

## I Remember Christmas

My Christmas before I was a teen, I could hardly wait until the magical two weeks would come.



My parents had an artificial tree that burned candles. Christmas tree lights, as we know them, were not available at that time. The tree was about 4 to 5 feet high and had little metal things (candle holders) on the end of each limb that would hold a candle.

My dad would go to Kraft's Hardware store in Utica and buy a box of candles that would fit the size of the candle holder.

He would set the tree up and we would start decorating. We then would put the candles in their respective candle holders on the end of the limbs. Next would come the various decorations. As we finished decorating, the final step would be the lighting of the candles. We had to be quiet, and were not allowed to run around so that the flame would not blow on the limbs or they might catch on fire.

Many a house burned down because of fires caused by a Christmas tree fire. Then the candles were all lit, and we three would sit there motionless watching the candles burn. The lights were out and it was a pretty sight. Dad would wait until they were half burned, which would be about 15 to 30 minutes, and we would put the fire out on the candles so we could burn them the next night.

You see, we were in a depression and money was scarce, and the box of candles would have to last until Christmas. Needless to say, we never had a problem with fire as we were very cognizant of the destruction that a fire could cause. Another Christmas legend was the Christmas bag we kids received on Christmas Eve at Trinity Lutheran Church. St. Lawrence and the Utica Methodist Church did the same thing. After the Christmas Eve church service, all of the kids would come to the front of the church to get their Christmas bag from the elders of the church.

In the bag was a variety of nuts, an apple (usually a snow apple which had white meat), an orange, and sometimes a banana. The other churches used the same method of disbursing their bags. Bananas were seldom in the bag. Very few were being shipped into the U.S. at that time. Sometimes the elders of the church had a little more money and we would get one in the bag.

As I got the bag home, I would dump its contents on the kitchen table to see what I had received. The first thing I would grab was the orange. I would peel the orange and we three, Mom, Dad and I, would share the orange. You see, there was no money to buy oranges and this would be the last one until next year at Christmas time.

My how times have changed.