

Friends, Family, and Tradition

As the Christmas boxes are gathered and lowered from their yearlong respite,
The attic slowly empties, leaving a solitary carton lodged in a corner of the drafty space;
A cardboard container overflowing with stories of years past, each protected in brown plastic cases.
Faded, yellowing labels with typed black words unlock the mystery of their content.
As I anxiously carry them down the narrow metal staircase, they rattle against each other,
The gentle noise awakening the stories from their slumber.
With eagerness and anticipation, I carefully place a tape into its player and
Settle cozily on my favorite chair by the warmth of my pot belly stove.

As the thirty year old flickering story unfolds, the Christmas Spirit fills the room as

The youthful faces of my parents and their dearest childhood friends emerge,
Sitting at the head of a festive table overflowing with their children and families.
As the Christmas Eve meal concludes, tender interviews of three generations begin.
Personalities sparkle as each speaks of their lives and their appreciation for each other.
A majestic Christmas tree fills the screen as the sound of children pounding on piano keys fills the room.
The assembling of their families at the foot of the tree suddenly hushes their playful melodies as parents
Cradle each other's children and sing the songs of the season, a perfect expression of friendship and love.

As one captured memory ends another begins, featuring a New Jersey Christmas morn.

My daughter's face glows with excitement as colorful wrapping paper falls to her feet as

She provides the narrative and enthusiastic description of each colorful treasure.

My three year old son entrusts each of his Star Wars presents to his grandpa who

Tenderly helps him unwrap each package and release another special character.

Their joyous grandparents encourage their wonder while fondly remembering

Their own four sons beneath that same star as the love of family still warms the tiny room.

The blazing blur of time has changed the faces, but not the scene, as the rituals of family remain.

A final memory unfolds with the loving site of my eighty year old grandmother in the center of her kitchen;
An overflowing room filled with the laughter of her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren.
Tables filled with colorful delicacies are surrounded by loved ones eating and sharing tradition.

Each one of my beloved uncles and aunts speak to me from the screen,
I feel their presence once again as each message reveals a small glimpse of who they were.

My Christmas memories end as an off key carol says "good night" to the fading face of the matriarch;
A loving mother, grandmother, and great grandmother who was the magnet
Drawing us together, creating tradition each Sunday and holiday for over 50 years.

As the screen turns black, this emotional ride through my past ends;
A gentle and precious journey filled with happiness, longing, and hope.

My spirit warmed as I realized the lessons of friendship that rekindled in my soul as I saw
The faces of my youthful brothers, loving parents and our dear, devoted friends.
I marveled at the similarities of my grandchildren to their mother and uncle and
Appreciated how quickly things change, but how the love of family remains constant.
My heart ached for so many of the loved ones in my life who have faded to another place
Leaving us the example of heritage and tradition...

During a Christmas Season that evokes such a myriad of emotions,
Let us remember the importance of family, friends, and tradition.

May we find comfort in change as we realize that youthful faces will age, the older will depart,
But a life well lived never ends as each of our loved ones leaves a precious piece of them to live in us.

May we honor them with each daily action of our lives,
Finding peace in knowing that we are the gift to be shared with all whom we touch as
We become the treasured reminders of a time gone by.
Visions may flicker and fade, but the memories we leave forever imprint the heart and soul.