

Hoquiam Farmer's Market News - Merry Christmas Wishes

Local News

Posted by: Anonymous

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When I was a little girl, we would often spend Christmas with my Grandma and Grandpa Bennett in Ryderwood. The drive took us quite literally 'over the river and through the woods' to grandmothers house. More than that, it took us to an enchanted place where little girls had special treats and privileges. Once our coats were off, the hugs and kisses given, Grandma would lead my sister and I to the closet where she kept her latest sewing projects. The door was opened and we pounced upon the two new starched dresses, made in little girl sizes. There has never been a dress in my life that could match the sweet creations which Grandma made. In fact, there is one which I simply could not give up- it survives still in my grandma's cedar chest. It was selfish of me to keep it- our dresses, like the other dresses we wore, circulated in a pool of clothing that my mother's friends exchanged as the children outgrew their clothes. Scraps of material left over from our dresses always ended up in a quilt. Grandma would have found it difficult to understand the modern concept of buying fabric for the sole purpose of making a quilt. Each of her quilts were like a scrapbook of treasured memories; the house dress that my mother wore until parts of the cloth completely wore out, the shirt of my fathers that still had some usable material in the sleeves, parts of a kitchen tablecloth. Looking at those tiny quilt pieces transports me to my childhood.

Grandma and Grandpa's retirement house was really, really tiny. Just right for them, but pretty crowded when our family came to visit. On summer nights we got to put our sleeping bags on the porch and sleep outside. On cold winter nights our sleeping bags were spread on top of Grandma's hand-hooked rugs in the living room. Having moved from a much larger house, the beautiful rugs were layered four and five deep in this little house. We played games on the geometric ones, making up silly rules about following the lines and winning if you could reach the center. The floral ones became settings for inside garden tea parties for dolls. There would be only one store bought Christmas gift, the same one every year. We looked forward to it as anxiously as if had cost a million dollars. It would be slowly unwrapped, revealing a box of Storybook Lifesavers. The most coveted flavor was the butterscotch. Then would come the rest of the gifts, all made with Grandma's loving hands; dollclothes that exactly fit each of our dolls, keeping them outfitted in the highest fashion of the day, a tiny doll-sized sleeping bag for my dolly (she hated being lost in the covers at night), miniature quilts so that our dolls could sleep under layers of love just like we did, stockings stuffed with oranges and nuts. Grandma knew a child's heart. I think that she had special insight due to the fact that her own childhood had been painfully cut short. Her own mother had died when she was very young and her father couldn't manage both work and looking after the family. The children were 'farmed out' to various relatives, rarely seeing each other. My grandmother felt that her sister had the better part of the division- that aunt and uncle let her sleep in the house and be a part of the family. My grandma slept in a farm outbuilding and was looked upon as a servant girl. Not surprisingly, she left that dismal home as soon as she could. Her delight in sewing us pretty dresses and keeping our dolls so well cared for was a way for her to experience a childhood that was cruelly taken away from her. Later that night, snuggled in my sleeping bag, I listened as my parents and grandparents played card games around the kitchen table. Lulled to sleep by their laughter, I said my prayers of thanks. I still do. Barbara

Bennett Parsons, with wishes to you for a blessed Christmas.