

Celebrating Good Memories of Christmas on Mackinac

By Tom Pfeiffelmann

Some of my earliest and fondest memories were of Christmas time and all that went with it: the mainland shopping trips, going up into the woods and picking out a tree, Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve, the school parties, going house to house Christmas Day to see what my buddies got, the community parties at the Community Hall and the school Christmas play.

When I was real young, my father and I would go up on the East Bluff behind the cottages and look for a large spruce or balsam tree. We had eleven foot ceilings at St. Cloud, so we always got a big tree. We would drag it home and my dad would saw off the bottom and use those branches for the mantel above the fireplace where our stockings would hang. If the tree had a bare spot, my dad would drill a hole in the trunk and insert a branch. He would then wire it to the tree and no one was the wiser. Our tree always had an angel on top and lots of bubble lights and icicles. We also had a lighted tree in the front yard. In later years, it was my job to pick out a tree. I remember one year I chopped down an extra big one and it took me two days to drag it home. The Horn family used to get their trees from the tops of tall spruce trees. One of the boys would climb half way up the tree and cut the top off and let it fall. They were very skinny, bushy trees. There were very few artificial trees back in the Fifties.

The Lions Club always put on a nice Christmas program at the Community Hall. They provided a turkey dinner, movies and lots of candy for all the Island children. It was great!

Just about everyone went to Midnight Mass and afterward we would go and have meat pie at someone's house.

I can remember getting a stuffed Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer the year Gene Autry made the famous song and a few years later when I got my first Red Ryder Daisy lever action carbine B.B. gun. I couldn't wait to show my pals. After opening all my presents, I was always anxious to head out to my friends' houses to see what Santa brought them. We would usually end up breaking something and when that happened we were off to the next house and more fun!

Later in the day I would return home for turkey dinner with my family and sometimes some aunts and uncles.

I will never forget one Christmas. Winter had set in with a heavy snowstorm and Christmas was only a week away. My brother and his buddies decided to go looking for a Christmas tree with a sleigh and a team of horses. I remember my Father specifically telling my brother not to take my dog, Laddie, as he might run away



Making the rounds on Christmas day in 1958 are (from left) Tom Pfeiffelmann, Eddie Horn, Eddie Pero, Jerry Horn, Don Francis, David Wightman, and Frank Blowski. (Photograph courtesy of Roger Horn)



The Christmas Pageant at the Community Hall in 1955. Front row, (from left): Cindy Francis, Ellen Stubbs, Jen Horn, Sandy Schmidt, unknown, Janice Wightman, and Lester Pero; (back) Wilma Fisher, unknown, unknown, Kathleen Green, Nancy Pfeiffelman, Candy Horn, Linda Horn, Sheila Reid, and Sylvia Perault. (Photograph courtesy of Tom Pfeiffelmann)

and wasn't familiar with the Island. Well, the dog went along. About three hours later, my brother came home and had to confess that he had taken the colie with him and while cutting down a large Christmas tree, it fell on Laddie and scared him off into the woods. They searched, but as it was getting dark, they gave up and came home.

It sure was a sad Christmas for this little six-year-old boy with no dog. I dreamed of waking Christmas morning and seeing Laddie, with a big red bow around his neck, sitting under the tree. This was not to be, however, and nothing would cheer me up.

Just before New Year's Eve, we were sitting down to dinner when the phone rang and my mother went to answer it. The phone was in the living room and we were in the kitchen but could hear my mother crying and thanking someone on the phone.

It turns out Laddie had somehow made his way into the Grand Hotel and was eating the leather off the chairs in the lobby when the night watchman found him. He was starving and scared and was given some food by the watchman. Most everyone on the Island knew my dog was missing and so he called our house to tell us the good news. It was the best Christmas present I ever got even if it was late.

For the rest of my dog's long life, he was terrified of loud noises and during thunder storms would hide under the house. The sight of a gun would send him running for home. He turned out to be a loyal friend and companion throughout my growing up years on Mackinac. I was away at college when he died.

• This story is reprinted from Mr. Pfeiffelmann's book, "Mackinac Adventures and Island memories: Growing Up on Mackinac," published in 2004.

Four Places Open on New Year's Eve

Open to celebrate the new year on New Year's Eve will be the Mustang Lounge, the Village Inn, and Patrick Sinclair's Irish Pub.

The Village Inn will offer music and dancing and complimentary champagne served at midnight, with a champagne and wine raffle. Visitors can also enjoy the Pontiac Lodge New Year's Eve package that includes lodging, a souvenir basket, sleigh ride, and a reception.

Patrick Sinclair's Irish Pub will offer a New Year's weekend celebration with a prime rib and lobster tail dinner both nights and entertainment provided by a traditional Irish sing-a-long folk band, the Black House Monks. A New Year's day brunch also will be served.

"For there is born
to you this day
in the city of David
a Savior, who is
Christ the Lord"

Luke 2:11

Little Stone Church - Union Congregational
Mackinac Island Bible Church
Ste. Anne's Catholic Church
Trinity Episcopal Church

