

Newsletter136

Keith's Corner/McGill News

December 17, 2021

Christmas Memories--2

The Christmas' I remember the most were during WWII. For many of the younger readers, that was World War 2, not World War eleven. I guess the reason was because of the war and the constant threat of an invasion, Christmas was a time to enjoy a few days of peace. The wartime footing this country was put on is hard to explain to those that weren't there. I had just started kindergarten in September. Monday, December 8, our teachers explained what had taken place and to stay close to our homes and schools. The many Japanese families were quickly evacuated to internment camps far away. None of them ever returned to McGill. Two reasons were given for the move—1-fear of sabotage(which was never shown) and 2-the anger over the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor could be a threat to the families. That anger was many, many times greater than that felt after 911.

So that first wartime Christmas was a somber time. It would be the last one for many years that toys were available. My brother Paul and I got a pedal, Big Mack dump truck that year. It was red and had a bed that actually dumped. We wore it out over the years. There is one on EBAY today priced at \$4,500.00.

The next 4 years were pretty bleak for toys. Toys made of metal were rare. Things like Tinker Toys and Lincoln Logs made of wood were popular. I remember a small farm set with a small cardboard barn and small fence. Rex Alred and some other kids had gotten some farm animals and so we pooled our stuff and pretended to be farmers. A lot of pretend stuff back then.

The problem was solved, as usual, by the people themselves. Most houses in McGill had small workshops in the garage or basement, so Fathers made toys for their kids and we McGill heathens made stuff for our parents. The Moms baked homemade cookies and candy. My favorite was divinity. Sugar was of course,

rationed, so Mom had to scrimp and save up sugar for Christmas. We also made things at school, usually for the Moms.

Unlike the PC schools of today we had Christmas plays, made gift cards and sang Christmas songs. We made decorations for the classroom. Garlands were made by interlocking small rings of colored paper. We made them for our trees at home. Decorations, especially lights were hard to get. We cherished what we had, took care of it and made it last a long time. No throwaway stuff. We had a top of the tree ornament that was a light bulb shaped like Santa carrying a sack full of toys. The folks first got it in the middle 1930s. It still works, even now in 2021.



Thanksgiving and Christmas time in school was, ALMOST, a pleasant time for us kids. We also got a parole for about 10 days from our gulag. New Year's eve was exciting. KCC would blow the shift whistle at the stroke of midnight and everyone would shoot their guns. Sounded like a small war. During the war we would only shoot one shell per person. But, the parole period went by fast and soon we were back in the detention center-- that place, teachers and parents call school.

This past year I have been gathering up a lot of the old, 1950s Christmas decorations at the McGill Drug Store and decided to put some of them out. Hopefully it will trigger some old, cherished memories of the past.

I found this 1940s or even earlier, artificial tree. It took a few hours to get it put together. Luckily, Gemma, the museum girl, stopped by to help. She put the blue ornaments on, while I wrapped some presents to put under the tree. We found some small articles to put around the tree. I hope to get a timer set up, so the color wheel that shines on the tree, can be put to good use in the evenings.



Here is the result-----



There are more decorations in the windows and also inside. Will be photos in next week's NL.

Merry Christmas

Commented [O1]:

