

CHRISTMAS MEMORIES

By Members of the Grundy County Historical Society

I remember the Christmas of 1969 because it was a "white Christmas". My ten-day leave from the U.S. Army at Fort Hood, TX, ended the day after Christmas, and I remember tromping through the snow on Christmas afternoon to get in the car and go to Chattanooga to catch a plane on Sunday morning back to Fort Hood.

That was my only leave, and when I was discharged, I was paid for 50 days of untaken leave time. By David Patton; Palmer, TN

I always remember the year that my younger brother and I asked for bicycles. Keith and I had aggravated our mother, Edna Layne, for weeks about getting new bikes for Christmas. Being she was a single mom raising three children, (I have an older brother, Nelson), we knew there was a possibility that she would not be able to afford such costly gifts for us.

When Christmas morning arrived, Keith and I ran to the Christmas tree hoping to find the one gift we had been wanting so badly. However, the bikes were not there. I will never forget the incredible disappointment that I felt. And that disappointment was mirrored in my brother's face. But we knew that our mother had done the best she could and had provided us with several presents that were lovingly placed under the Christmas tree.

After opening our gifts, Mama told us it was time for breakfast. Little did we know that a wonderful surprise awaited us in the kitchen. There, standing in the middle of the room were two beautiful, brand new bicycles.

Every time I remember this special Christmas, my heart fills with immense love for my sweet Mama who loved and made so many sacrifices for me and my two precious brothers. By Leslie Layne Coppinger; Tracy City, TN

Often I catch myself yearning to take the trails again of my younger years, especially those of our earlier Christmases together.

Mom would send us children off in search for that special rounded cedar tree. We'd search the nearby woods or head to the old Byars Field where cedar trees grew as if

they were planted there, and I'm sure they were planted by the Master himself. We'd find that special tree, trim it all up and fill our bags with holly, spruce and pine branches for decorating the windows indoors and outdoors. That smell of greenery filled the house!

We'd gather around the kitchen table making hanging lanterns and long chains from decorative paper pasted together with flour paste mama fixed for us to use. She gave us the center lid of her jar rims she took from her Mason jars and we'd paste pretty design on both the outer and inner sides of the lids. Mom made a little hole at the top of the lids and ran a string or ribbon through it for hanging. We'd string popcorn, berries, and often pine cones Mom had painted for the Christmas tree.

After we finished making the decorations, we'd start decorating the tree. It would be full of all our hand made items. At the top, we'd hang a star Mom made from cardboard covered with aluminum foil. We'd finish it up with cotton balls and icicles we'd saved year after year. We'd all stand back and idolize the tree, doing our bragging of how pretty it was. We never had a lot of gifts around the tree like a lot of us do now, for gifts were not among our possessions. Money was hard to get. If we got a gift, we were on cloud nine and were very grateful. We'd often hang our stockings and inside them would be an apple, orange, nuts and a candy cane. Often Mom put a pair of anklets or gloves or maybe a scarf in mine. The boys would get socks or a pair of mittens and maybe a small toy of some sort.

Christmas dinner was fit for a king. Mom would always make several cakes and pies, boil a big ham and then bake it with dressing. Green beans, turnip greens, potatoes (both Irish and sweet) would fill out the menu. There'd be bowl after bowl of delicious food before us to eat.

Every Christmas our home was blessed with a gathering of the families all talking and filling their tummies with delicious food. Gifts didn't come to a lot of our minds for we weren't used too getting much. Being together, eating and sharing our time was the most important issue for most families. Dad always said getting is not the meaning of Christmas; it's our giving that counts, if it's nothing but our love for each other, Christmas' meaning is love, God's love that he gave us the life of his son Jesus, who was born on Christmas Day. By Barbara Mooney Myers; Tracy City, TN

Daddy & Mama indulged me every year by taking me to spots all over Grundy County to find spruce, holly with red berries and mistletoe. We'd fill the trunk of our car with our

treasures and bring them back to Pelham where we'd fashion wreathes to tie with red bows and place on our windows. Now that I think of it, it wasn't the decorations themselves that gave me such good memories. It was the time we spent together as a family tramping through the damp woods and bringing the greenery and the tree back home to display.

Daddy would nail two pieces of plank in a cross then nail that to the bottom of our cedar tree to make it stand upright. He would then place a string around the middle of the trunk of the tree and attach the string to the wall to make sure the tree didn't fall over. That kept the tree next to the wall and out of the way in our small house.

All my Christmases have been good, but I especially remember one from my childhood when I got a dollhouse. It was all metal, stamped with the wallpaper, bookshelves, decorations and carpets as well as the windows and shingles. There were a few pieces of furniture and a couple of miniature people to put in it. It was beautiful! I'm sure that it took my parents, Elbert & Elsie Layne, hours to put it together. I loved it so much I was well into my teens before I could pass it on to my younger cousins Barbara and Linda Morris. By Janelle Layne Taylor; Pelham, TN