



*Leaves slowly weave their way toward the California landscape as the colors of Thanksgiving
Yield to the gray of winter and Christmas faithfully emerges from mountains of boxes.
Holiday cheer fills the room with countless, scattered decorations leaving their summer chambers
To begin their traditional role in brightening, enlivening, and transforming the spirit of my home.*

*Inside a large container, a small patch of bright squares peeks above the precious ornaments and trinkets.
I reach in and carefully free my colorful treasured quilt from the entangled web that held it captive,
Its countless stitched squares still clinging together, some faded, others frayed, and a few unraveling.
Despite the changes of time, they still intertwine, merging to form a unified blanket of comfort and security.*

*Pausing to rest from the bustle of decorating, I tenderly unfold it and spread it respectfully.
The familiar scent and enjoyment of its embrace envelops me and provokes memories of my past.
I reflect upon the calming, warming effect it had on my youth during those harsh New Jersey winters.
I contemplate the connection of family and the special moments of our lively Christmas Eve celebrations.*

*I remember our corner home standing proudly upon a soft white blanket of freshly fallen snow,
Resting comfortably beneath the benevolent glow of a shining December moon.
I can still hear the anthem of our American flag flapping in the wind, its metal clips chiming with each gentle clang
Upon the tall white flag pole that pierced the black sky and reached upward toward bright twinkling stars.*

*The decorations of our childhood home once lit up the suburban neighborhood but the passage of time
Has reduced the lively display to an elegant lone red and green wreath resting upon the elevated front door.
This welcoming entryway has opened its holiday heart to family and friends for close to sixty years with
My beloved mother still sharing her limitless love through the magic of her stove.*

*The enticing aroma of seafood, pasta fagioli, spaghetti, and veal permeates the tiny kitchen as
It heats up swiftly, working overtime to prepare the traditional yuletide feast and celebration.
The expanded festive table fills the center of the long and narrow dining room while
The gold dishes, silver spoons, red candles, and green napkins serve as perfect holiday accents.*

*This beautiful collection of color sparkles and shines, still attracting and beckoning
The ever-changing gathering of friends and relatives who have woven the colorful fiber of our family.
Their radiant love, commitment, and support conquers the chill of the night as
The happy holiday table remains as a binding and stable force throughout the uncertainty of their lives.*

*Like the quilt of my childhood, the patchwork of precious Christmas memories, lessons, and inspiration
Have left their everlasting imprint, serving a unique role, uniting to form a beautiful blanket
That has and always will provide warmth, security, and solace,
Telling the story of our family and singing the cherished song of our shared journey.*

*May this holiday season inspire and challenge us to live the grace, blessings, and love of our past
As we acknowledge and appreciate the influence of the generations of family and friends
Whose motivation, mentorship, and modeling have combined to form the fabric of our lives.
May we celebrate and honor them as we seize the opportunity to affect and enhance the joy of others.*

*Frank Allocco
Christmas 2018*