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H O L I D A Y MEMORIES

We asked our readers to recount their fondest memories of Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah and New Year's—those special memories that brighten these special holidays.

Writers whose special moments are published here will receive a snappy O&E nylon briefcase.

Below is a sampling of our readers' warmest reflections of the holiday season.

I HAVE a very special appreciation for holiday decorations in our home. It goes back to when I was very young. First grade to be specific.

The day before Thanksgiving, I was rushed to the hospital. I had been ill with our traditional childhood mumps and measles for a couple of weeks prior, but suddenly I fell very ill and the doctors could not identify the problem.

Thanksgiving was a very trying day for my parents. As for me, I was most upset with the fact the hospital was not serving pumpkin pie. I had no idea how sick I was. It was all rather exciting for me at first.

The first night, my mother stayed with me. On the second night, she had to tend to the other five children in my family. It was a hair-raising experience, all alone and watching Mr. McGoo's Christmas Carol for the first time. Morning could not come soon enough. I was terrified and I wanted out! Pumpkin pie became the least of my concerns.

I spent the better part of December as a human pin cushion. The doctors were able to identify a rare blood disorder, but I would have to spend more time in the hospital. Christmas was coming and my new fear was that Santa might not find me. Christmas was not too far away.

A week before Christmas, the doctor told my parents I could go home, but I would have to be closely monitored. It did not matter to me. I was going home!

As my parents carried me into the house that cold December day, I will never forget the glow that came over me as we entered the living room—all those beautiful Christmas decorations and the tree standing so tall covered with lights, ornaments and tinsel.

I made it, I was home for Christmas and Santa was sure to find me.

Mark J. Campana
Birmingham

ONE OF my favorite Christmas memories goes back to 1965. I was 10 years old and in our church play. The church was decorated with a huge freshly cut Christmas tree. Candles glowed on the altar and in the windows and in candelabra on every pew.

The service ended with the organist playing "Silent Night" on the church bells. As we filed out past the big oak doors into the night, to our wonderful

surprise, it was snowing.

All of the children dashed over to the adjoining school for our Christmas treat. There, at the school door, stood one of the teachers, holding a big hurlap bag. My heart was pounding in anticipation and worry. Suddenly it was my turn, and in one hand I was given a box of hard candies and in the other a camera. I was thrilled!

My family drove to River Rouge to visit my Aunt Mary, Uncle Roland and all of my cousins.

The outside of the house was brightly decorated with strings and strings of lights. Inside, a fat Christmas tree was laden with lights, balls and tinsel.

During dinner, we heard an announcement on the radio that Santa had been spotted flying over Dearborn, and my dad said it was time to go.

That night while we slept in our beds, Santa left me a box of 64 crayons, a thick Christmas coloring book, a Ken doll (to be company for my Barbie) and a brand new bike. It was my best Christmas ever.

Debra Gurrity
Garden City

YEARS AGO when my daughter was 3, she lay lifeless, lacking the will to regain her strength following a long serious illness.

Nothing said to her or done for her helped. Even a suggested trip to see Santa was met with, "I go tomorrow." On Christmas Eve afternoon, we bundled her up and went in search of a miracle called Santa Claus.

Entering his castle at the North Pole, we saw no one standing in line so dad started toward Santa. Suddenly we heard, "Well, hello there! Where have you been? I've been waiting for you!"

With that, she raised her head from dad's shoulder and looked around. Seeing Santa smiling at her she said, "Down Duddy. I go myself," and she wiggled away.

When he realized she wasn't strong enough to walk that distance, Santa sprang from his chair and scooped her into his arms, hugging her gently as he returned to his chair. They sat and talked for several minutes and her strength seemed to return with his every word.

Their visit over, Santa again gathered her in his arms and, after a kiss on the cheek and another hug, returned her to dad while everyone in the room smiled with tears in their eyes.

As we were leaving, this wonderful man called out, "Goodbye little princess. I'll see you later—at your house—and remember, Santa loves you."

Yes, we went looking for a miracle and found it in a Santa I'll never forget.

Lafern E. Porter
Westland