

# CHRISTMAS MEMORIES



by Erna da Burger Fex



My first Christmas memory is of my Dad throwing the burning Christmas tree out into our small courtyard. The tree had real small candles on it as did everyone's trees in Holland at the time. No wonder that made an impression on my young mind! Dad's hands were singed but he saved us from having a house fire! Christmas Day itself is celebrated as a religious feast in the Netherlands.

I remember my first Christmas in Canada in 1951. There was so much snow! My parents had very little money so our gift was a wooden sled, one present for the four of us. No one complained. I know that Mom cooked a delicious meal for us but I doubt that it was turkey because she didn't know that was traditional in Canada. We had only been in this country for two months.

The next Christmas that I remember very well was in 1952 when the Lions Club appeared at our door one dark December night surprising us with lovely toys and food. We were so excited! Father Regan had informed them that we were new immigrants with little money. He accompanied the Lions Members because they never would have located us otherwise since we lived two miles behind Creighton on an abandoned farm.

My parents never bought many presents for the five of us as they were frugal but we were satisfied and we older children understood.

A very sad, quiet Christmas was in 1960 after my brother Willy had been killed in a car accident in March. I can visualise my father just sitting and looking at the floor while Mom cried often that day. So did I. My baby sister Lillian was a welcome distraction with her laughter and needs to be fed and changed. She kept me busy. Alex and I were already dating at this time and I was very happy to see him. He was a significant diversion in that solemn Christmas Day.



In 1972, we spent the first Christmas in our own house on Moxam Drive in Lively. I was tired. Besides teaching full time with all the activities that entailed, my two daughters had the mumps. However, Alex and I were excited to celebrate Christmas in our own home. The tree was up and decorated and the Nativity stable was in a place of honour. It was important to us that our little girls understood the real meaning of Christmas even as they opened their gifts from Santa elatedly.

Our third daughter was born in January of 1974 and Christmas with a little baby was such fun as she gazed enraptured at the lights on the tree and tried to take the ornaments off. Her older sisters put them back trying to teach their baby sister that she must not touch them. Alex and I enjoyed watching our daughters interact happily with each other.

Then in 1988, our first grandchild was born expanding our family happily. The joy Alex and I experienced with this baby girl brought a whole new dimension into our lives. Christmasses were exciting and happy and noisy now that we had a granddaughter and subsequently four more grandchildren who enriched our lives. Children appreciate and look forward excitedly to Christmas and as a result of observing their inspiring delight, adults feel the enraptured spirit as well.

Christmas is a wonderful time of year and its' music enhances my soul. I love hearing and wishing a smiling Merry Christmas to family and friends.

