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# Life and Leisure

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## The Beauty of Christmas *By Jack Redmond*

Christmas has always been a beautiful thing to me. I remember growing up with the excitement of the day, the gifts and the family time. I was always the first one up on Christmas day to inspect the gifts, smell the tree and wait for everyone else to get up! There was a totally different feeling about this time of year. More than the gifts or different experiences, something amazing was going on that I couldn't really explain.

I still remember the smell of the tree which stood in the Christmas tree stand that my grandfather welded. It was my job to water the tree and we all decorated it. My mother baked butter cookies that we decorated with sprinkles, chocolate chips, and red and green cherries! I remember getting a Mongoose BMX bike made with its chromoly frame! I rode it in the snow on Christmas morning and even managed to put my first scratch on it. Those were the days!



Family time at my Grandmother's house was amazing as we ate turkey, ham, kielbasa, mashed potatoes and pierogies! We watched Miracle on 34th Street and It's a Wonderful Life in black and white. As I grew into a young adult, some of Christmas lost its shine. I no longer cared about the gifts, my Grandparents passed on and I found myself having to replace what I loved with new experiences for my family. Some things stayed the same, others

changed forever. I had to recapture the joy of Christmas!

Now as I raise my family, I help them embrace the beauty of Christmas for themselves. Each year, I break out the iron Christmas tree stand that my grandfather welded. It is one of the only things I own from him. We drive to a nearby farm and pick out a tree. My children decorate the tree and spend an entire day making a paper chain from construction

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