

# Living On a Lake: My Best Christmas Ever

By Gayle Rich-Boxman

Richmond Virginia, Christmas Eve 1968. Mom and Dad stick my sister and I in our guest room, close the door and we promise not to come out til Christmas morning for any reason. I remember several things: lots of noises, bumps, a bit of yelling or grouching from our parents on the other side of the door throughout the night. I also remember having a little television and of all things, watching Lawrence Welk (oh my) and The Miracle on 34th Street—a Christmas classic. In those days, we had only a few TV stations and it probably got late and we were either not tired or bored and Lawrence Welk was one of the few shows to choose from. For those of you who are old enough to remember, there was a lot of old-fashioned music, bad hair-dos and clothing (that haven't come back into fashion thankfully) and BUBBLES! It was the first and last time I ever watched it, so I am still clueless as to the significance of the bubbles.

Fast forward to Christmas

morning...we woke our parents up early, and though they were quite bleary-eyed and utterly exhausted, they allowed us to drag them out of bed and were thrilled by our over-the-top reactions to what they had done for us for Christmas. In ONE NIGHT, they had completely transformed both of our bedrooms! I'm talking about furniture and everything! Many small individually wrapped presents were discovered in the drawers of our new night stands beside our new beds. For any of you who have staged a room or two, just think about MOVING EVERYTHING OUT AND MOVING NEW STUFF IN up a flight of stairs and arranging it all in less than twelve hours with just two people! I truly can't imagine how they managed to not hurt themselves, or do it without blowing a head gasket!!

It was the best Christmas EVER.

One of my fondest memories of those three days was actually the smell of incense. In that day, incense burners were the new craze. That was one of the little presents found in my night stand. The incense burner was made of brass in this



East Indian sort of small configuration, with a flattish round bottom and a small center where you placed the cone of incense, along with a rather Mosquish-looking top with cut-out stars on the sides

so that the incense could filter through in an aromatic drift of smoke. The day after Christmas we had a freak snow storm and lost power for three days. Even though the temperatures upstairs were freezing, I spent hours up there in my newly refurbished room burning my incense and letting it waft around. I was in heaven!

As a neighborhood we all gathered together in whatever warmth

and light we could find during the power outage and so, post-Christmas, we asked our neighbors over to sit around in our den near our only source of heat, our fireplace. It also had a piano, someone brought a guitar, we had the fireplace going and candles lit and we sang Christmas carols. I recall my dad backing up into a candle and lighting his new Christmas sweater on fire!

Other than burning toast in the fireplace and Dad's mishap, I have only fond memories of spending three days with no electricity right at Christmas. We all managed to stay warm no matter what the temperature because we were happy and truly embraced the feeling of Christmas in every way! The smell of incense still takes me immediately back to my youth and is a reminder of how incredibly generous our parents were.

This season is one to embrace generosity. Don't forget those who are less fortunate and give freely...even if it's just of your heart. That's the best kind of gift - free, but priceless.

## Celebrating Families 2013



On Friday, December 20 and Saturday, December 21 kids and families gathered at the Grace Family Fellowship Church to join the fun at the "Celebrating Families" event. This is the third year that volunteers from the Summer Meals Program have organized the event which allows kids to make craft projects that they can give as holiday gifts. Activities this year included cookie decorating, holiday cards, a cupcake mug kit, candy cane art and a holiday sticker book. All activities were free although donations were accepted. On Friday children could get their photos taken in their PJ's with the Grinch; on Saturday Santa stopped by for photos. The photos were a fundraiser for the Head Start Program. The Celebrating Families event is organized in partnership with the Vernonia School District.

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