

Christmas Memories - By Stanton Southwick



Christmas can be a time of nostalgia, reflecting on the memories and feelings of this special time of year. These thoughts of past Christmases several decades ago come to mind.

I grew up in a rural community in northern Utah at the base of Lewis Peak. The foothills adjacent to our house offered great places for me and my friends to explore and play. Christmas breaks were the perfect time to get old tractor inner tubes and go tubing down the dirt service road leading to the irrigation canal that ran along the foothill. One Christmas I remember a record snowfall. The snow

broke power lines leaving us without power for three days. Stores and businesses were closed, and the snowplows couldn't get out to clear the streets. The road in front of my house that led up to the foothill was snow packed and slick. We jumped on the party-line rotary phones and got everyone in the area out to sled down the street. We sled for most of the day but were only able to make a handful of very fast runs because it took forever to hike back up the half mile long road, slipping and sliding the whole way.

As a young teenager, I wanted to learn to ski and asked for skis for Christmas. I must have asked a little too late...or I was on the naughty list that year...because I didn't get them. So, I started talking about skiing the following spring and kept it up all year in hopes that I would get them next Christmas. That year my dad lost his job after the department store he worked for closed their doors. My dad was out of work for six months that year. I was pretty sure my hope of getting skis was lost. To my surprise, that Christmas morning a pair of slightly used, but new to me, skis were under the tree. I don't know how my parents pulled it off but I'm pretty sure my next door neighbors, who happened to be my grandparents, had something to do with it.

Forty-two years ago on Christmas day, I proposed to my wife. I carried the ring around with me the whole day working up the nerve to pop the question. After visiting all sorts of family and friends, eating dinner, and holiday partying I finally asked her. She said yes! Our families were pretty upset I hadn't done it earlier so that they could congratulate us as we visited throughout the day. But they got over it.

Christmas is my favorite time of year because of all the feelings and memories it brings to me. Take a stroll down memory lane during this season and remember all the good things in your life.

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

"Our hearts grow tender with childhood memories and love of kindred, and we are better throughout the year for having, in spirit, become a child again at Christmas time." -Laura Ingalls Wilder

Favorite Flora: Dwarf Chinese Holly - By Caryl Davies



Sometimes a plant can be associated with a certain time of year. At this time of year I think of pine trees, poinsettias, mistletoe, and holly. Even though we are in the desert, we can grow holly under the right conditions.

This month's favorite flora is Ilex cornuta 'Burfordii Nana' also known by its common name, Dwarf Chinese Holly. This evergreen shrub is not seen too often in Las Vegas and it does take more water than a more common desert-adapted plant, but its thick green leaves give a lush look

that will provide year-round interest. In the late spring, you will see small yellow-white flowers followed in the fall with highly ornamental red berries that stay through the winter providing food for birds. This approximately 4' high by 4' wide evergreen shrub can be used as a border or hedge plant but keep in mind that the leaves do have a spine or two so be careful when handling or locating in your garden.

Holly's tend to prefer acidic soil and Las Vegas has mostly alkaline soil, so if you chose to grow Dwarf Chinese Holly, it will take a diligent gardener to assure the soil is fertile, well drained, and has the right amendments it needs. The benefit is that this beautiful plant can give you the feeling of the holidays all year long.



Early Snow, Cedar Mountain Utah
Caryl Davies