

Author's BAZAAR

ONLINE

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EDITOR'S NOTE

By Dean Rea

Many of us recall those joyous Christmas holidays of our youth. How our childhood friends talked about gifts they hoped Santa would bring, packages to wrap, a tree to cut and decorate, special treats that began appearing in the kitchen.

Author's Bazaar helps usher in this festive season by sharing several stories, poems and photographic images with our readers.

The childlike awe of Christmas is reflected in an image taken by Crystal Tillman, a professional photographer in Anchorage, Alaska.

Sheryl L. Nelms speaks of an enchanted Christmas in a poem, and David Griffin shares a blog entry written by Brother Jesse.

Christmas wouldn't be complete without a dog story, which is told by Louise Fusfield, and Delores Miller recalls memories of Christmas when she was a child.

A love story written by Hannah Dean rounds out our

gifts this month. I met her during a writing conference this year and read a chapter in a memoir she is writing.

The Eugene, Oregon, writer granted permission to publish the chapter about how she and her husband met and fell in love. This month they are celebrating their 47th anniversary.

New readers welcomed

If you have friends or relatives who you would like to receive *Author's Bazaar*...it's easy and free to get them onboard. We can just place them on our e-mail list. **However**, before this is done, you need to contact them, ask if they'd like to get *Author's Bazaar* and tell them we send an e-mail to alert them when it is published. Also, have them add our e-mail address to their address book so we don't get spammed: authors.bazaar@gmail.com Thanks!



Author's
BAZAAR
ONLINE

Author's Bazaar, an online hobby journal, is edited by Dean Rea and designed by Mike O'Connor.



CHRISTMAS AWE

Within each of us dwells the awe and wonder of a child throughout the Christmas season. Photo by Crystal Tillman
crystaljoele@gmail.com



The Enchanted Christmas Eve

By Sheryl L. Nelms
slnelms@aol.com

it was the
best

I was ten
my brother
was seven

we were at Gram and Gramps'
in Marysville, Kansas
with Mom and
Dad
Aunt Ardie
Uncle Dale
and cousin Larry

Gramps took us kids
out for a ride
in the snow

to look at
the lights
he said

when we came back
there were twin Flyer sleds
under the Christmas tree
for Larry and me

and Santa
was sitting in

the kitchen
with Grandma

eating her fresh
gingersnaps

Brother Jesse's Christmas

By David Griffin

davegriffin@sccoast.net

A Christmas story from Monk In The Cellar, the novel about eleven destitute monks in a decrepit old monastery in New York state. Through a strange set of circumstances, Brother Jesse finds his way to the Internet and writes a tell-all blog.

It's after compline, and I snuck down here to the cellars I like to do late at night. Just to be with my thoughts. I spent the afternoon working with Brother Winifred, who we call Kickstart. We have nicknames for each other, and

his comes from his motorcycle days. I feel badly for Kick. He is writhing in the agony of indecision. I'm not sure he has a true desire for this life, only an attraction for its different-ness. I can't tell him whether he is called to it. He either is or he isn't.


If I could give Kickstart the answers he seeks, I would surely do so. But it turns out we can never give people what they truly need. We can only help them to listen

When I listened, I found strength to live by and coincidentally the meaning of Christmas. It is Emmanuel. He is with us. There is someone who walks the path with us throughout our lives, and who shows up at the oddest times through a variety of people.

It's like I told Kickstart this morning about that sign you see all the time with the word "Believe" that says it all. Because miracles are happening all around us. There are symbols of them everywhere.

On my first Christmas away from home after joining the Ardent Brothers as a young man, I was assigned to a Retreat House in New Jersey and was serving on a four-day Retreat for retired nuns. Forty of them! I woke up in my cell-like room in the dark when my little travel alarm went off at 5 in the morning.

I knew it was Christmas morning, and I thought back

A large, detailed pinecone is positioned on the left side of the page, partially overlapping the text. It has a textured, brownish-gold appearance with many scales visible.

to all the times as a boy I had come awake on this day sure that a surprise gift or two waited for me under a glorious tree festooned with colored lights. That there would be no tree or gift this morning made me feel doubly lonely and rather sad, even at age 24.

When I turned on the light a small box wrapped in Christmas paper was on the bedside table. Opening it, I discovered a pinecone, round and open with square woody sprigs sprouting out. The touches of pinesap had dried to a white frosting, making it very Christmas-like. It was beautiful. It was wonderful. I still have it.

A half hour later I stood next to an old priest on the altar as he said Mass, and I functioned as the altar server. I looked out at the forty women in their religious habits and saw one who might have

been the eldest smiling at me. She was beaming, and her hand gave me a little wave.

Later at breakfast, I said to her, “Thank you so much for the present. Why did you do that for me?”

“You’re the youngest here,” she said. “You would miss Christmas presents the most.”

I was embarrassed. “I guess I’ll get over it someday,” I said.

“Don’t try to get over it,” she said. “Let that longing, that desire, remind you on Christmas morning that you are waiting on His grace and what you need will be provided. He is with us, and He won’t disappoint.”

You know, I can’t give Kickstart his faith. But I can give him a symbol. I can give him my pinecone.

Believe and things will happen all around you.

Emmanuel. Merry Christmas!

Christmas

MEMORIES

By Delores Miller

millerrussell@att.net

There is nothing sadder than to awaken on Christmas morning and not be a child. That is why the Good Lord gave us memories in December.

The Nicest Word, 1945

I know just lots of nice words
Long and short ones too.
But Christmas is the nicest word
That's why I say to you
Merry Christmas

The above verse is from my Christmas Eve recitation from St. Paul's Lutheran Church, South Dupont. Often snowstorms and blizzards accompanied the old 1936 Ford

Coupe the 3 miles to church so all the Sunday School children could do their proformance, which they had been practicing with Rev. Lange and the teachers each Saturday morning. Nativity play, some lucky kids got to be Mary, Joseph, the Wise Men and shepherds. Oh, what good actors we thought we were. Finale was “Silent Night” and the church lit with candles.

Marching out the council and ushers gave each child a brown bag filled with nuts in the shell, walnuts, pecans, filberts and almonds. Salted peanuts, suck the shells for the salt. An apple and orange always, candy, angel food candy, hard sweet meringue with a bitter chocolate covering.

And then there were the Christmas programs at Shady Grove and Sunrise schools. This was and still is a farming community and everyone was poor. Each child was expected to be part of the program whether they had talent or not. This was the yearly entertainment for the whole hamlet. Skits, plays, songs from the “Golden Book of Favorite Songs,” “Jolly Old Saint Nicholas,” “Up On The House-Top,” “Away in a Manger.” I still have my songbook, tattered and torn. Finally, Santa Claus came bounding in with a burlap gunny sack filled with brown paper bags filled with nuts, candy and fruit. Santa was usually Earl Christensen and Percy Mitchell.

A Miller family legend retold every Christmas Eve was from 1975. Our middle child, 4-year-old Richard was in Sunday School for the first time, and he was assigned by his young teacher, the preacher's daughter, to sing with his class "On Jordan's Bank." For three weeks, three times a day we diligently heard him sing all three verses over and over. Come Christmas Eve, off to the church he trotted with the family, marched down the aisle to his pew and promptly fell asleep dressed in his red suit coat and clip-on bow tie.

His teacher poked and prodded him to wake up and sing his song to no avail. The service mercifully ended. She dragged him back down the aisle by his toenails to a waiting usher who handed him off to a family member. Stuffed him into his fuzzy blue coat, out the door in the cold where he woke up and promptly said, "Where is my candy bag?" Now, 37 years later we still tell the story, and Richard denies the recollection.

On Jordan's Bank, the Baptist's cry
Announces that the Lord is nigh;
Come, then, and listen for he brings
Good News about the King of Kings.

Then cleansed be ev'ry life from sin
And furnished for a guest within,
And let us all our hearts prepare
For Christ to come and enter there.

All praise to you, eternal Son,
Whose advent has our freedom won,
Whom with the Father we adore,
And Holly Spirit evermore.

So, now it is Christmas time 2013 and the recipies surface for Christmas cookies and memories of their origin. Frances Spiegel's roll out white sugar cookies, Aunt Ella Knaack's molasses cookies, Alma Zillmer's peppernuts.

I will smile each Christmas Day
When I wake up;
And I will smile the day
I wake up in Heaven.

Children of Christmas are givers. They give thanks, love, gratitude, joy and themselves. Laughter, being with people we love in this era of uncertainty.



Stark images of Oregon ash trees stand beside the Siuslaw River in western Oregon on a winter day. Travelers often make a point of viewing this stand of trees during various seasons of the year while traveling between Eugene and Florence. Dean Rea photo.

A Dog Is Born

By Louise Fusfeld
lfusfeld@pacbell.net

Wrinkie was a dog. But he was so much more than that. He was a sibling. Seven years younger than I, he filled the role of little brother.

When it came right down to it, Wrinkie was no Einstein. My mother is convinced that he was left in the sack too long and missed out on some early oxygen that his little brain needed to function properly. Of course, she should know because she was there. We were all there, crowded around Terry's birthing box, anxiously awaiting the next sausage-like sack of pup to pop out of her.

They came fast, like guavas falling in autumn, and though Terry worked quickly to lick their transparent coverings off, one little guy got stuck behind her with his packaging still on. My mom knew she had to act fast, but would Terry let her reach through this birthing frenzy? The pup might die. She had to risk it. She carefully reached behind and underneath her, pulled out the pup and presented him

to the panting mom for sack removal. Terry did her stuff and her prodigal son was still alive.

So, Wrinkie came into the world, a Forrest Gump of canines. Part terrier, part beagle, part no-one-will-ever-know.



He had the body of a tallish, slenderized, dark brown beagle. His ears were like a beagle's that had been thinned like molasses cookie dough under a rolling pin and he had those big, liquid-brown eyes that twist hearts on dog food cans. When he grew into his skin, he was as smooth as they come. But, as a baby he had arrived with more than enough cov-

ering on his tiny skull and it rippled like milk chocolate velvet. Thus, my father had christened him Wrinkle-Face, Wrinkie for short.

A few weeks after the birth, his five brothers had been adopted by nice people. My sister held him in her lap at a

conference at the kitchen table and stroked his soft little hide. “Can we keep him?” My parents exchanged a glance. Okay. Two dogs are better than one.

I.D. and vaccine tags jingling through the house and yard, Wrinkie and Terry became our little team of horses. They protected the house and yard from marauding kindergartners, invasive mail carriers and suspicious friends. Wrinkie was particularly good at sounding the alarm when just about anyone approached the castle gates. He had inherited the superior sense of smell and poor eyesight of his half-beagle father. So, most of us were considered foes until within quite short range.

Wrinkie lived a long and happy life. He died at the ripe, old age of 17, nearly old enough to vote. Now he’s in heaven with his mom, barking at those who approach the pearly gates and waiting anxiously for us to come home.



The True Story About How We Met and Fell in Love

By Hannah Dean
hdean44@comcast.net

Meeting

People ask Jim how we met. He smiles and replies, “I’ll tell you the true story, but Hannah tells a different version. The real story is that she had one date with me and then joined the U.S. Army. Can you believe it? One date and she joined the U.S. Army.”

Listeners turn to me for my version, and Jim smiles as I begin. We developed this routine response over many years as we made new friends in our peripatetic lifestyle. I give my version and fill in the enormous gaps of Jim’s version.

We met in August 1965 at the wedding of mutual friends:

Keith and Joan. Jim was a groomsman for Keith, a friend from elementary and high school. Joan asked me to be her maid of honor. We knew each other as freshmen roommates in the girl's dormitory of a small church-related college in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Keith and Joan dated during our freshman year, and I dated a sophomore boy from Chicago, Norman. I was crazy about him and hoped to marry him, but he broke up with me in July 1965 just before my trip to Chicago to meet his parents. With a broken heart, I succumbed to my father's urging to join the U.S. Army Nurse Corps. I gave my heart to Norman but ended up in the recruiter's office.

Keith and Joan constantly told me that Norman was not right for me, but they knew who was. His name was James Dean. They invited me to Chicago at least once a year to meet Jim on blind dates, but he never showed up. I was disappointed and embarrassed, but I didn't think much about it because my heart belonged to Norman.

Their mid-August wedding offered Keith and Joan a perfect matchmaking opportunity. They made Jim responsible for transporting me for the weekend. They included Joan's family in their matchmaking effort. Jim didn't stand a chance.

We first met late on Friday afternoon at the wedding

rehearsal. Jim was on the platform with the groom's men when I entered the sanctuary, looking slim and handsome in a short-sleeved, blue, oxford-cloth shirt with a button-down collar and khakis. My heart skipped a beat.

The wedding party gathered at Keith's home for a buffet dinner after the rehearsal. As preplanned, Keith asked Jim to chauffeur me for the evening. The matchmaking plan ensured privacy for Jim and me, and I reveled in the arrangement. As we drove, Jim turned the radio to a soft-rock station. A familiar tune prompted me to keep time with the beat, nodding my head and patting my hands on my lap. Out of the corner of my eye I noticed Jim keeping the beat with his head. The wedding's conservative religious setting suggested Jim might be equally conservative: no bowling, no movies, no rock music, no dancing—you get the picture. He surprised me with his enjoyment of the soft-rock beat. I wondered if I surprised him. Had I found a compatriot? Had I already begun to recover from the loss of my dear Norman?

The wedding ceremony fades in my memory, but the reception and its aftermath became the foundation of my relationship with Jim. As matchmaker, Joan seated me next to Jim rather than with the best man. We talked and laughed easily the whole evening. He thoroughly charmed me. (In a

letter sent the following January, I described a photograph of us taken at the reception: “You look as though you swallowed something—and I look like I’m about to.” My underlying message implied that I wanted to swallow Jim.)

After the reception, we arrived at Joan’s home last among the family members who sat on the porch enjoying the night air. We sat on the porch swing, the only two places left. Over the next few minutes, family members yawned, stretched and excused themselves, leaving us alone on the porch swing. I appreciated the plot that left us alone on a swing after an emotion-filled day. I silently hummed “Some Enchanted Evening.”

We talked until 1:30 a.m. I remember only a few bits of the conversation. I corrected Jim for misusing a word because he claimed Edgar Lee Masters wrote the poem “Richard Cory.” He recited the poem to me. I told him I was sure the author was Edwin Arlington Robinson, but he continued to insist on Edgar Lee Masters.

Toward the end of our time on the porch swing, Jim asked



me what I planned for my future. I told him I had another year of university, and I boldly announced my plan to join the U.S. Army Nurse Corps unless someone like him told me not to. He replied that he was engaged to Jeannie and wished me well with my plan. I hoped my disappointment didn't show. Was I a bit too bold? Had I ruined the match-making scheme? Soon afterward he said good night and departed.

After Jim left, I went to the kitchen to get some warm milk so I could settle down for sleep. I heard voices from the back porch and stepped through the door to find Joan's entire family waiting for a matchmaking report. Poor Jim, the whole family conspired to throw us together; Jeannie was his only escape. I reported his engagement, and everyone commiserated with my disappointment.

I returned to Minneapolis the next day and wrote a Jim a postcard on Monday morning. I documented the definition of the disputed word and verified that Edwin Arlington Robinson wrote "Richard Cory." I did not want him to forget me even if he were engaged to someone else. I signed the post card, "Dictionary and Poetical Informationally Yours, Hannah."

That day, I went to the Army recruiter's office and committed myself to the U.S. Army Nurse Corps. I had offered

myself to Jim, but he refused. What could I do? My fate was cast.

On December 31, 1965, Jim responded to a Christmas card I sent and said, “Jeannie came up for Thanksgiving and the inevitable happened. We are no longer going together.” Do you remember that he told me in August that they were engaged? Not really, apparently. He ended the letter, “I hope that if you are ever in the area you will let me know. I would enjoy seeing you again. . . . Jim.” I immediately made plans for a spring break Chicago trip.

I waited two weeks to avoid seeming overly eager and wrote in the last paragraph of my January 15 reply, “There is a possibility that I will be in Chicago sometime between March 18 and 28. . . . It’s a temporary plan. I will let you know more definitely because I would enjoy seeing you, too.” I wanted to avoid scaring him off, as perhaps I had in August.

Jim wrote on March 1: “I’m glad to know you’ll be in the area in a few weeks. Let me know when because I’d like to drop over and say hello.” Jim’s approach reminds me of our dog who leans forward to investigate something unusual; he keeps his rear paws as far back as possible to ensure his get-away, should one be necessary.

During the week before quarter break, Jim called and

wrote again. I missed his call but responded positively to his brief follow-up note inviting me out to dinner and to see a “bit of Chicago.” So far, so good.

Falling in Love

Leaving Minneapolis in late March can be tricky. Minneapolis had a warm spell the week before quarter break, but the snow began falling and my older sister took me to the train station. I am notoriously prompt, and my sister is notoriously late.

She lived up to her reputation and arrived at my apartment in a snowstorm only thirty minutes before the train departed. I waited impatiently for her on the curb with my bag and yelled at her before she stopped the car. We made it to the train station in the nick of time. I didn’t want to miss this opportunity to renew my acquaintance with the person I thought was perfect for me. I just had to convince him, and that meant I needed to be in Chicago as soon as possible.

Jim met my train in Chicago about 2:30 a.m. and drove me to Joan’s family home where her mother had invited me to stay for more matchmaking. When we were alone in the house, Joan’s mother gaily sang, “Matchmaker, matchmaker, make me a match.”

I spent Monday through Friday in Chicago, and Jim and I were together every day and late into the evening. True to his word, Jim took me out to dinner at a restaurant in the Prudential building near the lakeshore in the Chicago Loop. As we opened the menus, he declared, “The sky’s the limit as long as it doesn’t go over twenty dollars!” I laughed. We were off to a good start.

Toward the end of the five days, Jim suggested I come to Chicago after graduation to await active duty orders for the Army Nurse Corps. My graduation was set for June 11, and I had to take the State Board of Nursing exams in Minneapolis to qualify as a registered nurse on June 21-22. I expected orders to active duty in late August pending the results of the examinations. I worried about the exams and whether the Army would allow me to await orders in Chicago rather than Minneapolis. I wondered whether anyone would hire me for only two months in Chicago, and I fussed about where I would live for two months. If I stayed in Minneapolis, I could continue working at the university hospital and I had an apartment, but it meant I would miss being with Jim whom I now loved madly.

The magic of our relationship started for me in August 1965. The seeds must have been planted for Jim because we loved each other by the time I returned to Minneapolis for

my final term. I left Chicago on Friday, and on Monday Jim wrote: "For some reason I thought that I would not miss you very much. But I do miss you and wish that you were in Chicago so that our relationship could have a chance to grow as I think it would. Please send me a picture of yourself. I miss you!" He repeated his invitation for me to spend the summer in Chicago.

I was over the moon with excitement and determined to make our Chicago summer a reality. The Army recruiter saw no reason why I should stay in Minneapolis as long as I was available for active duty on August 29. I wrote letters of inquiry to eight hospitals. All encouraged my application. I was happily stunned. Jim suggested St. Francis because it was in a safe area and closer to his southside home. Sr. Mary Seraphina wanted to meet me in person, so I quickly made another trip to Chicago for three days in early May. On Saturday May 8, she offered me a job although I was available only from June 28 until August 27.

Housing remained the only issue to be solved. Jim's family gathered on May 9 to celebrate his mother's 63rd birthday. The family was small: Jim's father died in March 1965, and his only sibling was a married sister, Nancy, without children. I met all of them for the first time with some trepidation. I had never met a boyfriend's family before, and I

wanted their approval. Of course, Jim and I had been in each other's presence a total of only nine days, but I was sure we were meant for each other.

I flew back to Minneapolis after the birthday party and wrote a letter that evening: "I'm so glad that Nancy has given me her approval; that was pretty important to me—I suppose you noticed that."

Nancy and Larry suggested I live at their house, and that settled our summer plan. Now I had to finish school, determine what to do with my few worldly goods, pack and pass the State Board examinations. Whew! I was thrilled, tired, a little nervous, and ready for my Chicago adventure. The matchmaking plot succeeded, and we loved each other deeply. I still grin and hum the matchmaker tune.