

Christmas is one of the most wonderful times of year. The colorful lights, Christmas decorations, laughing and smiling children, cold, crisp weather, and the celebration of the birth of Christ define the holiday season. These elements make the season unparalleled. Christmas is also significant because of the time we spend with friends and family. Wesley residents readily shared some cherished Christmas memories.

Wesley Lea Hill resident, Katherine Hanson, remembers Christmas at the grandparents. Katherine came from a large family of 3 girls and 2 boys. Christmas brought many grandchildren and grand cousins together. She recalls that the grandchildren were strictly not allowed in the living room. Handsome French doors were closed between the living room and dining room. The children would press their noses against the windows waiting for Santa's arrival. The only time the children were allowed in the living room was when Santa came to hand out presents. One of the men in the neighborhood always played the part of Santa. Enduring bonds were created amongst all those cousins. As adults the cousins would get together every Christmas. Katherine concluded, "We were a very close family."

Patty Deal, Wesley Bradley Park resident shared two very special Christmas memories involving her dad. When Patty was 6 years old her father had been in Europe for 3 months. He was setting up housing for the family's move to Germany. Christmas saw her father's return. Patty's most vivid memory of the reunion was the beautiful doll he gave her.

Patty then revealed the second time she was reunited with her father very close to Christmas, just 5 years later. This time her dad had spent one year in Vietnam away from his family. She recalled that her mom kept his return a secret because she wanted it to be a surprise. Patty declared, "That was the best Christmas present ever!"

Wesley Lea Hill resident, Sandra Fokkema, offered a fresh perspective on the Christmas season. Sandra has lived in Auburn for 60 years, but her richest memories of Christmas are from her time growing up in Holland.

Sandra shared, "In Holland the birth of Christ Jesus is celebrated on December 25 with church services on December 25 and 26." The Dutch wish to keep Christmas Day sacred. Sandra continued, "Christmas (in Holland) is also a fun time." Santa does play a part in the Christmas season. However, Santa makes his appearance in Holland on December 5, not in a sleigh with reindeer, but tradition dictates that he arrives from Spain on a steamship. Gifts are delivered by Santa on the 5th, then hidden and opened on the 6th. Also, special Santa Claus songs are sung during this time. In her neighborhood as a child Sandra recollected, "Santa rode in on a horse and climbed on the roofs and dropped candies down the chimney. It was all so wonderful!"

Take the opportunity this Christmas time to share your memories of the season, large or small. You never know, you may make a friend.