



Stay Connected

Family Connections & Grandparent Family Connections
University of Maryland School of Social Work

Holiday Memories



Fall 2007

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Members of a group for graduates of the Grandparent Family Connections Program were asked to describe their happiest winter holiday memory. Their responses follow, along with those from some additional caregivers and children. (Names are included at the request of the caregivers.)

Carrie Johnson (grandmother) -- "My most memorable and happiest Christmas occurred in 1949. Television had just been born. My mom took my sisters and I to the May Company to see the Christmas displays. On the second floor they had televisions. I stood and watched the kid show "Howdy Doody." My mom told me it was time to go. I told my mother and sisters we did not need toys. If Santa brought us a television for Christmas, I would never ask for another toy forever. My mom said she would talk to Santa. On Christmas morning we came downstairs and, sitting by the Christmas tree was a spanking new Admiral 17" television for the family. I loved that we were the first family on the block to have a TV. It was the best Christmas of my life. I will never forget Christmas 1949."

Barbara Belcher (grandmother) -- "My happiest holiday memory is when my mother and brother and sisters and I would get on the train to go to Turner Station to see Aunt Bea and Uncle John. They would have a big Christmas dinner. All kinds of goodies and they would give us a pair of gloves and \$1 in a roll of pennies. We thought that we were rich. Those memories always stayed with me."

Grandmother -- "I was 10 or 11 years old and we felt like we were the richest kids in the world. We got our first Christmas tree that year. We made decorations from all kinds of things that my mother got. We used popcorn and she had some beads and we cut decorations out of aluminum foil. It was real nice and pretty. We had lights in the window and that little tree sitting on the table. That year we got dolls that we wanted and a pair of skates. It was so nice. It snowed that Christmas and we got to play outside. My grandmother came up from the South and she brought us little presents too. There were 10 of us, so you can imagine back in the 1950's what a struggle it was; some other Christmases we got nothing or didn't have anything. That year, though, was the best Christmas we have ever had."

Mother -- "When I was 8 years old, my uncle picked us up in his car and drove us from Stricker St. up to Hampden to see the Christmas displays. My mother was scared to go because she said Black people weren't welcome up there and we might get attacked. We begged to go anyway and she finally agreed because it was dark. Every house had flashing lights on the roof, windows and bushes. There were life-sized manger scenes and Santas and reindeer on the roof that moved. Music was playing everywhere. It was like going to Wonderland."

Grandmother -- "Last Christmas was one of the most precious memories because I was homeless but I was still able to have a good Christmas. I was still able to give love and we all cared and nurtured one another. I think that is the greatest gift you can give anyone. It was just such a blessing that we were all alive and able to see Christmas. It was a gift that we were all together and that is something no one can steal out of my heart be-

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cause it is grounded in my heart. That is the perfect and greatest gift of all; we were there for one another and had each other.”

Sarah Reed (grandmother) -- “The best Christmas I ever had was being here in good health to see my grandchildren and great-grandchildren open up their Christmas gifts. The look on their faces was a joy to behold.”

Devon (age 8) – The night before Christmas I am so excited that I can’t sleep. I can’t wait for Santa to come. I hope that I’ve been good enough to get everything on my list. As soon as it is light, I’m allowed to get out of bed and wake my family. I get so excited when I see my presents. We moved this year, but my mother said Santa knows where to find us. I hope she’s right.

Mother – “I remember how my mother used to get ready for Christmas even though we didn’t have much money. I loved listening to holiday music. It gives me a warm feeling. My mom would put out candy, fruit, peanuts, and eggnog and we would all help decorate the tree. Now that I’m a mom, I want to do the same things with my children and make the holiday special.”

Destiny (age 8) -- “My fondest Christmas was when I dressed my father up as Santa Claus and put lipstick on him.”

Dorsey Brooks (grandfather) – “It was a pleasure to go to the old Montgomery Ward in South Baltimore to see people spreading cheer and look at the lights. That was one of the top places back then. Lafayette Market on Pennsylvania Avenue used to be made out of wood and tents. They had holiday trimmings running from store to store all the way from Presstman down to Dolphin Street. As you strolled down Pennsylvania Avenue, you would run into hunters giving away deer and elk meat that they had just had butchered. Everywhere was the beautiful smell of pine. You knew it was Christmas.”

Pauline Squirrel (grandmother) -- “My most happiest holiday was the year 1990 when the whole family was together—mother, father, children, grandchildren. Fun, games, food and a lot of loving memories. We found out each other’s strengths and weaknesses and what we need. It was very rewarding. The kids had the excitement of expressing themselves opening gifts, singing songs, and a lot of sweets.”

John Knight (grandfather) -- “My happy holiday is Christmas. That brings back love from mother and father who gave gifts to the family.”

Pearlie Knight (grandmother) – “The best Christmas I ever had was when I had all my children over and all 16 of my grandchildren. I had everyone I loved all around me. It was so wonderful to see them open up their presents.”

Mother – When I was a little girl, Baltimore still had a lot of fancy department stores down on Howard St. Now they are all out in the county. But back then there was Stewarts and Hoschild-Kohn. The windows always had holiday displays with fake snow and things that moved. Inside they played Christmas music on a real piano. They were expensive stores and we never bought anything, but it was fun to walk around downtown and look at everything. It felt safe too.

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