

Legends of Freeborn County

What's your favorite Christmas story?

Share it with someone to keep memories burning bright

by Bev Jackson

When I was recently asked that question, I paused and then related the story of the angel that has been at the top of my Christmas tree for as long as I can remember. She is made of spun glass (we called it angel hair), her wings are golden, and she appears to be floating over a fluffy cloud with rays of light shining from three stars. The price on her very faded box is 29 cents. She is fireproof and was made in the U.S.A.

I hadn't realized until just recently, how important that angel is to me. I do know that every year I admire the beautiful, lacy, ornate angles in the Christmas displays; but yet when I decide it's time to purchase a new one, those elegant treetops just somehow don't seem quite right. My angel was the first one that I ever saw on the top of a Christmas tree, and I guess this special holiday wouldn't be complete without her.

Getting back to my first question. Everyone has a different answer. Many of them revolving around family gatherings or school and church programs. I had the opportunity recently to spend Sunday afternoon with a group of storytellers. For an opening exercise, we were asked to share a special Christmas memory. The others talked of Santa Claus staring in the window to see who had been naughty, or Rudolph flying through the night sky (at least Dad and Mom saw him), of a special puppy that was to be a companion for a mother who had lost her sight, of not getting that horse that for sure would come this year. The stories went on and on, and as they talked I wished that I had a tape recorder.

Later this week, I shared some of my museum experiences as part of a women's Christmas program at a church. Then I asked for stories from the audience. A lovely gray-haired lady told of a snowy and bitterly cold Christmas Eve 83 years ago, when the youngsters were loaded into the three-box sleigh and snuggled under several wool blankets with hot irons to help keep them warm. Her father, dressed in a fur coat that cae almost to the ground, drove the sleigh while the other men rode on the runners or walked behind. When they arrived at the church, it was so cold they continued to wear their coats and boots. She smiled as she told the story

Several years ago, I went into an antique shop to purchase a table. I came out with a complete set of the works of James Whitcome Riley. My grade school teachers used to read his poems, and I love still. The other day, I decided to find out what he had written about this season and I came across the story of "Little Mandy's Christmas Tree". It's a very sad story about a little girl who was so poor that she didn't even know what a Christmas tree was. As I read this poem, I couldn't help but think of my granddaughter, Mandy, and of my other grandchildren whose lives are so richly blessed.

This year when we get together, I'm going to get out the tattered "Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer" book. It was one of the first books that I ever owned and I guess that it rates right up there with my Christmas angel. These are storied that I want my grandchildren to know. I hope 50 from now, they might be sharing some of these stories too.

What is your favorite Christmas story? Will you share it with someone?

May your holiday season be richly blessed with happy time and wonderful memories.

Merry Christmas!