

# Remembering the trees of Christmases past

BY JANET HIBBARD  
Special to the Record-Eagle

I think beautiful Christmas trees should be a part of every family's holiday celebrations.

For some, the annual tradition is to tramp through the woods until they find a perfect tree and then cut it down and bring it home. With the children gathered around the tree, it should be decorated with cherished ornaments while the family drinks hot chocolate and sings carols.

My Christmas tree memories are not like that.

As a young child, my first glimpse of our Christmas tree came on Christmas morning when I finally talked my folks into getting up to see if Santa had been to our house yet. I had to wake my older brothers and sister because we all had to go downstairs together. As I think about it now, they probably hadn't even been home that long, but they got up and followed little sister who couldn't wait any longer to see the Christmas presents.

In our family, the tree was a part of the gifts Santa brought so I never saw it until Christmas morning. The first thing I saw when I got down to the bottom of the stairs was a blinding light from Dad's 16 MM movie camera light bar. The rest of the lights in the house were always left off. It's no wonder all our Christmas morning movies look the same with family members, half asleep, squinting their eyes from the bright lights, making their way blindly to the living room.

I hardly noticed the tree stuck in a galvanized bucket filled with coal. The toys and gifts were more important. Our presents were

never wrapped, just piled up on chairs for each member of the family. I never questioned the style, it was the way we celebrated Christmas.

As I got older and Santa Claus no longer brought our Christmas tree, I still don't remember Mom and Dad ever having a beautiful Christmas tree. I suppose the price of

tinsel. Dad was even known to drill holes in the sparse area and fill in with branches cut from the bottom. If the tree was a little wobbly, he attached wires and secured the tree to a window frame. It was trimmed with lights that had half of the bulbs burned out. Our joy at Christmas wasn't dependent on the tree.

adult kids would want one for his family. They were pretty badlooking trees, all misshapen with branches spaced far apart and needles dropping fast. He called his kids to come over to get their tree, but when Dad showed them the \$1 tree he had bought for them, they each refused to take a tree. Dad took the rejections in

stubborn act of defiance that actually didn't turn out too bad. The tree was certainly full enough and when it was decorated, it was probably one of the prettiest trees they ever had.

Memories of holiday celebrations are not always out of storybooks. Every family can remember a holiday when things didn't go

exactly by the book. One thing I know, whenever I see a scraggly tree in a Christmas tree lot, obviously passed over by most shoppers, I think of the year that three trees were made into one and I smile.

Janet Hibbard is a local freelance writer.



Christmas trees was a part of it.

The shape of the tree never mattered to Dad. If there was a flat side, you simply turned that side to the wall. Or if it had bare spaces, it was filled in with

One year, Dad came across a tree lot with some real bargain trees for only \$1. Having lived through the Depression years, he was impressed with the value, and he bought 3 trees, hoping one of his

stride, although secretly I'm sure he felt they were all foolish to turn down such a great deal.

Not to be put off, he decided to keep all the trees and tie them together to make one tree. It was a

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