



## The Season of the Gift Giveaway Winners

Thanks to all of you who submitted recipes and memories. The winners will receive a signed copy of *All I Have to Give* and all entries are being posted at [www.melodycarlson.com](http://www.melodycarlson.com)

### Winners

#### **My Easy Fudge** by Kim M.

18 oz. semisweet chocolate chips (or you can use peanut butter chips for peanut butter fudge)

1 can Eagle Brand sweetened condensed milk

1 teaspoon real vanilla

In a saucepan over medium heat pour in the chips and then the condensed milk. Stir constantly until the chips are just about completely melted. Take the pan off the stove and add the vanilla (or peppermint) flavoring. You can add nuts or crushed candy canes at this point too. Keep stirring until final melting of chips takes place, and then pour into an 8 x 8 pan you have lined with foil.

You can let this fudge cool and harden on the counter, in the fridge, or in the freezer, depending on how much time you have. Incredibly yummy.

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### **A Christmas Memory by Joy P.**

I used to make a Christmas schedule for my family. I would time it to the minute and hand it out to all my family members.

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### **Discovering Christmas Trees with Character! By Judy D.**

After getting married I realized that meshing two families holiday traditions isn't always easy—frankly, all my sentimental ones, and my husband's family's traditions...that were none! Sadly, Christmas was shackled with sad memories for him, because of his parent's divorce, and little enjoyment or focus on simple holiday blessings. It took him a few years married to welcome the holidays. But after decades of marriage, we have created happier memories.

It began for us with “finding” the annual Christmas tree. I don't like perfect trees. I want them to have a flaw and character—something to give them interest, and I want to feel they “call out” to me to take them home, and create remembering for years to come. Growing up, my kids commonly asked, “Mom, is that tree talking to you?”

Such trees most often could not be purchased from a cement lot in town, instead needed to be a treasure discovered in the forests of Oregon, like those found on my grandparents property when I was growing up. Not as simple as in days past, because a pass has to be purchased, but still we would climb the hillsides searching for hours—sipping on hot chocolate and munching snacks, until we found the perfectly imperfect tree. Often bare on one side, or sparse throughout, but nonetheless a tree with character. A family favorite was a high elevation hemlock that was beautiful when decorated, but by New Years this lovely tree was a mere skeleton of itself, as needles fell from it with each footstep that passed.

Like us, somehow the perfect tree doesn't evoke laughter, memories or family chatter. The imperfect does! And it serves as a reminder to our family of the growth and beauty that can be found in our own imperfection.



### **Christmas fun by Alice H.**

As number eight in a line of nine children as well as the second of two girls, I admit that I was a spoiled little sister, at least until our little brother came along. Dad was a pastor and money was tight but the folks always encouraged us to buy little gifts for one another. (Remember the lifesavers books? Everyone loved them!)

One brother, David, has an especially dry sense of humor (think Bob Newhart). He liked to tease us little kids by buying and wrapping his gifts very early and displaying them in the living room for us to rattle and shake. He did this so early one year that the tree wasn't even up so the gifts went under the baby grand piano. Being very impatient and curious I kept asking him what my package was. He kept replying, "a pink elephant." Well that only made me "curiouser and curiouser" so I kept bugging him, always receiving the same response. The joke was on me because upon opening up my packages, what should I find but a lovely cuddly pink elephant!



### **Country Potatoes by Laura B.**

1 bag of frozen hashbrowns  
1 white or yellow onion, chopped  
1/2 cup melted butter or margarine  
1 Can Cream of Mushroom Soup  
1 Pint Sourcream  
1 Cup Shredded Cheddar Cheese  
Salt and Pepper, to taste

Mix all ingredients in a large bowl. Pour into a 13x9 baking dish. Bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes or until golden brown.

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Thanks to all of the 'runners up' who submitted memories or recipes.

### **A Christmas Memory by Kristin I.**

I was five years old and the Great Depression was raging around us, but our family wasn't hurting much that Christmas. I got a big doll, a teddy bear, and a dollhouse. My mother and grandmother were cooking a small ham, along with sweet potatoes, cranberry sauce, mince pies, and all the other Christmas treats.

My father was a mining engineer at the Magma Copper Company in Arizona, and he was on the mine rescue squad. When several men came to the door and talked quietly, Mother stood in the kitchen doorway, wringing her hands as Father left with the other fellows. Surely, not a mine cave-in on Christmas!

When Father came back, he was white-faced and sorrowful. They had found a one-room adobe house where seventeen starving people were living on the dirt floor, including a baby whose mother had no more milk. They had come to our town from Mexico, looking for work.

My mother and grandmother put all our Christmas food in a box and threw in some other groceries and canned goods. Father took it away and my mother fixed some canned baked beans for our dinner. It was the best meal I ever ate, and I remember the quiet Christian joy that reigned at our table.

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**Crisp and Chewies** by Vickie S.

1 ½ c. flour

1 t. baking soda

½ t. salt, cloves and ginger

1 c. sugar

¾ c. shortening

1 egg

¼ c. dark molasses

¾ c. oatmeal

Sift flour, spices and sugar in bowl. Add shortening, egg, molasses. Beat until smooth (about 2 min.). Add oats. Drop by tablespoon on ungreased cookie sheet. Bake 350 for 13 minutes.

Allow to stand on cookie sheet a minute or two before removing



**Holly Cookies** by Lisa

1 box of plain corn flakes

1 bag of big marshmallows

1 stick of butter

a few drops of green food coloring

red hot cinnamon drops

In a saucepan over low heat melt butter and marshmallows. when melted add green food coloring.

Pour over corn flakes

Make into holly shaped cookies on wax paper

Add a few red hot drops for holly berries.

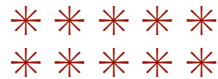
These are quick and easy to make, everyone loves them.

Nice to bring to a holiday gathering.



### **Christmas Memory** by Abi B.

My favorite Christmas memory comes from my childhood. I am 20 now, and the youngest of six children. Our family is all grown up and spread out across the country now and most of my siblings are married and have children. However, when we were all younger and could still hold tight to our family traditions we would have advent every night two weeks before Christmas. My dad would play the guitar, and we would all sing Christmas carols. Then my parents would read us a Bible story to remind us of the true meaning of Christmas, and we would close in prayer. I look back at those days now and wished that I could be six or seven again and have advent with my family just one more time. I will always cherish those memories of us together.



### **Cookie Recipe** by Britni

Buy a package of Nestle Toll House cookies nuggests and back them individually in a cupcake pan. Once the cookies are lightly brown, take them out of the oven and put a reese cup in the middle (while the cookies are still warm). The reese cups melt into the cookie and make a delicious treat!



### **Christmas Memory** by Katie B.

My favorite Christmas memory was this past christmas, when my parents gave my brother Alan, my sister Rachel, and myself a trip to the Florida Keys! We left the day after Christmas and stayed there for about a week. It was a lot of fun and I enjoyed spending the time with my family, something that is a rarity in this busy day in age! Merry Christmas and God Bless!



### **Sweet Potato Casserole** by Robin B.

3 c. boiled mashed yams  
1 c. sugar  
1 tsp. salt  
3/4 tsp. nutmeg  
1 tsp. cinnamon  
2/3 tsp. allspice  
2/3 tsp. vanilla  
2 eggs, beaten  
1/2 stick butter  
3/4 c. milk

Mix potatoes, sugar, salt, butter, milk, spices and eggs in order given.  
Add vanilla. Mix and pour into 2 quart casserole.

Topping:

Combine 1/3 c. flour  
1/3 stick butter  
1 cup chopped pecans

Mix with fork until crumbly. Top potatoes, bake 350 degrees for 35 minutes.

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### **Christmas Memory** by Denise N.

I'm sure you've gotten lots of submissions by now. But I have my own memory of that same flood. We were celebrating Christmas the night that water of the McKenzie reached its' peak. My aunt had not been able to Christmas off from her nursing job in California, so we scheduled our Christmas around her.

My family had gathered around the Christmas tree and could hear the torrents hit our roof. Wind blew but we were safe inside, and about to begin unwrapping packages. The lights flickered and went out. Shortly after, a neighbor came to retrieve my dad, brother (Dave) and uncle to help him rescue the old upright piano in the basement of the community church next door. The water was encroaching on its' back door.

Our house grew cold and the four kids who remained at home felt impatient. We'd been so close to unwrapping those wonderful gifts. Mom and my aunt lit candles and read us Christmas tales, but we could not be satisfied. Then my aunt remembered one package under the tree that would make at least one of us happy. She found it and presented it to my younger brother Kevin. (We probably were all allowed to open one gift, though I've long forgotten mine.)

Kevin tore his present open and found a wonderful set of camping gear -- including a nice, child-sized flashlight complete with batteries. He generously let us all take turns putting on the belt that held a compass, canteen and flashlight.

When Dad, Dave and Uncle Henry returned, they reported they'd gotten the piano safely up the steps to the landing. My dad went during the night to check the flood's level at the church. At its' highest point, it reached the back door but never went over the threshold.

My husband's family moved to Leaburg a few years later. His family attended church in that same building. I ignored him. He was my friend Jan's younger brother. He had no reason to pay any mind to his friend Kevin's big sister either.

Tom and I are now living in that little cinder-block building which had not been used for a church for two decades or so. It needed extensive remodeling. Bob Schultz designed and built our wonderful little home in the shell of that church. We treasure the memories of



our childhood, and of the connections with the community. So many people tell us they were married there, or had their baby shower there, remembered songs sung from the old hymnbooks under the roof that now houses us. And we treasure the uniqueness that our dear friend Bob put into our home. (He brought friends of theirs by to see our home about two weeks before he died this year. They had planned on having him build their home when they retire.)

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### **Grandpa's Peanut Brittle**

Get ready a well greased cookie sheet.

1 c. sugar                      2 T. butter  
1 c. Spanish peanuts    1/4 t. baking soda  
1 t. vanilla

Method: Heat a heavy fry pan over medium heat until hot. Pour in sugar and stir constantly until it liquefies. Add the peanuts quickly and stir; then the butter, soda and vanilla. Pour onto the greased cookie sheet. Set not more than five minutes. Loosen the brittle with a spatula and turn onto an ungreased cookie sheet.

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### **Christmas Memory by Rachel B.**

My family has always had a "special" Christmas Eve dinner of appetizers, and it was only the immediate family. My siblings, my parents, and me. And that's the way I liked it. A few years ago, we invited my single, elderly aunt, and my uncle who was going through a separation with his wife, whom his kids were spending Christmas with. I was a little upset when I found out, but afterward, I was so thankful. If they hadn't spent Christmas Eve with us, they would have been alone... and being a Christian means always opening yourself up for others... it was an "aha" moment for me, and now I

want more than anything to always have people over on every holiday.

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**Christmas Memory** by Alison M.

My favorite Christmas memory is the time when my grandmother had unexpected guests and they asked for their presents and she didn't have any for them.

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**Christmas Memory** by Erika S.

I can't remember which Christmas it was but I think it was around 2000 or 2001..

It was Christmas eve and me and my siblings were playing around and stuff..and my dad said he had to go out for a bit..so while he was gone my mom and the kids were playing games and ornamenting the tree. and a few hours later my dad came home..he walked in the door..and his jacket was moving...and out the top popped a Lil head of a puppy!!

Oh, my sister brother and I ran to him and was begging to hold him!!

It was a very fun night for all of us!!

That's my Christmas memory!!

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**CHRISTMAS WREATH COOKIES** by Linda A.

30 LARGE MARSHMALLOWS

1 CUBE BUTTER

1 TSP VANILLA

1 TBS GREEN FOOD COLORING

4 CUPS CORN FLAKES

RED HOTS

MELT BUTTER IN A LARGE SAUCEPAN. ADD THE MARSHMALLOWS AND MELT TOTALLY BRINGING TO A BOIL FOR A FEW MINUTES.

STIRRING CONSTANTLY TO PREVENT BURNING. ADD FOOD COLORING AND MIX WELL. ADD THE FOUR CUPS OF CORNFLAKES AND STIR TO COAT. REMOVE FROM HEAT. DROP TABLESPOON ONTO SHEET OF FOIL. AND QUICKLY DOT WITH RED HOTS. ALLOW A DAY OR SO TO DRY BEFORE STACKING . IT HELPS TO HAVE 2 PEOPLE DOING THIS TOGETHER. ONE TO DROP THE "WREATH" AND ONE TO DROP THE RED HOTS. ENJOY.Linda A.



### **Christmas Memory** by Kathleen S.

When I was a little girl, each year on Christmas morning I could anticipate a new doll under the tree. Some years it was a baby doll, others a Barbie doll, but for as long as I can remember, until I was a teen, I always had the thrill of discovering a new doll to add to my family each Christmas. I can even remember the unique fragrance of a new doll, and every time I unpackage a new shower curtain (which has the smell of fresh vinyl) the memories of a new doll rush through my senses. Only once was I disappointed when I had asked Santa for a new "Thumbelina" baby doll (the most popular doll that year) and didn't receive one. I must have been about six years old at the time and announced that next year I would visit a different Santa who would fill my request. Well, the next year I was happy to receive my long awaited request. Thumbelina was waiting for me under the tree the following Christmas, and I was proud and delighted to have her as my very own.

This little girl grew up and joyfully was blessed with five sons. Each year was a very merry Christmas no matter what the budget, and for a girl who had never had brothers I became very familiar with all the latest and most coveted boy toys that my sons enjoyed. Under our Christmas trees the boys would find things like Legos, action figures,

video games, Nerf guns, toy trucks, cars, train sets, tools, and sports gear. But somehow, without a doll, it just seemed like something significant of Christmas nostalgia was missing.

Fast forward to the Christmas of 1998. I was very pregnant (two weeks overdue to be exact). We had just finished celebrating yet another joy filled Christmas and everyone had gone to bed when I started having labor pains. They became increasingly stronger until the wee hours of the morning, when I woke my husband and suggested that I thought it was time to head for the hospital. After several more hours of laboring I delivered my precious daughter Hilary. She was a dream come true, the ultimate Christmas doll that I had waited a lifetime to receive. The scripture "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights..." seemed to announce Hilary's birth. She will be 10 years old this Dec. 26 and I still tell her she is my ultimate Christmas doll.

Now each year, as a bonus, our Christmas tree holds beneath it the treasure of a new doll.

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### **Christmas Wreath....by Janelle Mc.**

1/4 lb. butter

4 c. m,ini marshmallows

8 drops green food coloring

5 c. corn flakes

maraschino cherries

Line a pie pan with wax paper. Melt the butter and marshmallows, being careful not to burn the mixture. Add food coloring. Stir in corn flakes. Pour mixture into pie pan and quickly shape into a wreath. After it cools it can be removed from the pie pan. Add cherries to the wreath.

Recipe Note: 2 bags of marshmallows will make 3 wreaths

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