

*Life on the farm*

# 'Weihnachtsmann' works wonders

My brother, Ingo, and I were both old enough to shave before our mother granted us permission to join her on a trip to a patch of evergreen trees where we annually selected the best Tannenbaum for our living room.

I suppose none of the five Krieg children ever made it past the second grade before we realized there really wasn't a "Weihnachtsmann," but Mom kept on trying to keep us convinced. In fact, I don't think she has ever given up. But if nothing else, we've now known for years that Dad places the Christmas tree in the living room, and then Mom spends hours decorating it. The Weihnachtsmann -- or Santa Claus as most of you folks know him -- still gets all the credit, however. Mom insists on it.

Christmas is slow in coming. Especially for eager children. And especially for those with German parents who live on a farm.

Christmas is too holy and important of a holiday to treat lightly or saturate with displays which detract from its true meaning, our mother always insists. That's why we always treated Christmas Eve as a very, very special occasion. And, in accordance with German tradition, Christmas Day is celebrated on both the 25th and 26th of December. Add Christmas Eve, and the festivities are stretched out to truly be the most

memorable occasion a family can experience.

Except for sprigs of evergreens decorating pictures in the house, an Advent wreath, and Christmas music playing softly on the radio, there was never much physical evidence at home that Christmas was near. At least not until about 7 p.m., Christmas Eve.

Anticipating that magical and wondrous hour was the key to our wound-up enthusiasm and eagerness.

For days and even weeks prior to Christmas Eve, our emotions for Christmas were somewhat restrained. As the moment of celebration drew closer and closer, our anticipation grew. As with anything, the more we had to wait and anticipate, the more eager we became. The end result was that the occasion meant that much more and blossomed so much the brighter when it finally arrived.

When Christmas Eve was just a couple of hours away, the "Weihnachtsmann" made that trip to the grove of evergreens on a hilly slope of the farm.

Meanwhile, cookies were baking in the oven and delicious meals were being planned or prepared. You just knew that something was coming up, and couldn't wait for the night to blossom in glorious warmth and beauty.

While my father, brother, and I

were busy with the barn work -- making sure that the animals were well cared for and in their own way prepared for the Holy Night -- the "Weihnachtsmann" was supposedly decorating the Christmas tree and placing presents under it.

Once the calves and cows had been bedded down with a little more straw than usual, and the smell of some of our best hay filled the barn, we turned off the lights and walked up to the house. It was always a quiet night. Beautiful and serene, the way you'd expect it to be for Christ's birth.

Now the magical and wondrous moment was only an hour or even just minutes away.

By this time the living room had long been sealed off to anyone except Mom and Dad. A delicious meal, the finest dinnerware and a clean linen awaited us in the dining room. Showered and reasonably well dressed, we sat down for supper.

The warmth and beauty of the occasion grew to such proportions that it left no doubt this birthday was special. We felt good inside. Love filled the house. The holy night had truly arrived.

But it was far from over yet

In the living room, the "Weihnachtsmann" was supposedly still at work. We couldn't enter until after he had finished with his labor of love, and so we waited with our

hearts and minds just about stretched to capacity.

The signal to enter the living room came when Mom rang a small bell and a stereophonic recording of German church bells filled the house. The majestic and glorious sounding bells ushered us in to the tune of Christmas favorites such as "Silent Night" and "O Come Little Children."

The first thing we noticed was the magnificent tree. The "Weihnachtsmann" had done a fantastic job of decorating it. No one ever had a more beautiful tree. Its soft candle light illuminated the room just enough to see the facial expressions.

It wasn't until we were older that we noticed Mom's and Dad's faces glowing just as magnificently as the tree. We could see the love and joy in their eyes as they watched us search for gifts with our names on them. O what a pleasant feeling! And what a holy night!

We stayed up late and allowed our hearts to be filled with love and joy to a level unequalled during any other time of the year.

The festive mood prevailed in all its glory for two more days. The tree and the Christmas spirit remained for an additional week or even two. No one allowed this wondrous occasion to leave as quickly as it came.

Have a merry Christmas, everyone!



What a humbling experience it must have been some 2,000 years ago when Christ, our Lord, was born in a lowly manger in Bethlehem.

It is with a deep sense of thankfulness at this most blessed time of our Christian year that all of your friends that work for Beacon Feeds along with all of our Beacon dealers would like to extend to you and your families best wishes for a

"Merry Christmas" and a "Happy New Year".

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