

POPSICLE STICKS ON THE CHRISTMAS TREE

By John F. Hall

There are hundreds of Christmas tree ornaments on our Christmas tree. My wife, Paula and I take our time and a day to put those ornaments on the tree. Some of the ornaments were on our Christmas tree 56 years ago. The same is true about our nativity scene. It was made in Italy 57 years ago. It has the Baby Jesus, Mary, Joseph, an angel, the three Wise Men, a bagpipe player, a Shepherd, three sheep, an oxen and a mule. Italy is where the nativity tradition began. Shepherds did play the zampogna (Italian bagpipe) for donations. But it is not likely that they were in Bethlehem at the birth of Christ.



Each ornament on our Christmas tree has a story. Some are special like the one given to me by the soldiers in the Provost Marshall at Tripler Medical Center in Hawaii in 2005. Near the top of the tree is an ornament that was made by oldest granddaughter, Andrea. She was four years old at the time. It is made of six popsicle sticks in the shape of the Star of David. It is a Jewish symbol composed of two overlaid equilateral triangles that form a six-pointed star. It appears on synagogues, Jewish tombstones, and the flag of the state of Israel. Andrea printed her name on one of the popsicle sticks and the year 1999.



Some of the ornaments on the Christmas tree cost as much as \$40 dollars. This leads me into a discussion of price over value. Oscar Wilde in his play "Lady Windermere's Fan," wrote about a conversation between Cecil Graham and Lord Darlington, Cecil asked the question: "What is a cynic?" Lord Darlington answered:

"It is a man that knows the price of everything and the value of nothing." The price of the six-popsicle sticks ornament made by Andrea might be twenty five cents. But to Andrea it might be priceless. Every year she looks for her popsicle stick ornament on our Christmas tree.



Andrea liked to read Clement Moore's classic tale of Santa's visit, "The Night Before Christmas." When she was six years old, Andrea liked to read the Night Before Christmas to her great grandfather, Andrew Oakley and her great grandmother, Pauline Oakley, when they came to our house on Christmas morning for breakfast. My wife, Paula would hold the book as Andrea read Moore's tale about Santa. Andrea's sister, Heather would sit in Paula's lap and intently listen to that

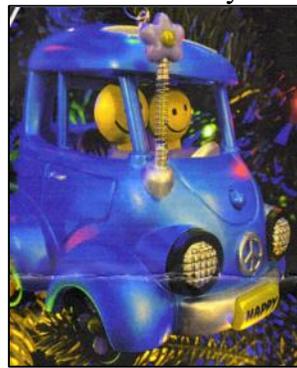
classic tale. This year, Paula decided to give the book to Andrea. I found a picture that I took of Andrea reading the tale to her great grandfather, and taped it in the book. I wrote

on the inside front cover these words: “And Andrea would read: The night before Christmas,”



One special ornament that I put on the Christmas Tree is a blue car with two happy faced people inside. You can tap on the hood of the vehicle and it will play the music to the Happy Face song. Many of the ornament have the grand kids pictures and a few second message that they addressed to us. They look to see if we put their special ornaments on our tree each year. So we spend a day or so putting them on our Christmas Tree.

This was to be my last story for 2021, but so many things were happening that got in the way. I will include a few short pieces from a few other writers.



Frances Pasch wrote about “Our Redeemer.” These are her words: “No room in the inn,” they heard the man say. Discouraging news on a long, weary day. “Go to the stable, bed down in the hay; that's the best that I can do, if you'd like to stay.” Since Mary and Joseph were tired and worn and needed a place for the Child to be born, they went to the place where animals lay and made a small bed for the Babe out of hay. Right before dawn, a cry could be heard...a Savior was born - the True Living Word. The awaited Redeemer, sent from up above...a gift from the Father, a true act of love. For, unless Jesus came, there would be no way for entry to Heaven on our final day. Let's open our hearts so we can receive His free gift to all who choose to believe.

In between taking down the Christmas decorations, I got back to writing this long delayed story. Edna Massimilla wrote a short piece titled “The Animals.” These are her words: “The animal adore you, Lord, they know You smile at them...for they recall a special time in the town of Bethlehem. The animals surrounded You at a cradle bed of hay, when You, precious Lamb of God in a manger stall did lay. The animals have knowledge of the purpose of Your birth - to bring Salvation, Peace and Love to all people of the earth. The animals are blessed. You smile at them, with care - for on that silent, Holy Night the animals were there!”

The third short piece that I will use in this story was written by Dianne Cogar. It is titled “Something to Ponder at Christmas time.” These are her words: “As the Christmas season's upon us and children beam with glee, and angels keep a watchful eye, let's pray on bended knee. Let's give our hearts to those in need and lend a helpful hand...So others who have much less are hopeful that God has a plan. Let's show the Lord that all he teaches will fuel our wisdom too! As we give praise to God above, remember to praise each other...and fill the air with song and joy, dear sister and dear brother.”

I decided not to pack away my twenty five cents Wise Man and the blue car ornament. I'll end this story with a short piece written by Shirley Powell call “Wondrous Night.” These

are her words: “Down in adoration falling, lo, the angels guard the Child. Faithful shepherds caught in wonder where the Babe lay undefiled. Angels singing in the heavens o'er the stable filled with hay. Star of wonder hovering over manger where the Christ Child lay. Wise Men came from distant places, led there by the Holy Star. Kings with gifts of gold and incense, traveled from their home afar. On this Holy Night so joyous, Angelic host God deemed to send brought good tidings and a message of peace on earth, goodwill toward men”

John F. Hall

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