



Betty Kaiser

## Betty Kaiser's Chatter Box: Christmases past: Memories and lessons learned

of Mexico. Early pictures of her show a barefoot girl in a dirty dress in the blowing desert sand. Later, things picked up rather dramatically for her family and I now have her beautiful French china doll.

Mom and dad met and married in Missouri and moved to California near her parents during the Great Depression. Grandpa established a business and by the grace of God they all survived and went on to buy houses and live the American dream.

Chuck's family immigrated from Wisconsin to Calif., during WWII. In Long Beach, his dad welded the Victory Ships. It was a dangerous job but it both helped the war effort and put food on the table for his family. Later, his job at Sears bought Christmas gifts for his three sons.

One year when Chuck was about 8 or 9 Santa brought him his favorite gift ever — a Gilbert Erector Set. He spent hours building cars and even a motorized roller coaster. It foretold his future as a craftsman extraordinaire.

In my family, I remember what seemed like lavish Christmases. Oranges and apples were in stockings. Under the tree were new clothes and a toy. I still have my Madame Alexander bride doll. My favorite was a Schwinn bicycle.

The same one that I would later fall off while racing the boy down the

street. It put me in the hospital with a compound fracture of my left arm.

Our kids were blessed with toys. Their dad managed stores for Toy World! A childhood dream world.

They always knew what the latest and greatest toys were. Chuck would put them on lay-away to be brought home and wrapped at midnight after the store closed on Christmas Eve.

Kathy, our oldest, was an avid doll collector and had her own dad-built playhouse in the backyard. Her favorite? "My bike," she said. "In the pre-car, parents drive the kids to a million activities days ... bikes were our freedom, our connection with our friends, the beach, shopping and more!"

Son Jeff was all about speed and music: skateboards, model cars, model airplanes and trumpets.

Grandson Matthew says, "My absolute favorite gift was a used MacBook when I was in middle school. This gift allowed me to have something to create music on; illustrate and sketch out ideas; learn about things through sources like YouTube.

It was an incredible gift that allowed me to learn everything from music mixing to video editing and graphic design. It is something that will forever stick out in my mind and I am super grateful for."

Ashley, our granddaughter-in-law remembers her family's on-going puzzle tradition.

Every Christmas morning there's a new puzzle for everyone to enjoy. She says it keeps them connected and doing something together with very little effort.

Finally, John, our youngest son, passes on a lesson learned:

"When I was 13, I wanted a 12-string guitar more than anything in the world. Knowing that no one would buy me a brand new 12 string guitar for Christmas — too expensive, too extravagant — I put a janky, used, "trampoline action" 12 string guitar on layaway at Heck Music in Ventura.

"When my mom heard about it, she drove me to Heck Music, demanded they give my money back, and lectured me all the way home saying, 'Never buy yourself something before Christmas!' I was humiliated, and angry. I knew darned well I wasn't getting a 12-string guitar for Christmas.

"On Christmas day, my grandparents arrived. Grandpa tossed me the car keys and said, 'Well, you better get the presents out of the trunk.' I opened the trunk, and sitting right on top was a guitar case!

"I had to wait until all the other presents were opened before I opened that guitar case. Inside was a brand new, beautiful Yamaha FG312 12 string guitar. I played that guitar for decades, until it was (sadly) stolen from my office about 10 years ago. Best gift ever!

"The moral of the story is: Never buy yourself something before Christmas... because you never know what you might get!"

Merry Christmas, everyone! And may all your memories be ones of joy.

Contact Betty Kaiser's Chatterbox at 942-1317 or email [bchatty@bettykaiser.com](mailto:bchatty@bettykaiser.com)



## Pet tips 'N' tales

By Mary Ellen  
"Angel Scribe"

### 'Holden' on to a Christmas miracle

Here is my favorite miracle wrapped beautifully in Holiday Spirit. Christmas Eve 48 years ago my husband, Howard, and I prepared for an unusual — possibly depressing — Christmas holiday because my stepfather, Jim, had terminal cancer. But, never in a million Christmases did we expect to end up immersed in a miracle! At the time, we had to take the ferry from Vancouver Island to reach the mainland where my parents lived. We packed up Christmas gifts and our "traveling trouble-adors" Channel and Camelot, Shaded Silver Persian cats whose fluffy, white winter coats resembled the cuffs on Santa's red jacket. As we pulled up to my childhood home, its Christmas lights sparkliness transfixed me, transporting me back in time. I entered the house into the kitchen where Jim's well-stocked "pharmacy" stood as the ammunition in his war against pain and illness. A heaviness hung in the air as if the Spirit of Christmas had yet to make an appearance, or had refused to board the ferry with us, purr-furring instead to remain behind on the Island with all of our friends and neighbors.

We decided to make an early night of it and all went to bed. I was the first to awaken on Christmas morning. Everyone else in the household was still peacefully asleep so even though it was only 7 a.m., I decided to call my best friend, Rita, back on Vancouver Island; after all, her giggling children would have awakened her hours ago. "Hello," she answered in a weak, crackly voice.

"Rita, are you all right?" I asked.

"Who is this?" came the reply from a total stranger.

Oh-Oh! Apparently, the busy holiday phone lines had crossed resulting in awakening an elderly woman. I apologized for waking her, but she said, "Not to worry. It is nice to have someone to talk to, as I don't have anything to do today, nor anyone to talk to."

No one is a stranger to me, so we began chatting.

Rita's number is a long distance, so I was curious as to where this woman lived.

"Burnaby," she said. About 10 miles away.

I know that when many phones are in use wires get crossed. But, how could this be? Introducing herself, she said that her name was Faith and that she was an 80-year-old widow and she did not have children. She continued that she had no reason to get up, as she had no one to share Christmas with. She was glad I phoned, calling it "A bit of a Christmas gift."

Faith and I talked for an hour. My mother awakened in the meantime so I asked her if Faith could share Christmas dinner with us and she said, "Yes."

Faith hung up the phone. Hours later she caught the first of many buses. Little did the last bus driver know that he would really be delivering a Christmas miracle. Excitedly anticipating the arrival of our mystery guest, our home's atmosphere was transformed from "doom and gloom" into joy. In the skiff of snow I met Faith at the bus stop. As a child, I frequently rescued stray animals, but this new rescue was an adventure, resulting in a wonderful visit, sharing a delicious meal and lots of laughter! After dinner, Faith and I donned our coats in preparation to drive her home but we were sidetracked by a miracle so extraordinary that we are still in awe of it after all of these years! Faith and my mother were saying their last good-byes when my mother asked, "What is your last name?"

Faith replied, "Holden."

"No!" my mother responded, "That's *our* last name."

We all experienced the shock of our lives when Faith, repeated, "My last name is Holden. H-o-l-d-e-n."

What are the odds? The same last name spelled the same way! How had we been divinely put together with someone with the same family name? What a miraculous, Divine, coincidence! Obviously, the universe was saying, "Family is not by birth alone, but also by Divine appointment. We are all one!"

Still in shock, (and our coats), we sat down on the living room couch beside the ticking grandfather clock, unprepared for even more as-yet-to-be-revealed surprises as Faith shared the story of her life. Her husband was from England, as was my stepfather, Jim, with both families migrating to the same city in Canada. Both of their husbands were the second of four children, with the same combination of brothers and sisters in the same birth order, and all of the siblings remaining childless after marriage. Faith and my mother had attended the same high school. An amazing list of coincidences, as if the two women were reading from identical books of life, reiterating one similar experience after another. How was it possible to dial a long distance number on Christmas morning, but end up connecting with a "local" person who needed us as much as we needed her? Unbelievably mysterious — God obviously works overtime on Christmas. It is a Christmas and a miracle we will never forget! And the clincher: Faith revealed that her phone number is *unlisted*! So, even if we had wanted to locate her, we could not have, adding evening more mystery to this Christmas Morning Miracle! May your holidays be magical, filled with miracles, family and friends. And if the holidays look dull create some magic and memories for others. Did you ever receive a pet for Christmas? Tell us the story at [angelscribe@msn.com](mailto:angelscribe@msn.com).



Mary Ellen and Myster E. wish you a wonderful holiday and a New Year filled with Joy and Health.

## COTTAGE GROVE BUDGET AND AUDIT COMMITTEE OPENINGS

The City is seeking applications for two positions on the Cottage Grove Budget Committee and one position on the Audit Committee. They are all for three (3) year terms. Budget Committee terms expire December 31, 2021, and the Audit Committee term expires July 2021. The deadline to submit an application is **5:00 p.m., January 16, 2019**. For more information and to download an application go to [www.cottagegrove.org](http://www.cottagegrove.org) or call 541-942-3346 X113.

# 6-day weather forecast

<b>THURSDAY</b> 56°   37° Rain	<b>FRIDAY</b> 46°   36° Mostly Cloudy
<b>SATURDAY</b> 47°   40° Rain	<b>SUNDAY</b> 47°   41° Rain
<b>MONDAY</b> 46°   37° Rain	<b>TUESDAY</b> 46°   35° Rain



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