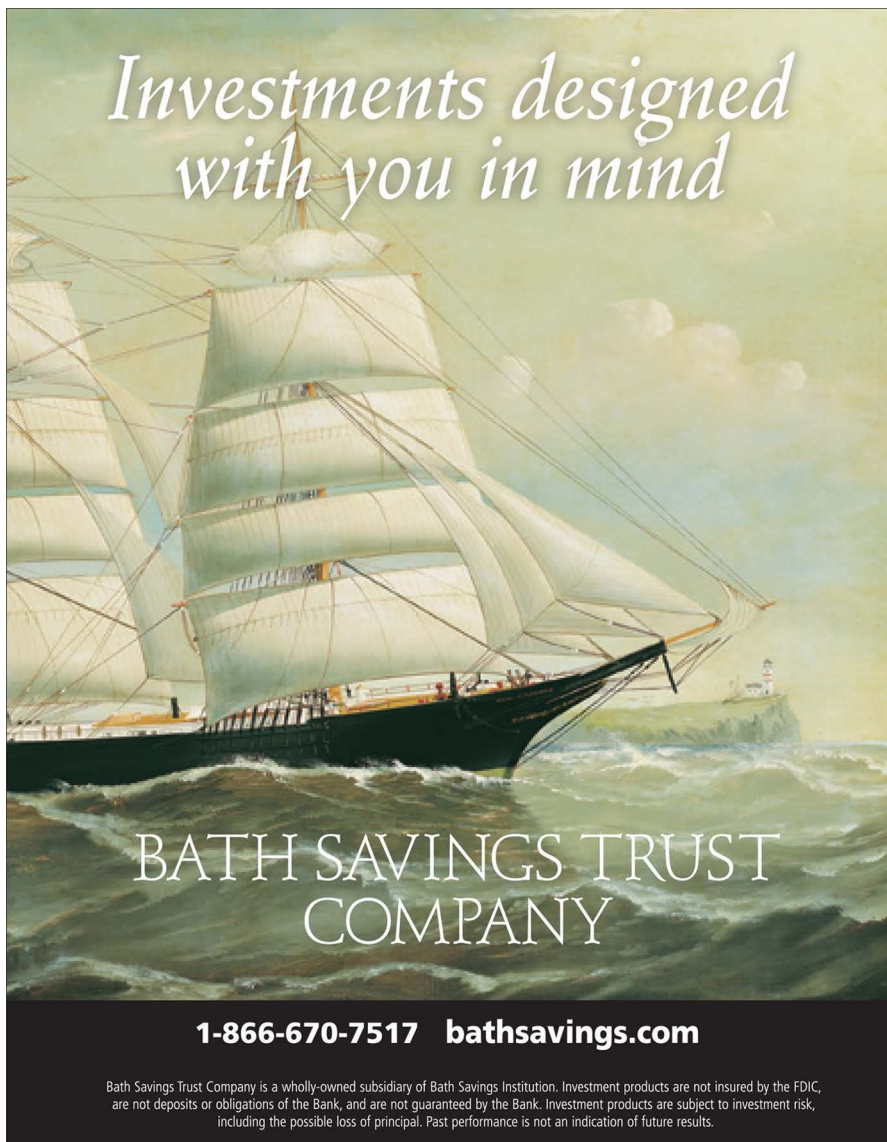
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Pearl

by P.K. Allen

It was on a peaceful Sunday morning
 just 75 years ago,
 when war came to our doorstep
 and changed the world we had come to
 know.

It started with the bombing
 and sinking of our ships
 And the loss of many lives
 as prayers rose up from our lips.

It ended four years later
 with two blasts from the sky
 That killed one-hundred thousand
 people
 and left a mourning nation to cry.

It was a hard fought conflict
 for the victory that we earned,
 But I wonder if in all the wars since,
 Are there any lessons that we learned?

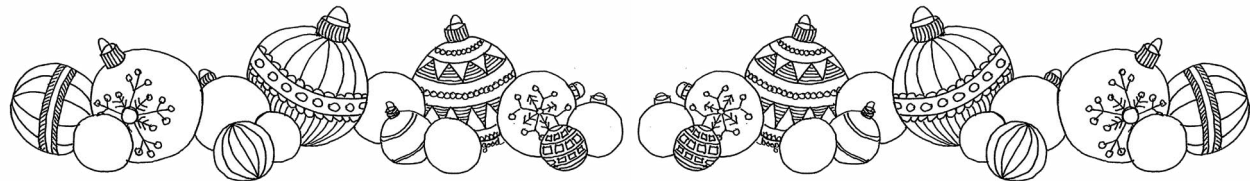
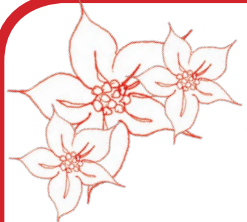
DECEMBER 7, 1941 - A Day of Infamy

by Elizabeth B. Bates

It was a Sunday afternoon in Boston, Massachusetts. My sister had the radio turned on because she liked the popular music all the time. My mother was in the living room writing letters. I had just finished my homework for the next school day at my High School, where I was a sophomore.

When the music suddenly stopped playing, and a voice started talking to us, I was surprised to find that it was the voice of our President Roosevelt. He was telling us, his fellow Americans, that we had just been attacked by Japan in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The Japanese planes had sunk ships and killed many of our people there. They had not declared war on us, so it was a total surprise. The President was asking Congress to declare war on Japan. The American people had been following news of the war between Germany and England for a long time. There were many Isolationists in our country who were loudly proclaiming that we should stay away from joining the battle against them, let them solve their own problems, they said. Now they were silenced. We had been attacked from the other side of our country. A Japanese military man said that they had awakened a "sleeping giant". He was correct.

Drafting men into the armed forces took place. They had no choice. We were at war with both Germany and Japan. Everyone had to be careful not to let the wrong person know something that could further imperil us. "Close your lips or sink our ships". It was all very frightening!



CHRISTMAS CARDS

by Betty Bavor

In 1843 Sir Henry Cole, a civil servant in the UK working as an Assistant Keeper at the new 'Public Record' later called the 'Post Office' wanted more ordinary people to use this facility. His idea of a Christmas card became a reality with his artist friend John Collett Horsley as they designed the first Christmas Card. It sold for one shilling – 8 cents and had three panels - the center panel showed three generations raising a toast to the card's recipient and on either side were scenes of charity with food and clothing being given to the poor. 1000 cards were printed and only the wealthy could afford them. When cards became more popular and more efficient printing production developed, postage dropped to a half penny. By the 1900s the custom had spread to Germany. In the late 1900s cards began to appear in America and were very expensive. Louis Prang, a printer from Germany who formerly worked with the UK card makers, began mass producing more affordable cards with pictures of flowers, plants and children. In 1915 Joyce C. Hall

and two of his brothers created Hallmark Cards. This company is still in business today after 100 plus years with grand children now in charge innovating the latest technology and new ways to celebrate all occasions and holidays with a card! Now



"Firstchristmascard" Licensed under Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons

you know the rest of the story.

Christmas time my mail box has a big red bow as I look forward to reaching for a precious Christmas card from family and friends. I have written a yearly letter for many years. Dear Abby frowns on this as it may seem boring and boastful. Many of us

live apart from each other and we welcome news of special happenings with an update of the year's events. I delight to read and re-read every letter I receive. Yes, I know what you are thinking, it's a digital age, the younger generation embraces speed and efficiency. The Christmas card process is time consuming: purchasing, signing, addressing and stamping to say to nothing of the cost. A mouse click and the holiday greeting finds its way to the computer!

I hang four foot X six inch wide felt streamers to attach my cards to so I can enjoy them throughout the season. People have family & personal pictures, meaningful cards and some have designed their own card which need to be seen and cherished. I feel their spirit with me. I guess I am old-fashioned – time goes so fast, people go in and out of your life, never miss the opportunity to tell them how much they mean to you. As long as I am able, a Christmas letter will be enclosed in my Christmas card and I'll happily thank the US postal service for it's safe delivery.

Christmas Dinner 1947 – Lowell

by Paul Roberts

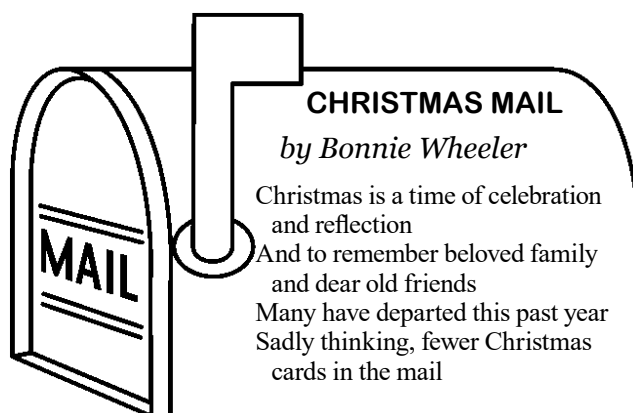
Ma was getting ready to tackle the last project for our Christmas Dinner – baking pies. She knew that the relatives would all want to take a pie home and Uncle John would want two pies because he was a bachelor and this was his only chance to get them. I noticed that he was too cheap to buy my mother and Dad anything for Christmas but neither one complained. My brother Fred and I decided to hide the two pies he 'ordered' and hint to Ma and Dad that 'other relatives must have taken his pies by mistake! We hid the two pies under our bed and put on our most 'innocent' faces. When Uncle John was told by Brother Fred that there were no more pies to give any departing guests Uncle John went crying to Ma that someone too 'his pies' and could she replace them? – (The cheap son-of-a-seacook (Dad's saying) actually wanted our exhausted mother to bake two more pies. She had already baked twenty-five pies and the big meal and was quite tired. She asked Fred and me to go look up in our bedroom to see if anyone 'put' the pies there. We knew the jig was up so Fred and me stuck our thumbs into his two pies and brought them downstairs and said "We found them Ma!"

The Shepherd

by Vince McDermott

I do not go into town much. I get very lonely up here in the hills with nobody to talk to but sheep. The sheep know a few words, mostly those I use to tell them what to do. If they get nervous I talk in a low voice to calm them down. I have had to do that a lot lately because there has been a big increase in the number of people going to town for the census. We have to cross the main road to get from the grass to the water. The sheep do not like all the activity. I will be glad when the census is finished.

There isn't enough room for all the travelers in town. But there is something else. A bright star is located right over the town. It must be some kind of omen. People say that royal travelers have come from very far away searching for some people who are staying in a stable owned by the innkeeper. I will go to see what is happening when I sign for the census. I hope the omen of the star is a good one.



The Wonder of Christmas

by Nonie Moody

On the road Mary and Joseph came.
Caesar Augustus called a decree
To register in his first census.
Their journey long with seldom a tree.

Mary gave birth to her first son
With straw in a manger for His bed.
The family had found the safest place
Wrapped Him in cloths and kept Him fed.

Some shepherds keeping watch by night
Saw the angel of the Lord, how frightening?
The Lord's glory shown all around them
They couldn't believe what was happening.

The angel brought good news of great joy
A Savior who is Christ the Lord
Born in the city of David
With angels singing in one accord.

The shepherds went to see the baby
Quickly with haste they found their way
To Bethlehem where the family stayed
And the baby in the manger lay.

Shepherds the secret could not hold
Of all they had seen and been told.
Jesus the child was alive and well
Wonder of wonders the truth was bold.

The shepherds returned to their field
Glorifying and praising God
Not quietly but with full voices
Christ is the Lord singing it abroad.

CHRISTMASTIME

by P.K. Allen

Christmas is a special time
that comes but once a year
And brings us all together
to share in joy and cheer.
It brings friends and families
who travel from far away

To visit and to celebrate
on this very special day.
A day over 2000 years ago
when a baby boy was born
In a stable in a manger
to give the world a better morn.





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A Catholic Cousin Meets His Protestant Cousin Lowell, Massachusetts – 1954

by Paul Roberts

My Protestant cousin came to stay with us for Christmas and being good Irish-Catholics we took him to the Sacred Heart Church to the ten o'clock Mass.

Grandmother McAloon filled us in on our cousin's background. He was born a Catholic but was raised by his Protestant father. Cousin Billy was an athletic – good looking boy and was fun to be with. Being nine years old he was inquisitive and friendly so when Grandma suggested that he go to The Ten o'clock mass with me- Billy said "Yes, Mam!"

When we returned home Grandma was eager to talk with Billy and me to see how Billy reacted to his first Catholic Christmas Mass. When Grandma asked "What was the best thing about the Mass for you Billy?" She was expecting to get into a 'Good old Irish- Catholic discussion on the benefits of Holy Christmas Mass and was therefore shocked when Billy laughed and said "I liked it best when the man came around and gave us money – I took a big handful!"(The collection!)

THE SPIRIT OF LOVE

by Bonnie Wheeler

It's time for a Christian celebration
The perfect gift from above
We joyously share with everyone
The holy spirit of love

CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS

by Gladys Szabo

Holiday traditions are carried on through generations.

As a child baking cookies was an important tradition. Mom and I would make several types of cookies but cookie cutter cookies were a must. We used imprinted cutters with many details. We would start early in the morning and spend the entire day baking and decorating. There were several cups of icings in red, green, white, yellow, blue and chocolate. We used paint brushes and toothpicks in order to create every detail. We would stop for dinner and hours later mom would be saying, "You need to get to bed now!"

"Just one more – I need to do this special one" I answered as I never wanted to stop.

When I married we continued my family traditions along with one of my husband's, which was "The visiting Elves." They would lurk around all day watching the children. In the morning they would receive a note with a treat if they were good. If they were not behaving they got a note saying "You better watch out!" The Elves would report to Santa. When children became 12 the Elves would stop coming.

The sugar cookie tradition continued but since my children were not as detail oriented as I, they would spread icing in appropriate colors and then put sprinkles on to create the details. This didn't take a whole day.

Now my grandchildren make these cookies with even less detail. Some are iced with sprinkles and some get sprinkles

before being baked. The important thing is the tradition continues with a few variances. On Christmas Eve in my childhood, we would invite friends and neighbors for an open house on Christmas Eve as I had no siblings and we had no other relatives in the area. Of course our beautiful cookies were displayed along with my mother's delicious cinnamon coffee cake and many more goodies.

My children were fortunate to have grandparents, aunts and uncles in the area giving us the opportunity for a festive and fun Christmas Eve dinner gathering and gift exchange.

My grandchildren have no relatives in the area other than myself. We continue to have our Christmas Eve dinner and added a Christmas story and opening one gift

each after dinner.

We sometimes invite friends who don't have family around.

Christmas Day through all the generations has been a family day. We open gifts while enjoying traditional blueberry muffins. (A tradition started with my children). We enjoy sharing our gifts, eating left over's and sometimes never getting out of night clothes.

The true meaning of Christmas and the magic of Santa has continued throughout our generations and I feel it will continue on as our family expands.

Thanksgiving and Christmas Holidays have always been my favorite time of year. Many memories bring back all the excitement of my childhood.

LOOKING BACK

by Bonnie Wheeler

If I could go back this Christmas to a childhood Christmas Eve, I'd spend more time looking at my family around the tree. I'd see loved ones who cooked the dinner, and Mom and Dad wrapping gifts with glee. I'd say "Thank You" to them all for the love they gave to me.

BAKING MEMORIES

by Bonnie Wheeler

Alaina and Raylee, two beautiful great-grandbabies joyful memories to create helping your loving Meme bake a Jesus birthday cake

Dear Santa,
I've been "wicked" selfish this year.
Please leave only one gift... a Winery!
Yours truly,
Patty L. Sparks

Christmas Cookies

by Sally Hartikka

What kind of cookie shall we first bake?
There's molded, and crunchy, wafers and cake.
Biscotti, and shortbread, delights and crisps,
Or we could make drops, formed, squares, or strips,
Macaroons, crinkles, kisses or wafer,
Scones, delights or refrigerator.
Blitzkuchen, chews, rolled, or hermits,
Squares, snaps, chews, or biscuits.
What shapes do you want, what is your wish?
Wreaths, trees, bells, perhaps even fish?
Stocking or snowman, nutcracker, doll,
Circles, dreidel, snowflake or ball?
Rudolf or Santa, a star or a garland,
Circle, a bow, a cone, or a diamond,
Pinwheel, heart, snowflake or bells,
A sleigh, an elf, a present, angels.
Now for the flavor, there's lots to choose from
Including almond, blueberry, anise or rum,
Molasses, gumdrops, jimmies or citron,
Coffee, cranberry, peppermint, lemon.
Pineapple, peanut butter, raisins or cherry,
Pumpkin, pistachio, plum or blueberry.
The best parts of baking are wonderful scents
And joy when I give cookies as presents.



THE CHRISTMAS LIST

by Bonnie Wheeler

Alaina's list was long.
I don't know where more toys can go.
I suggested only two toys this year
She thought for a while and said,
"Santa, Bring a bigger house and toy box."

DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Marcia Good Townsend

When we put tinsel on the Christmas tree, strand by strand and Carefully saved year to year?

DO YOU REMEMBER

Bubble lights on the tree branches
Bubbles rising within the tubes when they warmed?

DO YOU REMEMBER

Watching the Lionel engine and cars
Racing 'round the track beneath the tree?

DO YOU REMEMBER

Checking the dish of cookies you left the night before
To confirm it truly was Santa who left the presents gaily scattered 'round the tree and on the floor?

I REMEMBER WHEN

Santa found me even though
We'd moved and had no chimney!

I REMEMBER WHEN

Santa hid the big girl bike in shiny blue and sparkling chrome
Hidden behind the tree!

I REMEMBER WHEN

"Santa" followed us to England and back again,
but this time to Arizona.

I REMEMBER WHEN

"Santa" left beautiful
Jade and gold earrings in my stocking

I REMEMBER WHEN

"Santa" mailed me a check before Christmas
So I could buy enough gas and a ferry ticket
To "go home" to spend Christmas with my family.

I REMEMBER WHEN

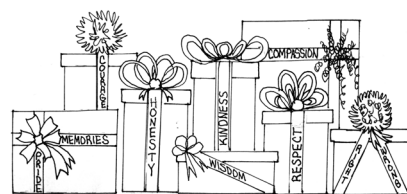
I was unable to drive "home for Christmas,"
So "Santa" wrapped my gifts and stocking and placed them in a box
For USPS to deliver to me.

I ALSO REMEMBER

The year "Santa" stopped bringing presents for beneath the tree
It was the years that Mom & Dad ceased to be.

I NOW CELEBRATE & PLAN

Each year, to "BE" Santa
For our little ones, with eyes so big with wonderment
For them to grow taller and wiser with each year blessed.
And to spread more memories for them to recall
On these special days of love and remembrance.



AMAZING GIFTS

By Charlotte Hart

Dear Santa, I need cramp-ons sharp and fine.
My winter gift? A sheer, steep mountain pass.
A wondrous gift was mine when I was nine.
My birthday wish—to climb! And Dad said, "Yes!"
Chocorua's Mountain Trail. The summit in the sky!
Clear brooks soothed summer's heat, brooks cold and wild.
Six decades plus more years came, then did fly.
"Your birthday wish now?" asked a young grandchild.
"To climb! Up Province Mountain by the lake!"
Leaves lined that trail with autumn gold and red.
Now? Tuckerman Ravine. A winter climb to take.
"Too steep! Too icy! Treacherous," some have said.
Strap on sharp cramp-ons. Do not fear. Just dare.
I've passed the timberline. The summit is right there.



A German Christmas

by Sally Hartikka

In 1960 I was a student at the Free University in Berlin. I had been given a host family in a program similar to the one Brunswick residents share with Bowdoin. My hosts were delightful, as were their four children, aged eleven to eighteen. They invited me to spend the Christmas holidays with them and provided fond memories which I still cherish today.

We went to church in the early evening, after which we returned to their home for a spectacular dinner, featuring Hasenpfeffer and a Weihnachtstrotz. After the meal the children were expected to perform...perhaps a song, piece on the piano, or recitation. During the performance, the father slipped out and went into the parlor, closing the door. Then, the great climax of the celebration: The doors were flung open, and there was the tree, radiant with real candles on them. Each person had a table loaded with gifts. I had my own, with the most marvelous presents on it, including a lovely scarf, book, box of candy, and other delightful and unexpected offerings. The family had already been so kind and welcoming, and now this wonderful surprise! I soon realized that despite all the items on the table, the best gift of all was their hospitality and friendship.

A CHRISTMAS WISH

by Bonnie Wheeler

When Santa asked Raylee what she wanted for Christmas, she answered, "A dog." I was shocked. I had already wrapped a baby doll and tea set for her. Later that same day, Raylee was looking out the front window waving goodbye to our neighbors as they followed the moving van in their car. They were moving away. She said, "Mommy, their dog, Lady, is running after their car." Raylee was crying and yelling, "Stop, stop. Let the dog in." I picked her up and promised her that Lady would be fine. I put her to bed with her favorite lullaby playing. That evening I watched the neighbor's dark empty house as a snow storm raged and saw Lady lying on the back porch waiting. "Okay, Santa, I guess you do have a dog for a very good little girl. I opened the door and whistled and Lady to came running to her new home.

