

Beginning to Celebrate



BAH, HUMBUG!

Holidays – there are all kinds. We have Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. Bah, Humbug is what I say. We've lost the true meaning of these holidays.

Easter is when we should be thanking Jesus for dying on that tree, but instead we watch for that bunny hopping down the bunny trail. Bah, Humbug is what I say. How do you get a rabbit to lay an egg?

Thanksgiving is a day we should be giving our love and thanks just to be able to sit around the table with family and friends enjoying that big feast. Bah, Humbug is what I say to too much fighting on this holiday.

Christmas. There are the pretty lights and that big tree, but when I look around, I don't see the baby in the manger. Oh, where can he be? I see Santa and his sleigh, Frosty and the old Grinch, but no sight of that babe that was born on Christmas Day. Bah, Humbug is what I say. We have lost the true meaning of these holidays.

Let's forget that rabbit. We know he can't lay an egg.

Let's forget the turkey and dressing, stop the fighting, and show our love instead.

Let's forget all the pretty lights and just throw that tree away. Take a minute to remember that little babe who was born on that Christmas Day.

Bah, Humbug is what I say. Is it too late to find the true meaning of these holidays? Bah, Humbug is what I say.

~ *Geraldine McQuitty*

MY TRIPS WEST

When we were young, in the early 60's, my husband and I drove west to the state of Washington. We started out from Ohio in April. We drove on old route 80, which at that time was just beginning to be built into four lanes.

I remember stopping at a roadside rest stop to eat lunch at a picnic site. It was a beautiful, sunny day, but a bit chilly. We sat at a table with budding trees and bushes on one side of it. We looked down and saw a cute little chipmunk about four inches tall just sitting there, eating away at his food, which he held out like he had two hands.

On the way through Wyoming, we saw a small, 1800's ghost town with a few white buildings. One was a saloon out in the middle of nowhere. There was not even one tree and no sign of people.

This state is as flat as it can get with a lot of open land. We saw Indians who lived on this land riding their horses and driving their cattle. Wyoming does have one set of large mountains, which we had to drive over, the Rocky Mountains. We drove into Cheyenne and did not see any snow, but when we drove up the mountains it had snowed about four inches. The snow plow was in front of us clearing the road. A person wouldn't want to be stranded in those mountains! There is not a store or gas station for miles. We drove over the mountains at night, and the next evening we saw a beautiful sunset with pretty blue sky, with low hanging white clouds. The sun looked like it was sinking down into the earth.

The next day we saw an antique car with a long, green body and yellow wheels sitting there on top of a huge sign saying "Pioneer Auto Museum." Further on up, we saw a

huge creature just standing there off the side of the road. It was a dinosaur. We called them long necks. It wasn't real!

On the way through Utah, the roads we traveled wound through high mountains. You could see each layer that was made over the centuries that built the mountains up to what they look like today. We also saw the Great Salt Lake.

On the way through Oregon we saw a river running up the mountain instead of going down. There were also beautiful waterfalls on the side of the mountain, like water coming slowly out of a hose, hitting rocks in a gentle stream. You could see a rainbow going across the waterfalls as the sun hit the mist.

Oregon is a beautiful place to see. There is a town called Dalles. Driving past, I looked up and saw a high hill full of dahlias four to six feet tall. There must have been hundreds of them, all the colors you could think of going across the hill. What a beautiful sight!

We drove along the Hood River and saw the huge Hood River Dam on our way into Washington State. We saw Mount Rainier. It is 14, 411 feet and is an active volcano with lots of dense forest. It was so huge and tall and had a top full of snow. People can go up only to a certain level to visit. Some actually go up in shorts in the summer because there is still snow and they can play in it. People can see Mount Rainier on a clear day from as far away as Tacoma and Seattle. Washington has the bluest water, and Tacoma and Seattle have lots of beaches. People go sailing on small boats and go swimming. We walked along the beach on sidewalks. People go skating there and walk their dogs. You can walk out to the dock and fish. We saw huge freighter ships and a ferry boat. It was very nice and relaxing.

We really enjoyed our visit, and the country was beautiful. Just last February, we made one last trip out west, but that time we took the northern route. I saw the Mississippi River and was thrilled by the sight of it. This is truly a beautiful country to see.

~ *Donna Hines*

A CHRISTMAS TRIP

For Christmas of 2006 I went to New York. I flew from Cleveland to Kennedy International Airport in New York City. When I saw my son and my granddaughters waiting for me, I gave them all big hugs.

My granddaughters had written letters to Santa Claus. I knew what they wanted for Christmas, and I bought these gifts in Ohio and brought them to New York for the girls.

During my visit we all went to an Italian restaurant. It was very pretty there and the food was so good! We also ate New York style hot dogs! My brother made a wonderful dinner for all of us. He prepared rice and beef, coquito, and sweet rice. It was a delicious holiday meal.

When we walked down Fifth Avenue, it felt like a dream! We visited St. Patrick's Cathedral. This church is big and beautiful. We walked through Central Park. This was so much fun for all of us at Christmas.

For New Year's Eve we watched the big ball go down in Times Square. The New Year, 2007 was beginning, and there were thousands of different kinds of people there. This was such a good Christmas trip. I hope I can go back next year, God willing.

~ Carmen Visalden

MEMORIES OF MOTHER

My mother was and still is today a great mother. She did not have much as a child, but she sure did have a lot of love in her heart to pass around.

She only completed the eighth grade. Her father and mother moved a lot in and out of town. She didn't like going to different schools. My mother is smart in many ways. She can do math really well. Still today, she keeps her money straight by figuring out her money and not overspending.

She is a great cook. She always made sure we had food on the table and always said, "Girls, are you ready for dessert?" She made homemade lemonade and sugar cookies for us in the hot summer months.

Mother would hand sew dresses for my younger sister and me to wear to school and church. I remember when I was younger she showed my sister and me how to draw dolls on paper. We liked to draw pictures and had coloring books. She showed us how to stay in the lines so the pictures would look good. I remember when she came back from the grocery store, she would tear up a brown paper sack to make art paper for us.

I remember when she would be sweeping the floor and some of us girls would bother her until she gave in and played with us. She would run through the house chasing us, and we would run screaming for joy. Sometimes she would cackle like a witch while she chased us. Other times, she would play "pinching bug" or Doctor – where we made her lay on the couch, fed her candy pills, put a washcloth on her head, and then we took her blood pressure or checked her heartbeat or her eyes. After a while she would say, "Girls, I

have laundry and supper to get done,” and then we’d let her go.

When I was eleven years old, I got really sick. Mother stayed up at nights taking care of me. She put hot towels on my back and legs to help with the pain. Then I went to Children’s Hospital. Mother couldn’t stay with me because she had seven other daughters and two of my brothers to take care of at home. Later, I had to have bed rest and didn’t get back to school until the last days of the school year. During that time, Mother waited on me hand and foot plus took care of all my other siblings and made sure supper was on the table and everyone was fed.

My mother never complained about anything. She just did her work and took care of everybody’s needs. She never had much either, but she just kept on giving her love to all of us. She always put everyone’s needs before hers. She taught us all how to be good to other people, not to lie because if we did nobody would trust us, and to be respectful to elders and not talk back to our aunts, uncles, or teachers. Do what we were told to do, but do not let anybody hurt us. If people were not honest, she wouldn’t go around them or talk to them. We followed her example.

Another reason I am proud of my mother is because at the age of forty-two (42), she had to take on the responsibility of the whole family when my father passed away. All the family responsibility lay on her shoulders. She never had a job outside the home before, so that was scary and exciting for her. I was proud of the way she took everything in stride, never letting things get to her. If they did, she never let her family know. She was never too tired for us or our problems.

My mother taught us to love the people who we love and are dear to us, how to be independent and not lean

on others to take care of us. She taught us to believe in God and “keep the faith” and believe in miracles. She has always been there for us children, and we will always be there for her, no matter how far we have to travel.

Therefore, these are just a few of the many reasons I want to thank her. She is eighty-one (81) years old.

“Thanks Mother.”

Love,
Your daughter

~ *Brenda Carroll*

BRAVERY AND HONOR

They go to unfamiliar lands
They do not always get hot meals
Or hot showers
Or warm beds
Or clean clothes

Some come home with no legs
Some come home with no arms
Some come home blind or deaf
And, sadly, some come home dead

But these sacrifices that they make
They do not make them in vain
For the reason that they make them
And have made them
From the Revolutionary War
To the war with Iraq today
Is so that their families
Can live in freedom

Dedicated to all solders especially my grandfather,
Edward Masters, who fought in World War Two

~ *Ethan Thomas*

CHRISTMAS

Standing in the kitchen all grown up with Grandma makes me think about how I learned to cook from what she taught me. She taught me all I need to know and what to do if there is a missing ingredient. My 79-year-old grandma cannot cook now, and it is up to me to cook, to carry on what she taught me. This past Christmas of 2006 was the first Christmas without Grandpa and him trying to grab a bite of sweets. I fear that this may be the last with Grandma.

I rose Christmas morning to find Grandma already awake, and to my surprise, the ham already in the oven. She told me that she wanted to help me out. I spent the next several hours preparing Christmas dinner, and we had a nice feast of mashed potatoes, vegetables, sweet potatoes, and cornbread. And the ham my grandma was so proud of. We didn't have much for Christmas. We didn't exchange gifts or visit much with relatives, but we had a small tree and we had Grandma. We all gave thanks to the Lord and for a good year.

Christmas to us this year was hard without Grandpa, but we were all grateful for what the Lord blessed us with.

~ Lindsey Wittmeyer

ONE LIFE

Did I ever thank YOU for my life YOU spared with YOURS
today?
I get down on my knees each night as I begin to pray!

I slowly walked upon YOU as the blood began to flow,
YOU hung from that old rugged cross as I watched from
down below!

YOUR feet and hands were nailed and the crown of thorns
was tightly wrapped around YOUR head,
And not too long after YOU hung there until YOU were
dead!

The cross YOU carried was so very heavy, but YOU did not
make a sound,
It was just three days later that YOU arose from beneath the
ground!

We rejoice in YOUR name as we give YOU our sins,
We gave away our old life, so a new one can begin!

~ Carolyn Sue Jones

MOTHER

My best friend
Sunshine on a dreary day
First face seen in the morning
Last face I see at night

Shoulder to cry on
Ear to listen

A source for favorite recipes
A companion for church

Teacher of sewing
of respect and prayer
Whatever I need
you are always there

and quick to share
happy laughter
pleasant walks
and private talks

I wish my mother
could live
forever

~ *Theresa Stone*