



Childhood Memories of Christmases Past

Recently Alfred and I were discussing Christmases past from childhood. Alfred remembers getting a chemistry set he had to share with his brother Loyd. He wanted a football uniform but his parents didn't want him to play. This memory of Christmas was around age twelve when in junior high. However, years later Alfred and his friends played football at the vacant lot by Rosehill Manor; called themselves the Rose Hill Roaches.

The first memory of Christmas I could recall was my sister's first Christmas. She was two and a half months old. What she got for Christmas I don't remember but I have a picture of her on her second Christmas.

What I remember most about that Christmas is how excited daddy was! Santa was to bring Ronnie and me each a bicycle. But he was so excited when he set the bikes by the tree he woke us and gave the bikes to us himself. Too funny! They were Sears and Roebuck J C Higgins bicycles. Whatever happened to those bikes I have no clue.

Mother saved her loose change in an antique water pitcher. She gave my brother and me the change she saved. Then on Christmas Eve we went Christmas shopping at the five and dime stores downtown. Alfred remembers shopping at the five and dime stores for Christmas presents too. We bought gifts for our siblings. My grandparents were still living. I always got grandpa Dugas a big fat candy cane stick, his favorite.

I remember an aunt who was poor. She gave me a fountain pen she got for free at one of the five and dime stores. They gave token gifts back then. The five and dime stores were Kress, Woolworth, and Grant.

We both remember having a live Christmas tree. And we both made strings of colored construction paper and linking strips together with paste. We strung chains to hang on the tree like tinsel is hung on trees nowadays. Alfred said they strung popcorn to drape on their tree.

When my sister Molly was a year old, we started decorating the Christmas tree on my birthday December 12th. My parents gave me a birthday party. My school friends would come and we went Christmas caroling. We went from house to house and some people gave us a little change which we used to buy Hershey's cocoa for hot chocolate. Alfred does not remember being invited even though we were neighbors and played together. Those were fun days!

Alfred remembers his sister Bert gave him a coat. He believes that was when he was in high school. He still has the coat. It's too big. The sleeves are too long and the shoulders are too broad. It's wool so it is warm.

My parents bought a house my sophomore year. They gave my brother and me electric blankets for Christmas. I wanted roller skates and what Ronnie wanted I forgot. We didn't consider blankets a Christmas present even though they kept us warm. We had a gas space heater. Mother and daddy took turns getting up early to light it. I wanted roller skates because we frequently went roller skating at the tent rink on 9th Ave at 32nd street.

Grandma Dugas always made a fruitcake with apple butter, pecans, and dates cooked in a cast iron skillet. I wish I could smell it now. She helped me make dewberry pies. We attended midnight mass and I sang in the choir. O Holy Night was my solo. Christmas is always a celebration of our Saviour Jesus Christ. The gift that keeps on giving is the love we share and our faith in Christ.



Carolyn and Alfred Hebert - Era 1940s to 1950s