



Writers remember...



Memories wrapped in paper

Sarah Lunsford

One of my favorite Christmas memories revolves around the iconic image of the holiday: the Christmas tree.

Because of my love of those wonderful characters created by Charles Schulz in his “Peanuts” comic strip, I have always had a fondness for the woebegone Christmas tree that was featured in “A Charlie Brown Christmas,” with its sparse limbs and one or two ornaments that was appreciated no matter what it looked like.

My love for the woeful little tree sprang from my love for Charlie Brown, Lucy, Snoopy, Woodstock, Pigpen and the rest of the “Peanuts” gang.

Every year when we went to the

local Christmas tree lot, I would find the most scraggly looking tree that seemed like it needed a lot of love and decorations and gaze at it with longing before joining the rest of the family in picking out the perfect tree.

My parents had their own mental picture of what a perfectly proportioned tree should look like, and my dad was the one who ended up picking out the perfect tree year after year. He always found the quintessential tree, perfect in shape, height and proportion. If such things were, it would have been the tree that all the other trees would look up to, longing to be just like it.

We would tie the green perfection onto the top of our car and take it home, where Dad would make sure it fit perfectly in the stand where it would remain drinking water for a couple of days before we started the process of making it look even more perfect.

When the tree was ready, the boxes filled to the brim with Christmas ornaments would come out of the attic. The familiar smell of ornaments wrapped lovingly in protective paper the year before would rise up and take me back to those Christmases past. Along with the familiar sweet smell, when we began to unwrap the ornaments and take them out of the paper, memories would rise up and expand with every bright decoration.

Of course, everyone had a favorite bauble.

Mom always loved the faded Christmas paper angels that our fat fingers put together when we were young, along with the paper and paste green-and-red garlands that conspicuously ended somewhere in the middle of the tree as they looped around the back but never quite made it back to the front again.

My older (and only) brother

loved the pair of little sparkling green pixies that always sat on two limbs on either side of the tree just a few branches below the angel perched at the top.

Dad, well, my dad always just loved the tree with all its sparkling white lights and decorations that were carefully placed just so. His annual task – aside from selecting the tree and telling us it looked great after it was decorated – was to make sure the angel sat on top of the tree and didn’t list to the right or the left. Adjusting the angel’s stance typically involved some sort of cardboard and rubber bands to make a place from which she could preside over the room.

And my favorite ornament? Well, I still look for it on my parents’ tree every year. It was never wrapped in regular paper like most of the others; it had its own box with a golden latch that was covered with red

satin. Whenever I saw the box nestled among all the other wrapped ornaments, I would wonder if it was as beautiful as it was the year before. Holding the red box, I would gently ease open the golden clasp to see the Renaissance-inspired ornament, a red velvet-covered orb that has a picture of a Renaissance woman on its front.

Year after year I was never disappointed; I always thought it was just as beautiful as I did the year before. After admiring it once again, I would carefully put this one cherished ornament near one of the pixies at the top of the tree. When I was done, I always stood back and thought about the fact that if I had just one ornament for a Charlie Brown tree, that this most beautiful of all ornaments would be the one. It wouldn’t matter to me one bit if it bent the whole tree, because the decorations were placed with love.

Hoping for a white Christmas



Harmony Wheeler

Until last year, I had never had the chance to dream of a white Christmas. I grew up in Modesto, and the one time it snowed there in the past few years I was at college. So after I moved to Twain Harte with my parents about two years ago, the big snowstorm around

Thanksgiving had us all excited. The power came back on just in time for us to have Thanksgiving dinner. Of course, I had been in the snow before at college in New York and in Indiana, and I had visited the mountains a few times to see the snow growing up, but there’s nothing like living in it.

Unfortunately, when Christmas-time came around, the weather cleared up. My dreams of a white Christmas intensified, but not quite so much as those of my mother.

“I just know we’re going to have a white Christmas,” Mom said non-stop as Christmas drew near.

“I prayed that we would have a white Christmas and I just know God is going to answer my prayer,” Mom continued on Christmas day. “I just know we’re going to have a white Christmas.”

Dad and I teased her and told her she was wrong, that it wouldn’t snow, but she persevered.

Christmas day quickly passed, hour by hour.

“It’s not over,” Mom said. “It’s still Christmas day.”

Sure enough, around 9 p.m., it started to snow. A light layer of snow, perhaps 2-inches in depth, gave my mom just enough of a white Christmas for



her to make a snow angel.

Aside from the time I got a dollhouse big enough for me to sleep in as a child, that white Christmas

has to be my favorite holiday memory; the best gift a girl could ask for on her first Christmas in Tuolumne County.