

The Story behind the story

In 2016, Judy saw a contest for submissions of Memorable Christmas stories, and felt moved to write a **“A Christmas Remembrance”** that was selected and featured in the Steinbach Carillon, on display here today.

It relayed her experience as a four year-old child, when her mother took ill and was away for emergency surgery right over Christmas.

Judy shared that amidst a stressful time filled with unknowns, miracles of the Christmas spirit found her, bringing her joy and peace.

It was published in December 2016.

She wasn't sure why she felt compelled to share it.

However, the Christmas after, in December 2017, her mom, Rose, passed to Heaven, and she found the reason: the story ended up serving as a comfort for her.

Honourable Mention – Adult Stories

A Christmas Remembrance

by Judith Maltman
Winnipeg, MB

WHEN I think back of my Christmases past, one of the most memorable was one that at first seemed it would be the worst.

That December 24, I was about 4 years old, when earlier in the day my mother took very ill and needed to go to the hospital. She had a ruptured appendix and needed emergency surgery. As a result, I would have to spend the night at Aunt Nellie's house. I tried to be brave, not to upset my poor sick Mom, so I didn't cry. But on the inside, my four-year-old heart was beating very fast, and I was scared and worried. I was an only child at the time, and in the fifties, babysitters were not customary. So I went everywhere with my mom. I even went along on the occasional trip from our Kleefeld farm to the St. Pierre movie theatre. After enjoying the delicious home-made coconut marshmallows there, I would sleep on my mom's lap. If by chance I was still awake at some exciting action in the movie, mom would shield my eyes with her hands. So here I was, apart from my mom, at Christmas, the most special day of the year. Besides worrying about my mom I had other concerns--would there be gifts under the tree for me at my aunt's house? How would Santa know I was there?

My Dad dropped me off and returned to the hospital. At Aunt Nellie's I had one cousin near my age to play with as well as a baby cousin, so I was distracted from my worries for awhile. But as the day turned into the dark December night, my concerns grew. Was my mom ok? Where would I sleep? Would I get presents?

and on and on. Then shortly before bedtime, some beautiful music sounded outside? What was that? We were in the country with no nearby neighbours, so it was an unexpected sound. Aunt Nellie replied that it was Christmas angels singing. I was amazed and in awe! I knew about angels, but I had never actually HEARD them! This was a miracle!

With one last longing look at the Christmas tree, with its wondrous scent of pine and the magical bubbling lights, we children were coaxing into bed. (Santa couldn't come if we were awake, and yes, Aunt Nellie reassured me, Santa would find me at this house). After much whispering and fidgeting, we finally fell asleep.

And on Christmas morning, miracle of miracles, there were presents with my name under the tree! Not just from Santa, but also from my mom and dad, and from Aunt Nellie a shoebox filled with doll clothes that were a little girl's dream. There were outfits with matching hats, but the very best of all was a lace bride dress with matching beaded veil. What joy and relief I felt! Later my Dad came with news that Mom had her operation and would be ok. All was well in my little world.

Though young, I learned something important that Christmas. No matter where you are, or in what circumstances you find yourself, Christmas will find you. Every Christmas Eve, as the dusk descends into night, there is a heavenly hush over the world, as angels' wings brush our souls with the Christmas message of joy and peace. If you stop to listen, you just may hear their singing too!