

Christmas Is Nostalgia

By MARGARET MILLER

Christmas in the Heusted home in Livonia has always been traditional and old-fashioned, with a time-honored toyland under the Christmas tree.

This year Donald and Virginia Heusted and daughters Deborah and Melanie are using their traditional approach to keep up with the times.

Saving electricity by dispensing with lights on the tree, they have added instead some antique Christmas cards to go with the collection of treasured heirloom toys arranged under the tree.

Nostalgia is important to Virginia Heusted, especially at this time of year.

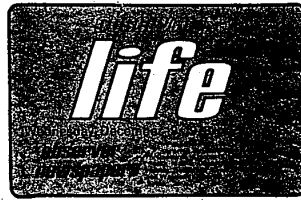
She has in her home display toys that belonged to her parents and grandparents, as well as toys from her own childhood, some that belonged to the girls and some found in antique-store foraging.

"You may not pay much attention to things belonging to your parents when you are young," she said, "but when they are gone you really appreciate these things."

"And Christmas is a nice time to get them out."

At the base of the Heusted tree each year is velvet patchwork quilt, hand-sewn more than a century ago by Mrs. Heusted's grandmother. Sitting on it in a place of honor are two teddy bears, one that belonged to her

MRS. DONALD HEUSTED of Livonia holds one of the antique dolls that each year are used for unusual decoration under the Heusted family's old-fashioned Christmas tree. (Observer photos by Harry Mauthe)



mother and the other from her father's childhood. They are having a tea party with a set of tiny dishes Mrs. Heusted once played with.

"I found the teddy bears in an old trunk in my parents' home after they died," she said. "I'm so glad they saved them, along with a lot of my toys. I've since made quite a study of teddy bears, and I know these are among the first ones manufactured. They have the distinguishing hump at the back of the neck that shows they are more than 80 years old."

A slate Mrs. Heusted's grandfather used in school reads "An Old-Fashioned Christmas," and a set of alphabet blocks spell a holiday greeting.

"The blocks aren't that old, really," says Mrs. Heusted. "They were mine."

Several dolls have places of honor. There is a china-faced lady, who belonged to Mrs. Heusted's grandmother, and several contemporaries purchased over the years. A companion Mrs. Heusted remembers as a girl is a pert Patsy doll.

"I really like her, and she's getting more valuable all the time," she said. A Shirley Temple doll, an original, stands beside her.

"I never had a Shirley Temple doll; I guess my parents never could afford one," she said. "So I bought one for Debbie when she was little."

The old Christmas cards on the tree include some found in family Bibles and some purchased recently. Antique ornaments are hanging on the tree, too, Mrs. Heusted said, including "some from my first Christmas tree."

Missing from this traditional tree are the strings of popcorn and cranberries you often see.

"We tried that one year," Mrs. Heusted said, "but the cats went after them and we were afraid they would pull the tree down."

The rest of the Heusted home has plenty of touches of nostalgia.

An old family trunk in the dining room holds wrapped Christmas presents as the family completes them. In the kitchen is another of Grandfather's school slates, with a greeting written on it.

Year around, Virginia Heusted can enjoy her mother's old kitchen cupboard in her own kitchen. She brought it from her parents' Detroit home and antiqued it.

Like all collectors, the Heusteds always have in mind some particular thing they would like to add.

"Right now we're looking for a Victorian cradle for the old dolls," Mrs. Heusted said. "Their kid bodies get stiff so they can't be propped in a sitting position and they have to lie down."

"We had hoped to find a cradle for them this Christmas. Maybe by next year we'll have one."



TEDDY BEARS that have been in the family a long time have a tea party under the Heusted Christmas tree.



ANTIQUE CHRISTMAS CARDS that Virginia Heusted has been collecting replace lights this year.

m. m. memos

Writing and addressing Christmas cards -- much later in December, of course, than any reasonably - organized person would do it -- I happened to remember a favorite summer camp activity of a few years back.

We used to have a day for Christmas in July, putting together makeshift decorations and gifts and singing "Oh, Tannenbaum" in the pine groves.

Maybe we had a good idea there. Needs a bit of adapting, of course.

I don't really want to move the whole celebration, but how about relocating in the calendar the Christmas card part?

Problem with the traditional system is that I can't bear to send off cards to friends without a note, and the notes seem to turn to letters and that doesn't expedite

early mailing of Christmas cards.

Somehow, I've never been able to bring myself to use the Christmas newsletter system, though I do enjoy receiving them from friends.

So there I am each holiday season trying to catch up a whole year's correspondence during the busiest week of the year.

How about a new tradition of Fourth of July card? Too practical, I fear, to get off the ground. And, come to think of it, what would Christmas be without all those pretty snow-scene cards coming in?

OK, let's get with it. Where did I put that list of new addresses?

—Margaret Miller

Redford Grandmother's Yule Greetings Are Poems

A few score people on Mary Morris Mikkola's Christmas card list get remembrances to treasure — original poems hand-lettered by this Redford Township resident.

For eight years Mrs. Mikkola, a widow in her 60s, has been writing a special Christmas poem each December and lettering it on Christmas paper to send to her friends and family.

"I've had people tell me they've saved the whole set," she said.

"Last year I sent out 110 letters with the poem I wrote then. This year it probably won't be that many. I sometimes have trouble with arthritis in my hands, so I can only do two or three at a time."

This year the message is "A Christmas Prayer." "It's the first time I've

used a prayer for my Christmas card," said Mrs. Mikkola, who is much involved in the activities of Rice Memorial United Methodist Church in Redford Township.

Its final lines read: "Forgive our worldliness At this season of merriment And remember only The joy, adoration and praise When we thank you, O God."

For the greatest gift, Your son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

One regularly-metered poem she sent on cards several Christmases ago was titled "Galilee" and Mrs. Mikkola said it had been suggested it could be set to music as a Christmas hymn.

"So far, I haven't found anyone to do it," she said. Mrs. Mikkola has written poetry most of her life, during girlhood in Indiana and during 45 years in the Detroit area, 30 of them in Redford Township.

She writes about all sorts of subjects other than Christmas — her friends and grandchildren, her travels, her daily experiences, the antiques she collects and enjoys.

The poetry output is a bit down since her husband's death nearly three years ago. "My husband use to think everything I wrote was good," she said. "He was so proud of my work and such an encouragement. There's not quite the incentive now."

Mrs. Mikkola was quick to point out, though, that she doesn't "sit and brood."

Besides church work and home projects and reading, she loves to travel about this area with friends. Two years ago she traveled to Europe on a tour and she's anxious to go back to see more of favorite spots like Salzburg and Vienna.

"I keep busy," she said, "and I will just as long as I'm able to. There's a lot I still want to do and see."



MRS. MARY MIKKOLA of Redford Township checks over one of the poems she composed and lettered to send to friends and family as Christmas cards (Observer photo by Harry Mauthe)

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