

# The Faces of Christmas 2017



The Faces of Christmas...Dec.1, 2017

The "Faces of Christmas" in our life are simply on loan from God. Let's look at some of the faces who have strolled thru my life. Some, like every person in this picture, are long gone but others are still in my world.

Today let's start with some faces of people from long ago...1928 to be exact. Don't you love the way they are all dressed up for the occasion? The women are wearing their sensible tan cotton stockings (some are sagging at the knee) and are wearing Mary Janes. This was taken on Christmas Day 1928 on my mom's uncle Carl Manke's farm about a mile east of her birthplace near Malcolm, Nebraska.

Left to right front row: Mildred and Esther Pieper, and Verna Manke is between the two Hearold boys.

Behind them were Carl Manke, Mom, Alma Pieper, Agnes and Leona Manke, and Mary Hearold.

In the back were Ray Hearold and Carl Pieper.

Mildred, Esther and Alma Pieper were Mom's sisters and Carl Pieper was her dad. Agnes and Carl Manke were Mom's aunt and uncle and Verna and Leona were their daughters. I have no idea who the Hearolds were.

I've also added a Christmas tree from that era. No doubt they carried it outside to take the picture.

Do you have any very-old pictures of Christmas to share? I'm sure all those ladies were mighty busy in the days before Christmas, baking goodies and making candy. This was before the Great Depression hit so they probably had access to sugar. Eggs and fresh milk and cream were plentiful.



## December 2<sup>nd</sup>

Yesterday the "Faces of Christmas" were mighty busy at daughter Cindy and her hubby Fred Watson's home near Forest, VA.

Every December the local Girl Scouts, Brownies and Daisies gather at a Lynchburg church for Service Day. The girls make Christmas cards for soldiers, pack birthday boxes for Meals on Wheels and make ornaments for themselves. They also snack on cookies. There are huge tubs of frosting and many bowls of colored sugar for them to slather onto cut-out cookies.

For many years these cookies have been furnished by Cindy Watson so yesterday Cindy and her crew of elves baked cookies.....THIRTY-SIX DOZEN cut-out cookies. Twelve batches of dough were mixed, using 12 pounds of butter, 24 cups of sugar, 2 dozen eggs and about 75 cups of flour. The process began a bit before 12:30 and the last cookies came out of the oven at 4:00. All this was done with 4 cookie sheets. We had a system going. Nell Watson (Fred's mom), Nancy Robinson (a friend from Gladys, VA) and I cut out the cookies. As the cookies were cut out, Jim and Fred transferred them to pieces of parchment paper and set them aside. When a pan of cookies came out of the oven another sheet of cookies was pulled onto the pans. Cindy was the "mixer-upper" and baker and kept the whole project running smoothly. The magic ingredient in the goodies was the laughter and love (and flour dust) that floated over the goodies. Thank you, Cindy, for letting us be a part of this fun tradition

## December 3<sup>rd</sup>

The "Faces of Christmas" continue as I remember my kids' grampa and grandma, Clem and Arvilla Faist, and their favorite (and only!) aunt, Marion Greenfield-Sanden. These pictures were taken on the Florence Road farm about 5 miles south of Freeport, Illinois in 1950.

Oh, my, that tree! Honestly, every decorated tree is beautiful....even if it is a "Charlie-Brown-type" tree...because of the memories that float thru the cranium of both the person decorating it and the person seeing it. Actually, what they see are their own memories, not the physical tree. Be honest; do not trees transport you back to long ago loving times and make your heart bubble?



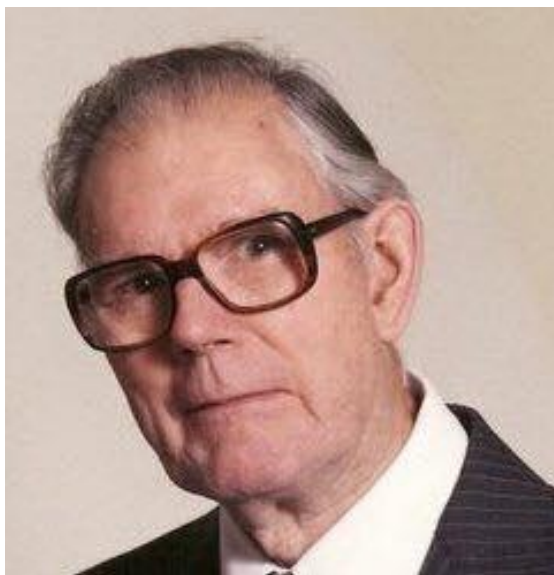
December 5<sup>th</sup>

The "Faces of Christmas" here belong to my parents in 1955. Both pictures were taken at Christmas but the second one is the one that sets off the tenderest memories.



The first line of "Oh, Come all Ye Faithful" never fails to turn me into a blubbering mess of sobs. That song transports me to Christmas Eve services at the Ridott Christian Reformed Church, a half mile west of my birthplace near German Valley, Illinois. (The church is gone now, replaced by a pretty new building and renamed Grace Valley Christian Church.) I am standing beside my parents, Mom in her dark-blue, silky "church dress" and her home-sewed gray winter coat with a hand-crocheted tiny, red-yarn mitten as a decorative pin on her lapel. Dad, in his dark blue suit...the one he wore for their wedding in 1941, is standing right there beside us. Mom's voice is off-key but she is singing her heart out and Dad is humming along (Never once did I ever hear Dad sing). Their faces glow as I've never seen them before. It is CHRISTMAS!!!!

Oh, and beloved Rev. Abbas is at the pulpit (That's him in the third picture and the last picture is of the church about that time.)

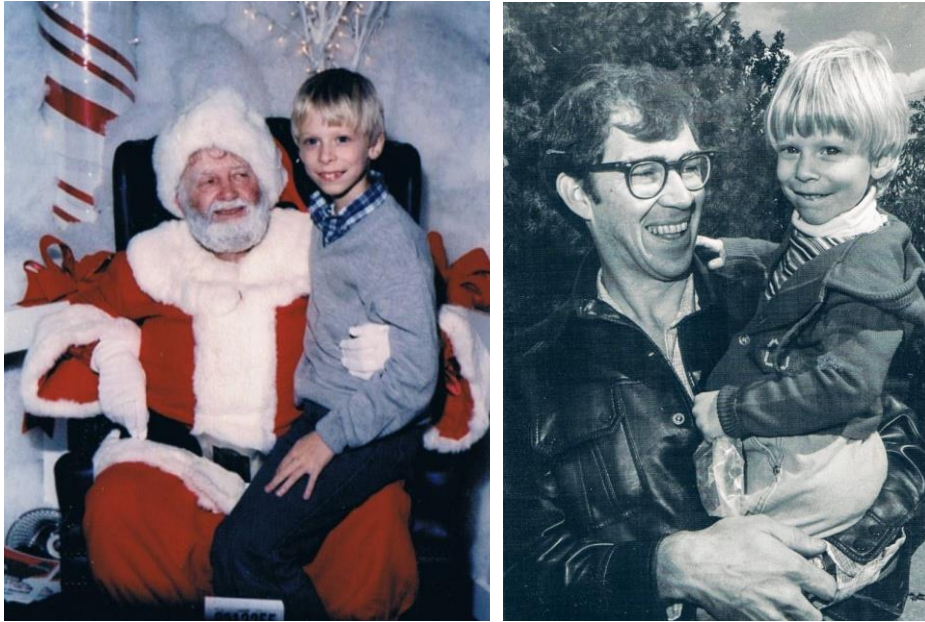


## December 6<sup>th</sup>

The "Faces of Christmas" come in all ages and sizes. See the picture of Jim's son Scott Moseley in 1985. Look into the face of that cute little boy. You can just see the excitement bubbling out of his eyes. It's Christmas!

Santa looks pooped tho. Santa also looks sweaty. See his wet hair sneaking out from under his cap and the fan on the floor beside him. Hey, it isn't always zero in December in the south where this picture was taken. Scott is probably the umpteen zillionth kid he has held that day but Santa still manages to smile.

I couldn't resist adding Scott and his daddy a few years earlier.



December 8<sup>th</sup>

The "Faces of Christmas" were so happy in 1959. My kids' cousins, Gary (age 6) and Mark Greenfield (age 3) were visiting their grandparents, Clem and Arvilla Faist, on the Florence Road farm south of Freeport, Illinois.

Can't you see the excitement and wonder in the faces of those 2 sweet little boys? They are seeing the stash of little cars and toy trains and lots of candy from Santa. Oh, how they believed in the magic of the season! Note their sensible brown shoes (no Nikes) and Mark's suspenders.

Grampa Clem looks proud of his little grandkids (He loved them so much!) but I suspect he is looking forward to stretching out on that cot on the enclosed north porch. Gramma looks as tho she is wishing this whole picture thing was done so she could make sure that there is nothing mussed up and that everything looks OK.

Those two little boys went on to have children and grandchildren of their own but they never lost the awe of Christmas.



## December 10<sup>th</sup>

The "Faces of Christmas" are not always human. They exist in the little crocheted carolers (at daughter [Cindy Faist Watson](#)'s home and made by my mom), the Nativity scene (also made by Mom, using detergent bottle bodies for the people and hand-sewed camels and sheep), the sock monkey (sewed by Mom as a thank you for [Jacqueline Coates Meyers](#) in 1974 because Jackie was able to get tickets to the Freeport High School pageant for her), the Cabbage Patch doll that cousin [Lois Covault](#) cherishes and places beneath her tree (also sewed by Mom), the Santa and reindeer that Mom constructed so many years ago, the little crocheted bears that sit in front of our fireplace and remind me of the many hours Mom spent making them, and the tiny ceramic angel that my friend [Charlotte Barber Wiley](#) shaped and gave me a few years ago.

These are only material things but they reflect the love of the people who constructed them and are examples of the true Christmas spirit.

## December 11<sup>th</sup>

The "Faces of Christmas" waltz thru my memories as I picture my beloved 5. The first picture is of Larry and Lori in 1963.

By 1964 Larry and Lori were really into Christmas but the third picture shows there were 3 as Cindy joined the family.

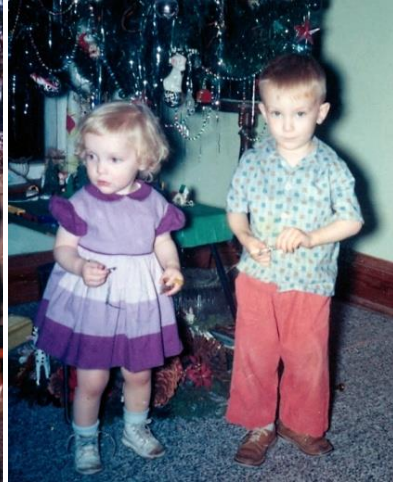
In the 1966 picture Sandi has been added.

In 1968 five little blondes were immersed in the excitement of Christmas.

The magic of Christmas is reflected in the faces of my beloved five in the 1969 picture.

In 1972 they were still loving the season.

I look at these pictures and can see the different personalities of each of my children. I love them so much! They are all grown now but the "Faces of Christmases Past" keep my heart warm.



## December 12<sup>th</sup>

Sometimes the "Faces of Christmas" show up in poetry. This poem was written by daughter [Cindy Faist Watson](#) (a high school senior) in 1981 about her dad's new car. She took quite a bit of poetic license but did a great job. I doubt she even knows that I have the original. (She will get me for this one. Haha!) Click on each picture to see the whole page.

'Twas the day after Christmas, when all through the place,  
Every package was opened, each unwrapped from lace.  
The wrappings were slung by the chimney with flare,  
In hopes that the wastebasket would be right there.  
The teenagers were nestled all snug by their gifts,  
While boxes of sugar-plums were piled high like drifts.  
And mamma in her nightie, and I in my jeans,  
Had just settled down to watch the other teens.  
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter.  
I sprang from my chair to see what was the matter.  
Away to the window I flew like a flash,  
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.  
The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow,  
Gave lustre of midday to objects below.  
When what to my wondering eyes should I see,  
But a foxy new car, of high qual-i-ty.  
With my dad as the driver, so lively and quick,  
I thought for a moment it must be some trick.  
More rapid than ever, out the door we came,

As he whistled and shouted and called us by name:  
Now Linda! now, Larry! now Grandpa and Randy!  
On Lori! on, Cindy! on, Grandma and Sandi!  
To the top of the porch, to the front of the lawn,  
We dashed to the car, how our eyes were so drawn!  
Near to the car our feet quickly flew.  
To the car full of extras- and Daddy too.  
And then in a twinkling, he heard by the door,  
The prancing and pawing on the snow-covered floor.  
As he drew in his head, and was turning around,  
Down to the seat, I quickly came with a bound.  
I was dressed for the occasion, just as he saw,  
My voice was so hoarse, shown by the jerk of my jaw.  
A bundle of extras were placed in the dash,  
And it looked like the value of a hundred dollars cash.  
The lights how they twinkled! the horn how merry!  
My dad was so happy, his cheeks red as a cherry.  
His eyes how they shown, a victor of a goal.  
And the hair on his head was as black as coal.





December 13<sup>th</sup>

The "Faces of Christmas" are sometimes gone before we want. Jim's mom, Mary Moseley, passed away Dec. 13, 2002 but her memory brings smiles to her family. She was such a kind and loving lady who dedicated her life to her children and grandchildren.





## December 14<sup>th</sup>

The “Faces of Christmas” sometimes have 4 legs and go, “Oink”.

For 57 years I lived in northern Illinois, 37 of those were spent on a farm near Freeport. The main source of income on that farm for over 35 years was pigs....lots and lots of them. Let’s just say that I know which end of a hog goes, “Oink!” Winter in the Midwest can be a touch chilly (OK, downright brutal sometimes) so the animals all had toasty places for shelter.

Many Christmas Eves, after the gifts were unwrapped and everybody else had hit the hay, I walked out to the farrowing house (where newborn piglets lived with their mammas). The main source of light in the building those nights was a heat lamp over each crate. (Farrowing crates resemble baby beds without mattresses, are constructed with steel bars and prevent the mammas from squishing their babies against pen walls when they flop down.)

The little pigs in each pen were lined up like Smokie Links beside their moms for warmth and the only sounds in the dimly-lit building were the snoring of the sows (Yes, sleeping sows emit a snoring sound!) and the gentle “whoosh” of the Reznor furnace fans blowing heat throughout the building.

As I sat on an overturned 5-gallon bucket in the alleyway, for just a few minutes I was magically transported to a stable in Bethlehem and a healing sense of peace drifted over me as the cares and stress of my life were eased.

That building no longer houses little pigs and I no longer live in northern Illinois but the memories are so vivid and sweet.



## December 15<sup>th</sup>

Who is ready to check into the little northern Illinois farm by way of Mom's 1949 diary and see what "Faces of Christmas" we can find?

Thursday, December 15, 1949: 2 degrees above zero and Dad was on a quest to Ridott (about 5 ½ miles northwest of our farm) for coal which was hard to find.

Mom did some cleaning and got the fake fireplace down from the attic.

Let's talk about that fireplace. It was constructed of lightweight wooden orange crates and covered with a brick-patterned crepe paper. A piece of 1" X 12" board was sanded smooth and varnished until it glowed and was used for the mantle. Of course, stockings were hung on it and Ole Santa filled them with apples and nuts. (One year Dad insisted on hanging a huge burlap feed bag instead of his stocking. Don't you just know on Christmas morning that bag was filled to the top with cobs and coal? The joke was on Daddy. Never mind that the cobs and coal were just the thing to burn in the cook stove that day.)

Most years the top of the mantle was the perfect place for Mom's little log-cabin village. The cabins were built with heavy brown cardboard pieces. The outer layer of paper was carefully pulled from the sheets, revealing a believable log wall. All the roofs were slathered with whipped Ivory soap and water and the whole scene sparkled.

Not very many years ago cousin [Lois Covault](#) from Montana shared that her family had a fireplace exactly like it each Christmas. Mom and her sisters probably shared the same pattern.

A fake fireplace doesn't really qualify as a "face" but it certainly triggers an avalanche of memories. I can still feel the excitement of seeing the fireplace set up because that meant that a tree would soon be brought home from Freeport and it was almost Christmas! Did you hang stockings when you were young? Do you still?

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15

cold again today 2 above  
folks went to Ridol for coal  
coal is hard to get  
got down Linda's fire place  
and did some cleaning





## December 16<sup>th</sup>

In 2006 my team at work (Intercon in Forest, VA) decided to be Santa and his reindeer for Halloween. Since I had the perfect shape for Mrs. Santa, an old red tablecloth (served many a Christmas dinner on that thing in Illinois) was turned into a gown for the occasion.

We had lots of laughs that day as the first picture shows, but the real story began after the pumpkins and costumes were put away. Every year since then daughter Cindy Watson has volunteered me to be Mrs. Santa at numerous breakfasts with Santa, Little Beacon Daycare, Brownie and Daisy Christmas parties and Lynchburg's Girl Scouts of Virginia Skyline Super Service days.

The faces of the little kids are so very precious as they crawl on my lap or gather around me to ask questions (such as: Does Santa wear pajamas to bed? Did you adopt Rudolph? My brother has been such a brat; is Santa bringing him any presents this year? Is Santa bringing me that puppy that I asked for? I saw you get out of a car; why didn't you come in the sleigh? You must be really old; why isn't your hair white?).

We talk about important subjects (such as: What did you do to get ready for Christmas? What did you do nice for somebody this year? Where was your Elf on the Shelf this morning?) We sing Christmas songs, then have group hugs to carry back to Santa at the North Pole. They also eat cut-out cookies...LOTS of them (Remember the 36 dozen that Cindy and her elves baked 2 weeks ago?).

Today daughter Lori McCarthy dressed in an elf costume and joined me for a big dose of love and hugs as the little girls reflected the magic of Christmas right into our hearts. Just look into the "Faces of Christmas" and immerse yourself into your own memories of long ago.







December 17<sup>th</sup>

Yesterday I posted some "Faces of Christmas" from Mrs. Santa's files. There are so many more so today I want to share more pictures. Let your worries and cares float away for a few minutes and simply look into these faces and feel the wonder, awe and giggling happiness.











## December 18<sup>th</sup>

Memories of the "Faces of Christmas" come to the surface in Mom's 1949 diary entry. Let's go back in time and be little kids again.

Friday, December 16, 1949: On a foggy day, my folks went to Freeport to do last minute shopping and to buy a tree. I went to neighbors, Henry and Rosetta Buttell's home after school until my parents got home. Rose Marie and I were the same age and both were at Iler School. No doubt we put up that tree after evening milking chores were finished and I was in a wonderland of ornaments and 6-watt-bulb-shaped lights. Little plastic churches and houses slipped over the bulbs but the bulbs burned so hot that the plastic often melted. Bright foil reflectors could be inserted between the bulbs and sockets to make the lights just sparkle. Some of the bulbs were shaped like birds or Santas. There were very old glittering glass balls and gourds painted gold. By today's standards the decorations were pretty lame but, to a kid in 1949, they were pure magic!

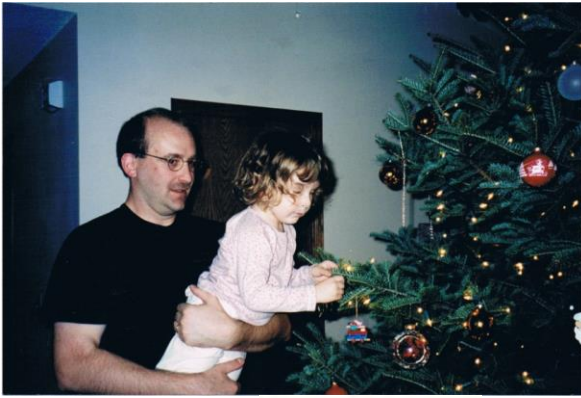
After the tree was all "prettied-up", the overhead light was turned off and we drank tea and ate cookies as we sang Christmas carols in front of the dimly-lit tree. Oh, the excitement! I can close my eyes even tonight and visualize that scene but, mostly, I am seeing it thru the eyes of love and security and memories.

The pictures show some of the vintage lights and decorations but, best of all, the last three show the "Faces of Christmas" on my granddaughters [Emma Faist](#) and [Anna Faist](#) with their daddy, [Larry Faist](#).

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 16

Not so cold today rather foggy  
Went to Ferguson to do our  
luck shopping and tree  
Linda went to Buttel mill  
we came home





## December 19<sup>th</sup>

Let's combine one of Mom's 1949 diary entries with more "Faces of Christmas". Step into your "memory mode" and follow along.

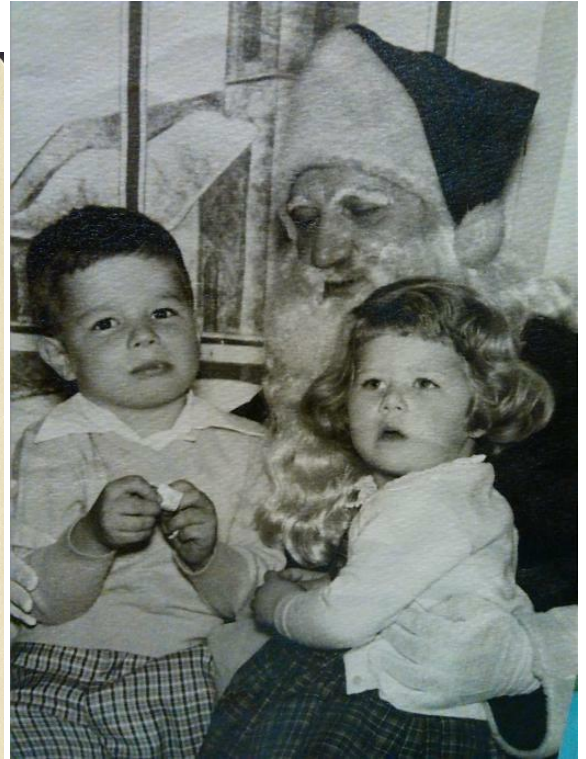
Monday, December 19, 1949: Mom's mother, Martha Pieper was taking the train back to Nebraska so I got to skip school. In the mail that day was a package for me from Mom's sister Mildred and one for Mom from her friend Florence Aldag. After milking chores in the evening we went to German Valley and Mom got a new kitchen clock.

The big event, tho, was Santa's visit to the little town. Oh, the excitement! I remember a queue of little kids extending a half block from the lighted tree in front of the bank. Each of us received a paper sack which contained candy, an orange, maybe some crayons and a small coloring book. Usually, Santa arrived on the local fire truck but one year he came jingling up the street in a horse-powered sleigh. With him was a pretty dark-haired lady who was Mrs. Clause, wearing a bright red coat and a red hat. Years later I learned that she was my pal, Reuben Bolen's mom, Flossie Murray (Joyce King's aunt).

Many of our family and friends take their children to see Santa so I'm adding some of these faces. Click on the pictures for IDs.

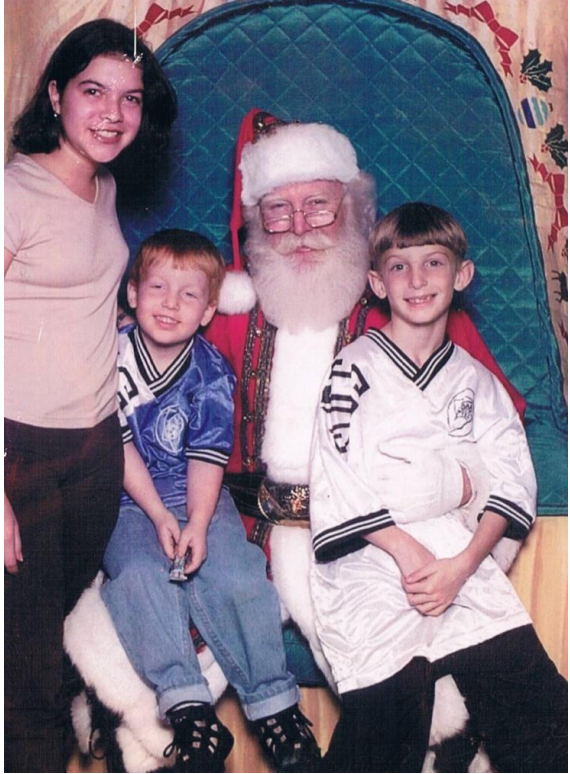
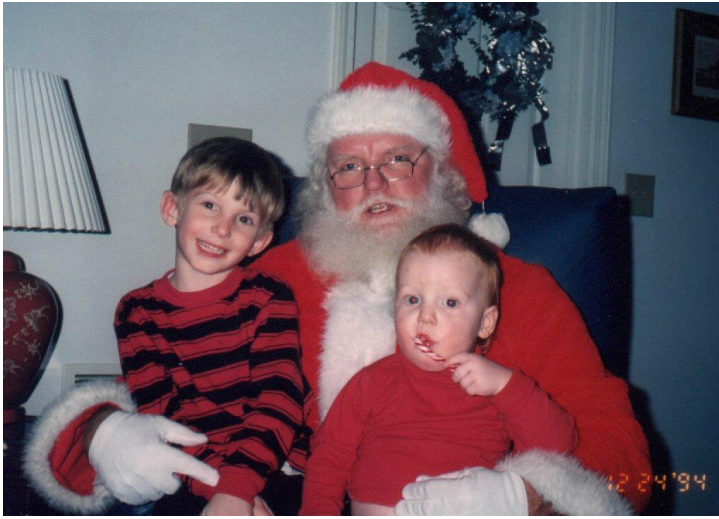
One last note: two "Faces of Christmas" are very happy in Lynchburg today (Dec.19, 2017). Jim's biopsy report came back as benign. Praise God!

MONDAY, DECEMBER 19  
Linda stayed home from school as we took Mother to Mt Carroll train left at 3 she get home at 10:30  
We went to see Santa at G.V. to night's elite's kitchen school I got a clock tonight  
Linda got a page from Mildred I one from Florence I do believe she is married



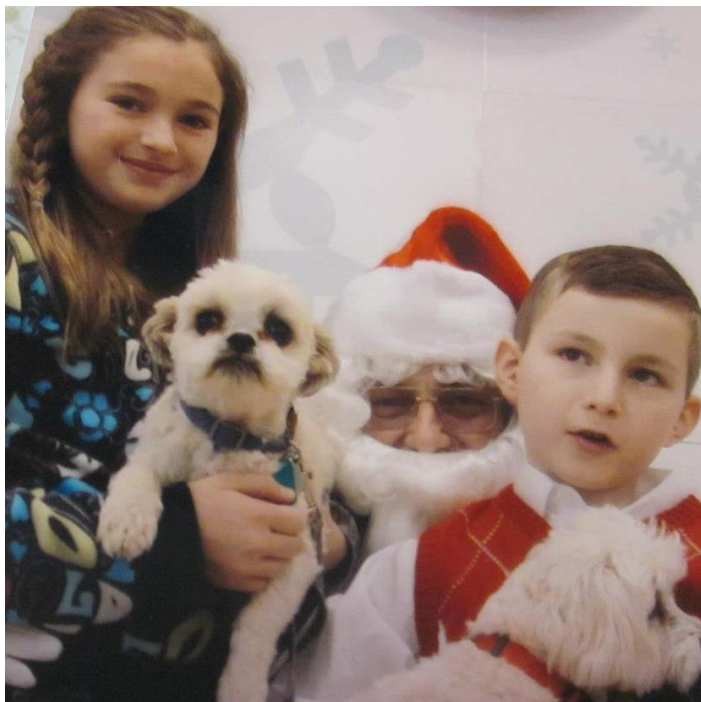
Ryan & Matthew  
12-17-93









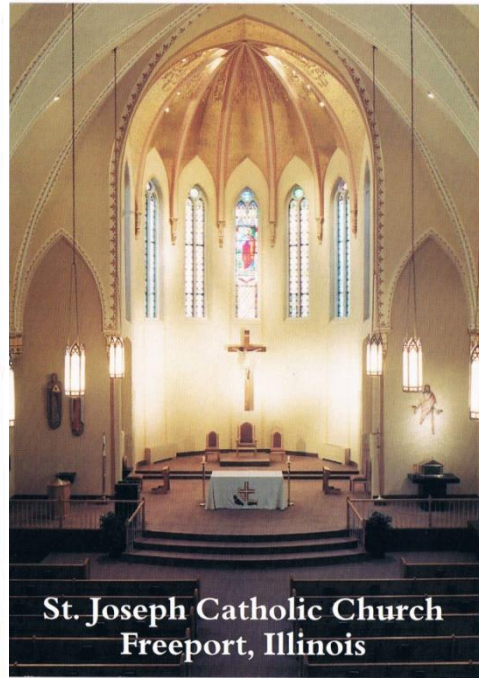


December 20<sup>th</sup>

When my beloved 5 were very young, the 4 grandparents came on Christmas Eve to attend the kids' Sunday school program at little Florence Methodist Church. Then came the excitement of gift opening. Once that and evening lunch were over, we all bundled up and headed for Midnight Mass at Grampa Faist's church, St. Joe's in Freeport, Illinois.

The kids were in awe of the huge structure but they got the giggles when they realized that some of the parishioners had been celebrating the season with something other than hot chocolate before they came to church. Erma Bucher made the organ come alive and the choir's voices in the balcony drifted over us like comforting, warm glitter.

The best part happened just before midnight when a group of workers arrived after their shift at work and lined the walls in the back corner of the sanctuary because all the pews were full. They all needed shaves and their clothes were rumpled from their long day but it didn't matter to them. Their faces were almost luminous as they stood in silence. They were THERE and it was CHRISTMAS! Oh, the "Faces of Christmas"!



**St. Joseph Catholic Church  
Freeport, Illinois**

## December 21<sup>st</sup>

When I was a teenager our youth group from Silver Creek Church went caroling a number of times at German Valley, Illinois. Our moms had hot chocolate and cookies ready when we got back to church.

In 1998 Diane Van Raden invited me to join a group from the Baptist church at Baileyville, Illinois. It was such fun to sing with people I'd known for so many years.

Several years ago Irene and Jimmy Clark invited us to a Christmas party in their beautiful home in Lynchburg, Virginia. The whole group walked around the neighborhood singing carols in the crispy-night-time air.

This morning a new thing happened; neighbor-down-the-street Louise Riley and two of her grandloves came to our door and belted out a rousing rendition of "Jingle Bells". The eyes of little Santa (with his red and white hat securely in place and his white fabric beard askew) and Rudolph (with her nose painted bright red and pipe-cleaner antlers smooshed to one side) sparkled as they sang and all was well with the world. Oh, those eyes! Oh, those "Faces of Christmas"!



## December 22<sup>nd</sup>

During the early 1970s my beloved 5 were immersed in the “stuff” of Christmas and they kept me hopping as their antics and “Faces of Christmas” filled my heart with memories.

Larry's classmates in Baileyville School were making Christmas gifts for their parents. The teacher told each student that they could not ask their parents for money to cover the cost of materials. Instead they must earn the money. Larry asked me how he could earn that cash. I told him that I would give him the money if he could go one whole afternoon without fighting with his sisters. After an immediate, "But Mom, isn't there ANY other way?", Larry proceeded to his room, locked the door for the rest of the afternoon, and success was his. That may have been the year he gave us a hand-made ceramic ash tray with the words “Don't smoke” engraved inside the bowl of it. The first picture is of Larry about that time.

One Christmas Aunt Marion and Uncle Merlyn Greenfield arrived with 5 large, black-bulging garbage bags. Oh, Joy! They contained huge pillows for watching TV from the floor and those gifts were a big hit.

During those years my troop each wanted many gifts under the tree. Once I made the tactical error of placing all of the gifts in five large boxes and each kid received one huge wrapped gift. I learned not to do that again. It was fine to supply each of them with a huge box to stash

their opened gifts, but there better be “LOTS AND LOTS” of packages under that tree for each of them.

The last picture shows my very favorite “Faces of Christmas” a little over 34 years after the other pictures in this post.



## December 23<sup>rd</sup>

In the blink of an eye my five toddlers were in high school and college and Santa had ridden off into the sunset, in hot pursuit of the Tooth Fairy and the Easter Bunny. Santa had always brought a big tub of candy and nuts, but now they helped me fill the stash of treats on Christmas Eve.

One year Cindy's high school class decided to forgo the traditional gift exchange and, instead, used the money to purchase tooth brushes, shampoo, and play dough for the residents of St. Francis School. Such unselfish, good teenagers!

That same year Lori was a part-time cashier at Garrity Gifts and the mall Santa came into the store in full costume - beard and all - and bawled her out royally because the store had just raised the price of his favorite chewing tobacco. It was a shattering experience. Yes, Santa had indeed "blown his cover".

Christmas Eve day 1991 Cindy helped me move Grandpa Faist to Stephenson Nursing Center. She spent the afternoon taping Grandpa's many Christmas cards to the wall, even though he no longer had the sight to see them.

For years my kids razzed me about my choice of music, labeling my "easy-listening" and classical choices as elevator music. I grinned the year they exchanged George Winston CDs.

Oh, my "Faces of Christmas" were growing up.





Randy has just spotted his new aquarium. Those fish had problems one day after Billy Kaiser dumped the whole container of fish food into the aquarium. They became floaters. New fish time!





## December 24<sup>th</sup>

As with the normal progression of life, the generations roll on and now a younger crew embodies the “Faces of Christmas”. They are our future and I love them so much. Many of you also have grandkids so you know the feeling and are banking memories of your own.





December 25<sup>th</sup>

If you are searching for the "Faces of Christmas" you need only to go, look in the nearest mirror. You are neighbors, former neighbors, classmates, relatives, relatives of relatives, relatives of friends (even a few relatives of X-relatives), friends of my beloved five, someone I met in the aisles of Walmart, the gal we met who wore Halloween pajamas to breakfast at a motel, genealogy buffs, snowmobile racing



friends, in-laws (and a few outlaws 😊), train watchers, fellow church attendees, people from churches that I have attended thru the years, clerks at various stores, and the list goes on.

You, my Facebook friends, have allowed me to share in your joys, sorrows, frustrations, favorite meals, politics, and memories. Your faces reflect God's love and the whole essence of Christmas. I hope this Christmas season has been filled with smiles and joy (even tho some of you have recently lost loved-ones). Love you all!

