

My Memories of My Family
 By Karma Christensen

The memories of my childhood are warm and wonderful! I grew up in a perfect time, a time of innocence and joy.

When I think of my parents and brothers and sisters, I think of a family that worked & played together. It seemed that everything was for the good of the family. The needs of the family were met first. I think of Dad going to work every day, rain or shine taking his old black lunch box. You could set a clock by his return, he loved us and wanted to be home.

Mom was a "stay at home mom", she was there to take care of us kids and all the other many things "moms" do. She was always there, the first word we would yell when we came home from school was "MOM!". Only twice do I remember her not being there, once when I had been hit by a car, (I wasn't hurt just a few scraps, but boy did I bawl when she wasn't there) and the other was during a thunder storm and I was so scared! I knelt down and prayed that she would come home soon, it wasn't very long until in the driveway she drove.

We grew up on "The block", at that time there was all most 100 kids that lived there. The block was one big extended family, we were welcome in any home and in turn they were all welcome in our own. We were at home on the block, safe, secure, and happy.

I remember us kids would gather in the field and play games. Relievo, Crack the whip, (I really liked this one, being one of the smallest you could really go flying) Pomp, Red light Green light, Baseball, but don't let your ball get in to Mr. Barber's yard or you would never see it again! I think he must have had a radar system to know as soon as a stray ball hit his grass.

Mom & Dad's best friends came from the block. Lola & Loring, Laura & Lyman, Cora & Elmer. These people were just like parents to us, this has carried on into our adult lives. I remember this group of friends sitting around our kitchen table filling sacks with candy and nuts for a ward Christmas party. This scene was repeated many times. I remember the women sitting at the table or on the lawn and visiting. We kids would love to listen and see what information we could find out.

Christmas was a magic time for us, we would start it out by getting a Sears wish book. We kids would ponder over the pages for days on end dreaming of the perfect gift for Santa to bring. Then we would always go to the GRA Christmas party. I don't remember to much of the program except for singing "Here comes Santa Claus". Then we would hear his jingling bells, and Santa would appear. Then the awaited time would come the prizes would be drawn. Oh how we waited for our ticket to be drawn! We would never win unless we would bring a friend then the friend would win. The Grandkids made up for our losses though.

We would all work at little jobs on a chart with different sized payments according to how hard the job was. We would earn our money then when it was time to go Christmas shopping we would load in to the car and go to downtown Provo! Center street was a glorious wonderland of lights, cold air puffing from the shoppers. (The song Silver Bells always reminds me of this) We would look through Kress, Woolworth's, Pennys, and others stores, trying to find that special gift for everyone on our list.

Quite a few Christmases we would work for weeks to help a family in need. Fixing up toys, washing dolls faces, combing and curling hair and making new clothes. Mom would sew pretty dresses or a shirt for the children, fix up special tasty dishes. When all was ready on Christmas Eve we would all load up in the car with boxes full of surprises. We would park a few houses away Dad, Elmer and the bigger boys (who wouldn't get caught) would sneak up to the door leave the boxes, knock and run! What special memories these are. We were taught great principles of charity & service with out ever knowing we were being taught.

We would decorate our tree on Clari's birthday, Dec. 20. The tree seemed like it was up forever! We would lay under the tree and the bulbs would distort our faces as we looked into them. We would look at the packages all wrapped in bright paper, and try and guess what was inside. Steven just couldn't wait, when all alone or with a gullible accomplice (I was one once) he would carefully unwrap an end or the whole thing if necessary to find out what it was.

Christmas eve was spent with the Shepherd's (Cora & Elmer). Every other year it would be at our home. How excited we would be! Good food, laughter, gifts, games, and of course the Nativity. (We have carried this tradition on to the Great-grandchildren) I remember Ray Shepherd sithering like a snake down the stairs he was excited! One Christmas when we left the Shepherd's house and stepped out in to the cold frosty air and started to walk home. Out of Mr. Duddley's dark house came Santa Claus himself! What a surprise! We called to him to stop, but he just hurried on his way. Boy oh boy did we hurry ourselves home to bed.

Our Christmas contrition (I couldn't say tradition when I was little so we have always called it contrition) was to open one package Christmas Eve. It was always pajamas loving sewn by Mom. We would hang our stockings on our chosen spot, snuggle in to these soft new "jammies", jump in bed and wait for Santa!

I remember Christmas morning, getting the O.K. to get up. We would stand in the hall with the front room door shut and wait for Dad. He would slowly get up, then get dressed, have to go to the bath room, all the while the excitement was mounting, finally he would be ready. We would open the door and rush in to a magic Christmas land that Santa had created during the night. One year Lenore and I practiced our entrance for days, how we would look and what we would say when we got our baby dolls. I do not remember one Christmas of ever being disappointed. Once the green eyed monster of jealousy tried to creep in I had asked for a Tressie Doll and on Christmas morning I had my Tressie, but Lenore had one to for a few minutes I thought that's not fair she didn't ask for one! Santa knew what he was doing because Lenore and I had many wonderful hours playing dolls together.

We can't mention Christmas past and not talk about food! Santa would always bring a case of oranges, the big red bowl full of nuts, and of course the "Starbles". We would devour this by News Years and the News Years baby would bring some more! Christmas time has always been a marvelous time for me, I thank Mom and Dad for all the work and sacrifice they did to make it so special.

We always went camping with the whole Johnson tribe to Bear Canyon every summer. What fun we had spending time with our cousins, Aunts, Uncles, and Grandparents. We would play in the creek on inter-tubes covered with burlap sacks. We

would walk up the creek as far as possible then float down. There was fishing, horse shoes, the teeter totters, home made root beer, treats, songs around the camp fire, Grandmas honey candy, and of course Rook.

I always get a chuckle when I think of the floating bridge. We would have to cross it to drive right up to our camp sight. The sign said "SLOW" Dad would never heed the sign, and the bridge would buckle and bunch up. The trucks tires would be spinning and all sorts of excitement. When I was little I remember water coming in the back of the truck during one crossing scared me to death. I think Dad did this just to get us all fussed up! It's a memory to remember.

One of the weekly occurrences was our Saturday night bath, we would sit in the front room and watch Lawrence Welk while Mom put our hair in curler's. Then Sunday night we would pop, popcorn and watch "the Wonderful World of Disney".

One Christmas Nedra and Steven each got a bike! What fun they had! These two bikes are the only bikes I remember having at our house. Everyone shared the bikes I don't remember any fighting over them. Nedra taught me how to ride the bike, she rode on the pumper to help balance while I learn how. I remember riding this bike home from the church the day Nedra got married. We were over to the church decorating, I rode the bike home and my ringlets were bouncing up and down. (I thought that was pretty neat)

We loved to perform for the new movie camera! Mom and Dad always encouraged us to sing, play the piano, put on a play, or any creative thing! I appreciate their love and the confidence they helped to build in us.

The summer was not complete with out a "Super Circus". Mom's patience was unbelievable. We would make a tent on the clothes line out of blankets. Think up acts and practice for days. Then at the performances we'd sell tickets, popcorn and have a great show. I remember one time we left the record player out in the sun and that record was never the same.

We would often sleep out in the summer with a big group of friends. The sleeping bags would all be in a long row in the back yard. One challenge was to sneak apples from Mr. Rieske yard and not get caught! One time Lenore, Janice Larsen & I thought we could do it. We crept quietly through the Lilac bushes, across Connie's back yard, to the fence, the apple trees now in reach. I grabbed a big branch and pulled it over so I could get the apples. Out of nowhere Mr. Rieske grabbed my arm, we were caught! I screamed and let go of the branch it whapped him hard in the face! Needless to say that when that branch hit him he let lose of my arm. Boy did we run! I don't remember stealing apples from him again.

One fond memory is going to pick up Dad's paycheck. We would drive to Geneva (the old way this was before the freeway). Then we would stop at Ream's Grocery store, cash the check and buy groceries for the next two weeks. Nedra has said how she and Steven were playing around in the store and would open the Marshmallow toppings to see the fluffy white stuff come oozing out! (funny they didn't kick us out) After the groceries were loaded in the car, if we were lucky we would get to go to the Hi-Spot. Hamburgers were 5 for a dollar back then, we'd all get a hamburger and two orders of fries one for the front seat and one for the back! This doesn't sound like much but you got you moneys worth back then.

As we grew older Mom and I worked at the hospital as volunteers, a Pink Lady & Candy-striper. We worked in the cafeteria. We both enjoyed this very much. I learned to enjoy cooking and making new dishes here.

My brothers and sisters started to get married and leave home. This brought a new joy to us! Grandchildren! We thought these new little children were the neatest ever! We couldn't wait to see them! Codie, Chad, Joe, and Valena were wonderful in our eyes. One by one more of us married and more Grandkids were born, we have loved everyone so much.

Some very fond memories of life with the Grandkids are: the egg farm, salad parties, camping, going to get a coke, the Christmas party, our trip to California, and many more. What a wonderful time we had.

In the last eleven years I have really enjoyed getting to know Dad better. We have worked together building set for Children's Theatre. What marvelous memories! We have built Dragons, castles, pumpkin houses, Tom Sawyers village, that the buildings would open and close like a book, all done with pulleys. What fun we've had. One time that wasn't much fun, was when he fell out of a truck and got ran over by a sleigh! He was hurt pretty bad, and I'm sure glad he made it!

All in all my memories of my family are fond ones. Fresh home baked bread, bringing clothes off the line sweet with the smell of outdoors, canning corn, working together, playing games, Grandparents living with us, I could go on and on. Thanks Mom and Dad for everything you did to make our lives happy!