

GRAPHIC ARCHIVES

THE MAGAZINE DECEMBER 2021





Me with Santa! A Kodak photo image from 1973 when my parents first moved to Knoxville and had this picture taken as Santa was asking me what I wanted for Christmas. I'm fairly certain the only thing on my mind was a Harlem Globetrotters basketball jersey so I could watch Scooby Doo cartoons and feel part of the team! LOL! I recently discovered this photo that brings back all those wonderful memories of Christmas as a child.



The Christmas Spirit

‘Tis the Season! Yes! December is that magic time of the year when we get to spend time with family and loved ones and celebrate life as another year ends and a new one is soon to begin. The month always seems to go by so fast and the challenges often become more of a burden than a relief as we age in years and lose that sense of magic from childhood memories. It is a reflection of some loss of innocence and a need to fulfill responsibility.

Faith is the key to inner happiness that becomes consumed with added stress as we age and December is that time of year to celebrate the victorious gains and learn from those mistakes that may or may not have been within our choice. The truth of the matter is that we are all special and only through spiritual guidance can we answer those questions we have unto ourselves. This month's issue of GRAPHIC ARCHIVES is a reflection of just those sentiments as life loses a sense of magic and takes on greater challenges of expectations.

A few days after I was born on December 19th, 1966...my parents told me they put me underneath their Christmas tree as if I were a gift. Life can be surprising as the gift you give to the world may come back to bring you the joys and wonders that you may not expect, but a gifted child learns the most important thing in life is the blessing that becomes responsibility to those that have endured the pains of growing up while teaching life's lessons. I dedicate this issue to my loving parents...for which I find happiness and spiritual leadership not only in December... Every day of the year!

**Love, Wishes,
and Merry Christmas!**

GRAPHIC ARCHIVES

THE MAGAZINE • DECEMBER 2021



≡ *Not So* A Silent Night

A Childrens Book I created that became a gift to my own ambitions.



≡ JC Leyendecker

Spotlight on the master artist that was an influence on many illustrators.



≡ Stained Glass Windows

A Photographic slideshow for the Roswell United Methodist Church.



An airbrush illustration from my childrens book, "A Not-So Silent Night," in which a couple of mischeivous elves accompany Santa to deliver presents. Full story and more illustrations beginning on page 5.

The Rundown

Cover: An illustration I created in 1990 for WCYB-TV that was used in a promotion for the "Toys for Tots" program initiative as a commercial on television.

Inset: A Kodak moment of me with Santa.

30: Collective Memories
The Spirit of Christmas through the years.

32: Haddon Sundblom
Defining Santa Claus through painted advertising.

34: On A Personal Note...
An Illustrated Card for the Holidays that was a blessing to myself as much as others.

36: Seasons Greetings
A few photos from my house to yours in the spirit of Christmas and the Holiday Season.

Back Cover: Another airbrush illustration from 1990 for a television commercial that incorporated our WCYB-TV Hot Air Balloon and a promotion for an icy drink at a local convenient store. Happy Holidays from me to you!



≡ Christmas Cards

A collection of cards to showcase historical traditions.



≡ Cardinals

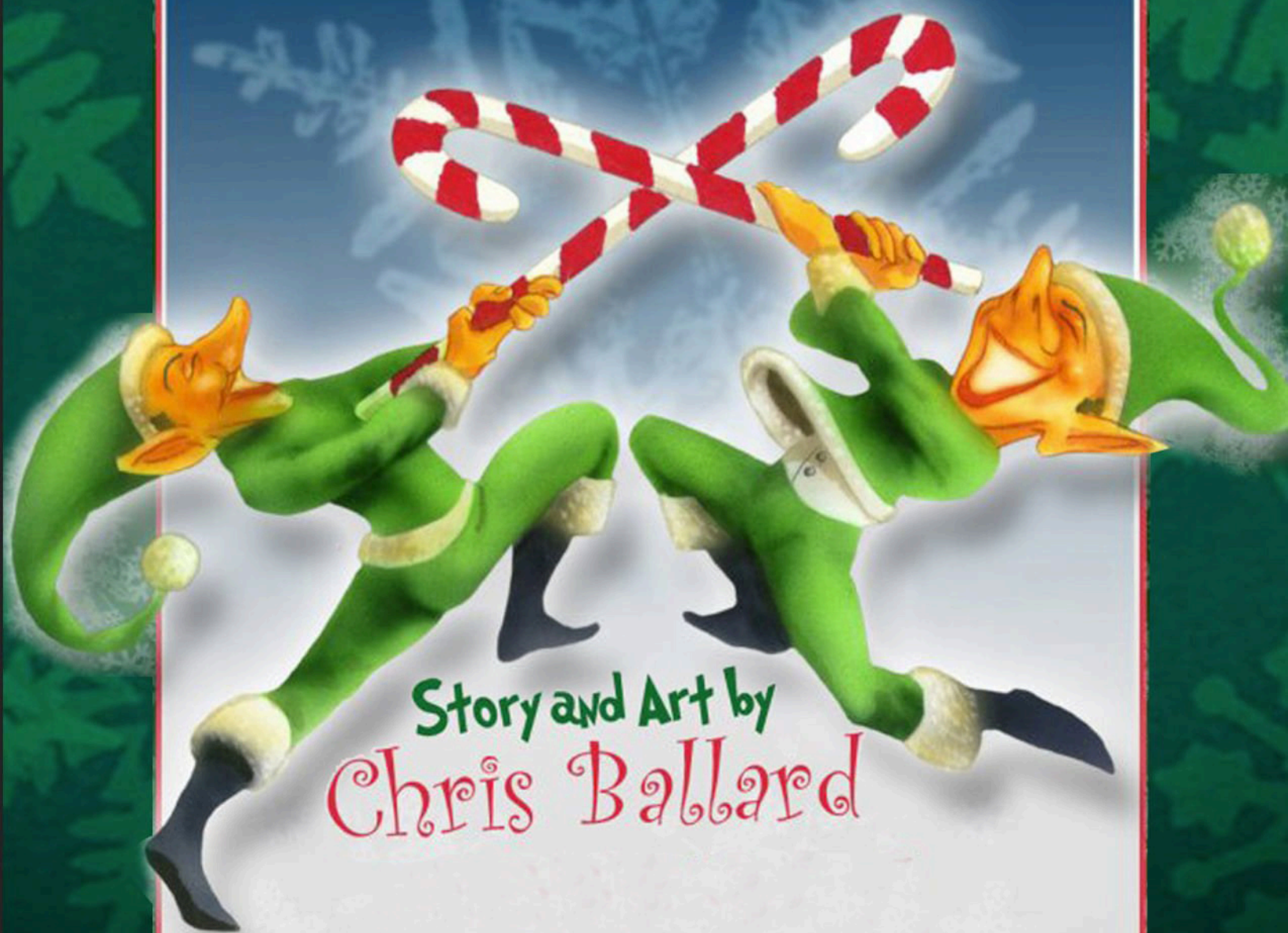
The iconic bird associated with the Christmas Spirit.



≡ Christmas Menu

Recipes from the Gourmet Gallery!

Not So **A Silent Night**



Story and Art by
Chris Ballard



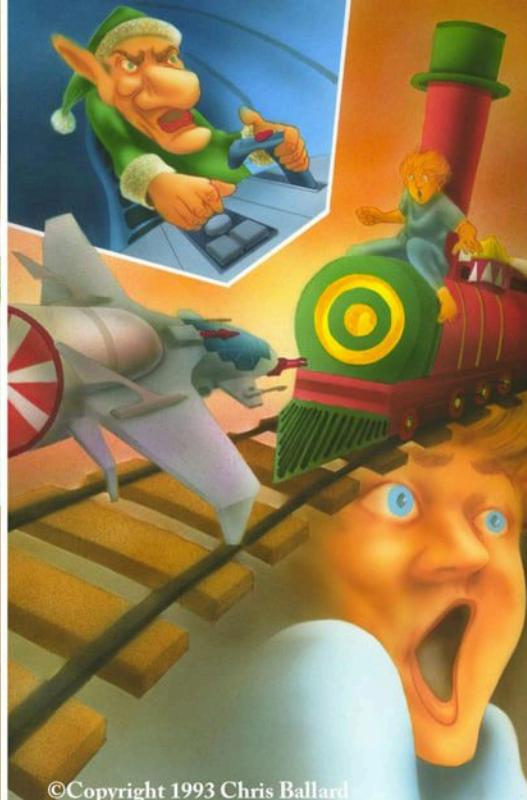
Reflecting back upon a time and age (1993) when life was ambitious, yet I was struggling as a freelance artist and technology had changed the design industry virtually overnight... I felt my career as an artist found death before it had a chance to blossom. It was both the best and worst of times, working on the graphic novel "On A Pale Horse" for Innovation Publishing and later color artist for "The Lawnmower Man," I knew I had to push myself towards something that would becoming more enticing to myself and others.

It began with a simple idea that empowered myself to use my strengths as I worked through my weaknesses to create a better world for myself through artistic exploration in which I had crafted for so many years since childhood. I embraced the challenge with a new spirited effort through a childrens book I wrote, designed, and illustrated for myself. I wanted the story to be told simply through my airbrushed panel-to-panel paintings. There were no descriptive narrative words as my focus was on the artistic nature of storytelling. More of an experiment than a set goal in mind in that I needed to prove to myself I could create a story through my own vision to highlight my sense of design, illustration techniques, and drafting skills that were becoming an extinct quality amidst a world of new computer program technology.

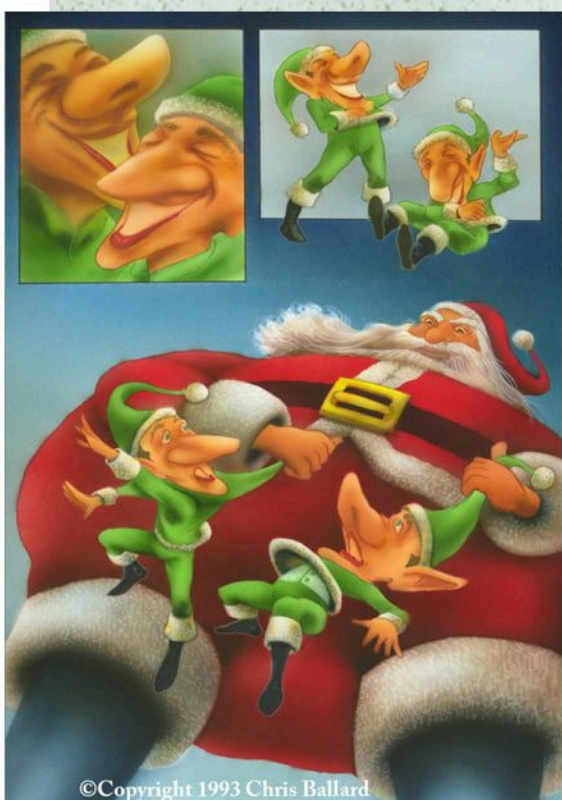
It was a personal commitment from beginning to end as I would lose track of time working on the project I initially titled "A Silent Night" in which a couple of Santa's elves turn mischeivous helping to deliver toys to children. I was accustomed to working through artistic challenges from my freelance illustration venture, but this would become something more. This would be my own creative property to showcase talents beyond the call of duty or any expectation of reward. The childrens book project would simply be a portfolio of skills for future endeavors.



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I continued to work through the challenges. No friends, no love interests, nor much of a life outside of art as I had painted myself into a corner of expectations and nothing to show for it. I felt determined to prove something to myself.

I gained acceptance with a small scholarship to the Graduate Sequential Art program at the Savannah College of Art and Design based on my illustrations. The work was used as an exhibit to showcase students talents. There was even an attempt to publish the book through the college's printing lab until the cost of quality color printing became an issue.

I submitted the illustrations to numerous childrens book and graphic novel publishers. The rejection letters never meant as much to me as what I had already gained for myself. Hindsight is 20/20 and few can see with future vision, but I had reached a point in which art had provided new opportunities in life. The spirit of Christmas is within and I discovered more about myself as an artist than with any other authority simply through my own personal challenges to myself. It is the one body of work in which I feel most accomplished as an illustrative artist. It led me to other artistic endeavors as I had more lucrative opportunities on the horizon, but 1993 was a struggle to survive and I look back upon each page as if it were just another chapter in life's grand design to reflect upon how creative necessity is the mother of invention. A simple idea will only prove it's worth through execution. That is what separates those with resources from those willing to do what it takes to overcome the challenges. I changed the title to "A Not-So Silent Night" as the story revolves around the many aspects that contain some noise that awakens the spirit of the soul to take action from within their own imagination.

"A Not-So Silent Night" by Chris Ballard

graphicasylumweb.com/A_Not_So_Silent_Night.html



To:
Richard
Wyndham
Huffman
from his
friend —
Wendell



J.C. LEYENDECKER

MASTER of ILLUSTRATION

Joseph Christian Leyendecker was one of the most talented and popular illustrators during an age when magazine printing and advertising utilized painters to promote sales. His virtuoso technique and disciplined work regiment became the aspiration of every other artist in the field to emulate his style. One of those was Norman Rockwell, who was so impressed with Leyendecker's work that he moved his studio to New Rochelle to be closer to the most prominent illustrator in the business.

Leyendecker had established himself with his evolving classical designs with a painting style few could emulate. His work embellished both magazines and commercial advertisements. A working method which began with simple gesture sketches from live models, he never used photographs as reference. Working through his original sketches, he would then work out illustrative solutions throughout the final rendering as the strength of an image was complement to both design unity and painting technique, which had been a well-kept secret. His use of stand oil, linseed oil and turpentine allowed for the painting process to become more fluid, allowing for more quick and precise strokes while drying with a wet feel and not showing the brushwork.

Born in Montabour, Germany in 1874, J.C. Leyendecker came to America in 1882 showing his talent for drawing and painting as he secured employment at the age of 16 in Chicago where he continued classes at the Art Institute, which further propelled his ambitions to study at the Academic Julian in Paris, France while he continued to fulfill work for clients in Chicago and returned to New York City with an established portfolio, which soon began to grace magazine covers including *The Saturday Evening Post*. His style set the style and standard for the magazine covers as he often was commissioned for creating the advertisements from client within the magazine. It was not uncommon for the artist to have multiple illustrations for both the magazine and outside clients within the same issue.



An illustrated advertisement within *The Saturday Evening Post* by J.C. Leyendecker.

As the most celebrated and exceptional illustrators of the age, J.C. Leyendecker's fame never took him beyond his reclusive nature. He shunned publicity and never married. A man of privacy, yet committed to his skills as an artist as his work paved the way for so many others wanting to follow in his footsteps. Norman Rockwell was one of those artists that had closely studied his attention to design and painting technique. Rockwell went on to become the famous artist in his own right as he soon began to grace the covers of *The Saturday Evening Post*. The primary difference often noted between the two successful artists was that Rockwell often used photographs to trace over with more realistic detail, rather than the more disciplined Leyendecker method of capturing images through live-posing models to deliver a more stylistic approach. Both artists were successful in their own right, but J.C. Leyendecker had set the standard for all illustrators to follow.



"I Saw Mother Kissed Santa"
Oil Painting, 1921.
J.C. Leyendecker.



STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

ROSWELL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



Special-needs adults showing their artistic craftworks during Noah's Ark Class at the Roswell United Methodist Church. December, 2018.

“Nothing is more illuminating than the light shining through the human spirit.”

Noah's Ark Class at the Roswell United Methodist Church was a Sunday lesson for special-needs adults to participate in the spirit of the season. The theme would be a slide presentation of the stained glass windows throughout the church with a few craft activities for them to create.

I was asked to take photographs of all the stained glass windows in the church by Marcia and her mom, Nancy, who would lead the group with the various stories from the Old Testament and into those with Christ from the slideshow presentation. With only a couple of weeks, I took photos of all the stained glass windows in the church. Fortunately, there was a descriptive catalogue of each and I could easily organize the photos accordingly.

The presentation was brilliant and held the attention of all those that were present with much audience participation. The focus on the slideshow and narrative responses was as much a showcase of the inner spiritual enthusiasm than the study of biblical accounts from history. I watched their excitement as each slide portrayed a new image and offered a challenge to understand the significance of the story reflective to the artistic stained glass windows.



Stained-Glass Windows above the main altar at the Roswell United Methodist Church depicting the life of Jesus Christ and the sacrifices he made for us all.

The project began as a simple request for just a few slides, but I thought it had larger potential as a book with all the descriptive information for each window. I felt ambitious and took on the challenge for myself to create something for the church to consider as a publishing effort. With the information onhand, I went through the entire collection of photographs I had taken of the numerous stained glass windows and the information of each as well. There were a few we had missed in our original shoot as they were part of the collection outside the main Church in offset buildings as others had been moved within other structures. Once I had all the photos needed, I worked to complete the book of all the stained glass windows from the Roswell United Methodist Church.

It was a personal challenge for me as I learned more about those accounts from the stories of both the Old and New Testaments from The Bible. Projects of interest are often those that are something of a self-discovery from within and the work seemed effortless as I rolled through the pages using my photographs and redrafting the text. It was as exciting for me as much as a thrill for those attending the Noah's Ark Class.

The thousand year history of stained glass windows began as early as the 7th century dating back to 675 AD when Benedict Biscop first hired artists from France to glaze the windows of the monastery of St. Peter 's Church at Monkwearmouth, North East England. The technique employs metallic salts or colored glass arranged in shapes and forms with painted embellishments. Considered more as illuminated wall decorations, the vibrancy of colors is dependent on the amount of light passing through from sunlight or a light source that becomes reflective upon the colorized glass image that has been designed. In many ways, it is also a metaphor to the human spirit in which rays of sunshine or light enters the soul through some majestic vision and reflects upon the heart a vibrant optimism of hope.

Those eyes from the Noah's Ark Class opened wide while watching the slideshow presentation and wanted to answer the questions with so much enthusiasm. It was such a reward for me to have taken on such a simple project to provide content in which meant more than simple photography. This was much more fulfilling to my own heart and soul in that the work and effort was nothing compared to seeing how much impact it had on those wanting to gain more in life through spiritual inspiration. Their eyes were indeed similar to those stained glass window through which light poured through to give them a more vibrant and optimistic hope in working through their own challenges.



Photograph of me with Marcia and Nancy after the Noah's Ark Class presentation.



More Photographs from the Noah's Ark Class Stained Glass Windows presentation at the Roswell United Methodist Church December 2018.



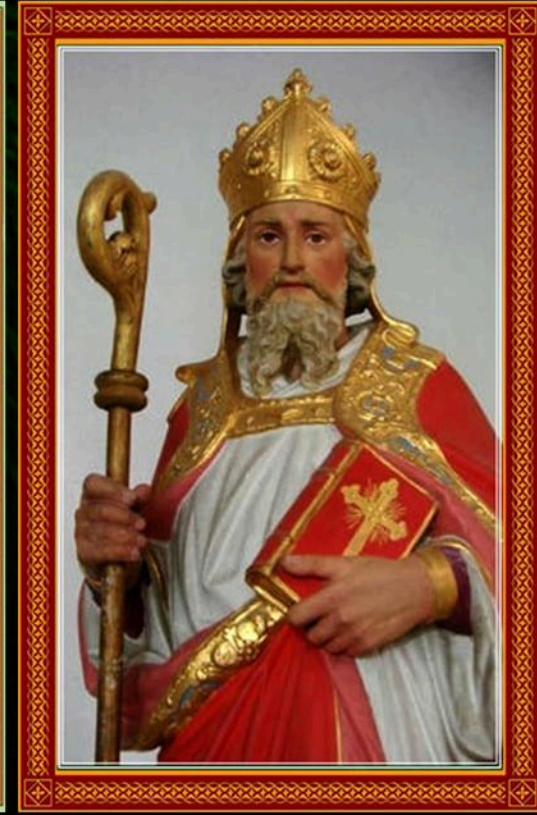


For more Photos from RUMC Noah's Ark Class
<https://graphicasylumweb.shutterfly.com/pictures/3171>



Christmas Cards

"Christmas at Our House: Songs and Stories of the Season" was a 56-hour radio program on KQ95-WIKQ from Johnson City/Greenville, Tennessee to celebrate seasonal music during Christmas in 1990. I would often dub recordings from the radio directly to cassette tapes to capture music I could listen to and I would have an instant library of Christmas music. I had an entire box of 90-minute cassette tapes that I recorded from that radio show from beginning to end. More interested in the music at the time, I simply would record until the tape ran through and put in a new one. There were radio hosts sharing personal stories about their own family traditions and also providing historical content based on many current Christmas traditions and how they originated or evolved throughout the years. I could always go back through the recorded cassette tapes and take out the chatter and the news breaks between songs, so I simply captured the entire show as it aired. A silver lining and blessing in disguise as I would discover many years later.



Selected Christmas Cards related to Christmas Trees, The Nutcracker, and Saint Nicholas.

The stories from those cassette tapes from “*Christmas at Our House*” began to roll through my wheelhouse of ideas. I had an incredible resource of information about the many seasonal traditions and thought about bringing it together in a series of Christmas Cards. The idea had been lurking in my mind for years and I finally committed myself to a project that could serve as a series of cards with historical accuracy that showed the progression of so many aspects related to Christmas traditions.

An AE Biography on Santa Claus put everything else in context and became another source of information for me to research further. The Christmas Card Series Project was finally realized in 2017 as I rolled out the cards on social media. Not having time to generate the artwork on my own, I simply took the images from various sources on the internet with my descriptions from history to help explain our current traditions and how they originated. It was fascinating for me to finally understand the how and why of Christmas in our culture as it evolved through so many other cultures and traditions before Christ was born.

The Christmas Card series became popular amongst friends on social media as I would share each card. It was nothing I could copyright for myself as the artwork would come from various sources, but that becomes a larger issue for legal matters and as long as I am not making a monetary profit from shared resources, there can never be an account against me as one taking advantage of creative property. I have had graphics/illustrations taken from me and used elsewhere, but I find most are innocent and respectful of creative property and not using my work for their own personal gain. Imitation is a form of flattery and can never be duplicated from its original conception.

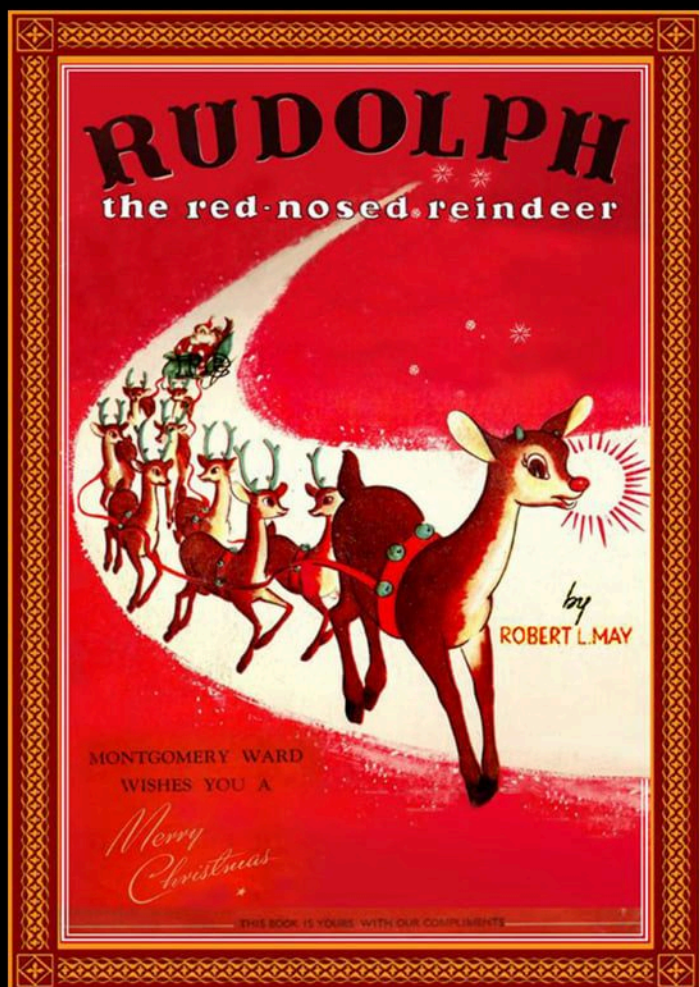
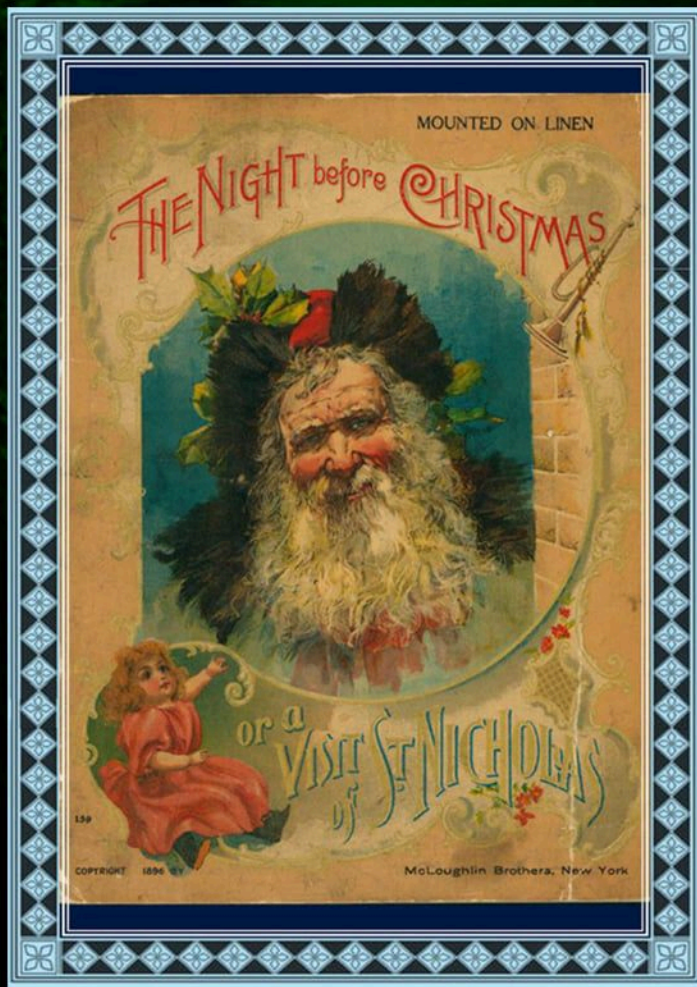


“White Christmas”

Watercolor, 1989

One of a few cards from my Christmas Card Collection in which I used my own artwork.


There are 44 separate Christmas cards in the series that follow a loose sequential development throughout history pointing to the progression from Saint Nicholas’ transcendence through different cultures and how various cultures and traditions have led to the current-day Santa Claus. The A&E Biography was a valuable resource in discovering the many aspects I had never known growing up and combined with the stories from *“Christmas at Our House”* radio program helped to pull all those seasonal elements together to showcase something of a gift of knowledge for others who take interest in the Spirit of Christmas. Each card brings to light the many facets that have become intertwined within our own culture as both art and literature have had a profound impact on shaping Christmas into a season of human compassion through charity and boosting economic development through gifts and business. In many ways, Saint Nicholas’ vision to the world began with similar acts of gratuitous efforts shared with those in need to help humanity through generosity. From Sainthood to Santa Claus... the cultures, traditions and distinctions may differ, but the Spirit of Christmas thrives from the birth of Jesus Christ and all those following His faith in Christianity. His is the reason for the season and it is hard to imagine a world without the many diverse aspects that have been a result of such devotional inspiration to mankind.





Nature

Northern Cardinal

 Photograph of a male cardinal in my backyard during a recent winter ice storm. Most remain around human dwellings as seeds and birdfeed often attract them.


The Northern Cardinal is often thought to have spiritual meaning as they represent luck, devotion, loyalty and domestic harmony. Symbolic as they appear on many Christmas cards and are believed by some to be angels that appear to bring the spirit of heaven upon earth.

Ranging from southern Canada throughout the eastern US and into Central America, the bright red plumage of the male becomes a stark contrast to winter's muted color palette. Feathers serve to provide insulation and flight, but like many songbirds, Cardinals replace their feathers through a molting process which often occurs after breeding to restore its vibrant red colors. Females contain a more olive-reddish-brown crest to mark the distinction between the sexes. Migration is limited to short-distances as the Cardinal prefers to remain within areas with a steady food supply. Bird feeders with sunflower seeds and wild bird mix will become a dependent source of food for them as long as there is a consistent supply as many humans enjoy providing for them as much as simply taking pleasure in bird-watching.



Female Cardinal with lighter-toned crest feeding in my backyard upon my homemade suet. My personal observations in recent years are that the male will often accompany the female while feeding and at times the two will share seeds from one's beak to the other in an act of courtship of loving one another.



 Recent photograph of a male cardinal amidst the turning colors of Maple leaves. Always present in my backyard, Cardinals depend on seeds and birdmix from humans, especially during the winter months.

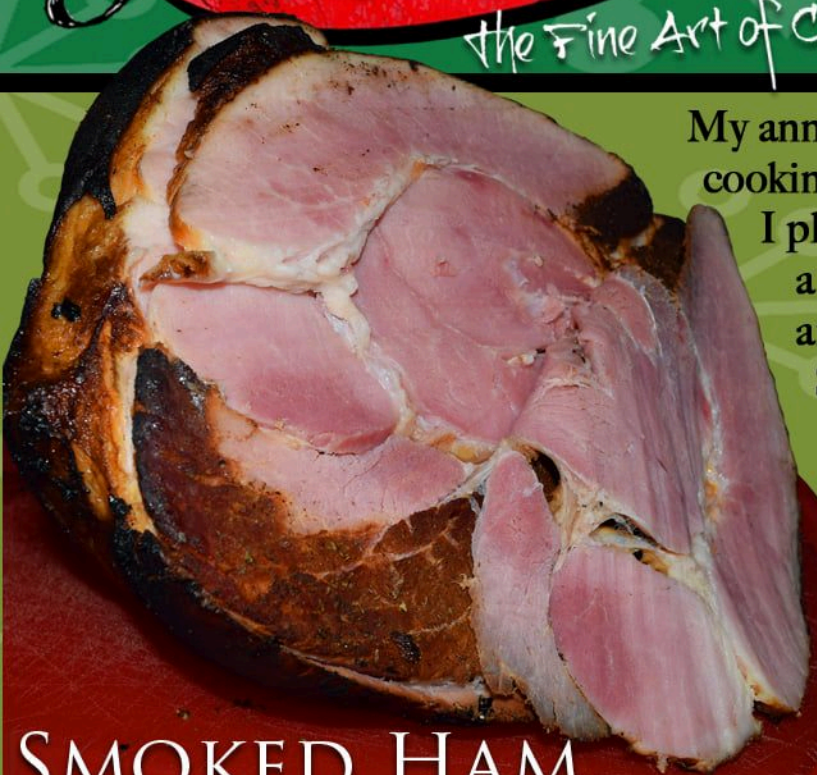
As songbirds, Cardinals have at least fifteen or more different types of calls, most of which are used to attract mates or communicate with others as a warning. Males sing during courtship to impress their mate and chirp as a warning to rivals and dangerous threats. Nesting habitats are found in shrubs and trees near woodland areas as they forage on the ground consuming fruits, seeds, buds and insects. The Cardinal's conical bill is specially suited for cracking shells to extract seeds.

The Cardinal is listed as the State Bird in seven different states. It is also a popular mascot for numerous sports teams and is often associated with Christmas themes. The species originated in the southeast portion of the US, but has expanded its range as far as southern Canada and Central America. Few migrate west of the Mississippi River, but they can be found in California and even Hawaii due to human transport.

A scientific research study conducted in 2016 on West Nile Virus transmission found Cardinals to be immune to the disease and they have been listed as a species of least concern by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature.)



CHRISTMAS MENU



SMOKED HAM

My annual gift to myself each year is spending time cooking as it is both a passion and provides a need. I plan to put my smoker grill in action to smoke a ham, along with Corn on the Cob and anything else that may be desired.

Scalloped Oysters are my seasonal favorite as with my Holiday Green Beans with Crispy Onion toppings. I use some of the Ham to cook Turnip Greens for good luck in the new year and often cook some Speckled Lima Butter Beans. No Christmas is complete without Banana Pudding and Doo-Dads to snack on in-between meals!



SCALLOPED OYSTERS



MACARONI & CHEESE



HOLIDAY GREEN BEANS WITH CRISPY ONIONS



& Smoked Ham & Smoked Corn on the Cob

An Easter Tradition is ham...and I look forward to any opportunity to use my smoker to grill. One of the things I've learned is to spice up the meat with a rub. The flavors seep into the meat during the smoked grilling and add more taste. I've found it to be well worth the extra effort. While smoking the ham, I prepare the corn and put that on the grill as well. I carefully slit the corn's cover to separate, remove the thin insulated interior thingamajigs to dispose... and place the cob back into the leafy part and place them directly on the grill. No salt or butter to cook, as you can add that later if desired. Smoked Corn on the cob is my favorite!

Smoke-la-homa Rub!

It's very basic in that you mix some spices together to add flavor to meat while grilling as it soaks through during the process. There are many types of specific rub mixes, but this one is one that works with many Simply mix all the ingredients together and literally "rub" it onto the meat while grilling.

*1/4 cup Paprika
3 tablespoons Garlic Powder
3 tablespoons Celery Salt
2 tablespoons Kosher Salt
2 tablespoons Dark Brown Sugar
2 tablespoons Ground Cumin
2 tablespoons Chile Powder
1 tablespoon Dried Oregano
1 tablespoon Ground Black Pepper
1 tablespoon Ground White Pepper
2 tablespoons Cayenne Pepper (Optional...
for a spicy kick!)*



Macaroni and Cheese

4 cups Macaroni
3/4 Cups Butter or Margerine
2 1/2 tbsp All-Purpose Flour
3 cups Milk
2 cups grated Sharp Cheddar Cheese
1/2 Cup Shredded Parmesan Cheese
Bread Crumbs
2 Tablespoons Italian Seasoning
1/4 tsp Cayenne Ground Pepper
4-5 Slices Fried Bacon, Chopped
Salt and Pepper to Taste.



1. Add Macaroni to a large pot of boiling water with 2 teaspoons of salt. Boil until al dente (softened, but still firm), drain Macaroni in a strainer and set aside.
2. Melt 1/4 Cup Butter. Whisk in 2 1/2 Tablespoons of Flour to mix well. Whisk in 3 Cups Milk and continue to stir. Add in 2 Cups Sharp Cheddar Cheese and stir to melt into the Roux. Add another 1/2 Cup Shredded Parmesan Cheese. As the sauce thickens, turn off heat.
3. Coat a Baking Dish with a thin layer of Butter and add the Macaroni.
4. Pour the Roux (Sauce mixture) over the Macaroni.
5. Melt a Tablespoon Butter (or Margerine) and add 1/2 Cup Bread Crumbs and stir to a slightly brown mixture. Coat Macaroni top with Buttered Bread Crumbs.
6. Sprinkle Cajun Seasoning to taste on top as well as Italian Seasoning.
7. Optional: Add Crumbled Fried Bacon as a topping.
8. Bake the Macaroni covered with Aluminum foil in the Oven at 350° for 30-40 minutes.

Notes

This is a simplified version that I've found to be incredibly tasty! The Roux or Sauce is critical to the process. I add a few spices, but feel free to add your own. The Bacon gives an added flavor, but is optional.

Gourmet GALLERY

the Fine Art of Cooking

Holiday Greens with Crispy Onions

Ingredients

2 lbs Fresh Green Beans
8 tbsp Butter
2 cups Sliced Mushrooms
Minced Garlic
(or 4 Garlic Cloves, fresh)
1/2 cup Flour
1 cup Chicken Broth
2 cups Milk
2 oz Sour Cream
2 teaspoons Sugar
Salt and Pepper to taste
1/2 cup Dill Weed
6 Green Onions,
or 1/2 chopped Sweet Onion
2/3 cups Grated Parmesan Cheese
1 tablespoon Fresh Rosemary
1 tablespoon Fresh Thyme
1 (3.5 oz) package Crispy Onions

Directions:

1. Boil Green Beans until tender.
2. Saute Mushrooms in Butter, adding Garlic. Once mixed, sprinkle in the Flour and continue to whisk. Add the Chicken stock and continue to stir about 4-5 minutes, until the stock is thick and bubbly.
3. Transfer Mushroom stock to a baking dish. Stir in the Green Beans, Parmesan Cheese, and remaining Seasonings. Add Salt and Pepper to taste and top with Crispy Onions. Bake at 350° for 30 minutes.

For more recipes from my "GOURMET GALLERY"
graphicasyllumweb.com/Gourmet_Gallery.html



Chris Ballar

Collective Memories

The first Christmas I can remember from childhood was waking up that morning to find toys scattered throughout the living room and candy thrown all about as if Santa was in a hurry and didn't have time to organize the presents. The apartment my parents and I were living in on Cedar Lane in Knoxville was the top half of the owners home and I wasn't concerned so much about the messy room as I was excited about the gifts that seemed to appear as if by magic! That miracle would become engrained forever in my mind as if Santa had become the best gift I had expected to deliver those wishes.

That is Christmas for many fortunate children in that miracles happen without reason. My collective memories were just beginning to form at such an early age and I have many fond memories during that time. I knew nothing about worldly struggles nor the efforts that would go into sacrifices and challenges to earn those extras that made Christmas special.

For many years as a child I would become excited as Christmas drew near. As I began to show creative interests my parents would give me magic markers as presents, which were always needed because I often ran out of ink. Clothes were another common gift as I would outgrow and wear out what I had already. Needful things were always a blessing and Santa's gifts were directed towards those items that had delightful purpose.

From childhood to adolescence to rebellious teenage years...and even through college and adulthood, those memories are everlasting and the greatest gifts are those that are more mindful than material possessions. Those gifts that come from sacrifice and effort have far more meaning as they are earned through loving wishes and compromising solutions to build towards future progression. Christmas is a time for giving in so many aspects for those that work hard to bring joy to others. I believe that should be the essential quality of any artistic mind to employ themselves in some manner that inspires others through their own gifted talents.

The Christmas spirit is best observed through the eyes of children in wonderment of so much to learn and to understand. Fantasy can become the magic that powers the mind with imagination and anything seems possible at such a young age. I believe that much was going on in my mind as a child in that the true gifts I received were those of encouragement and needful things. I was blessed to grow up in such a loving family and those memories continue to put my imagination to the test in that support was all I ever needed to pursue any ambitions I wanted to fulfill.

Living life through such an artistic mindset is as inspirational to me as much as others.

Those things that give me a sense of value and help lead me towards something of importance becomes my inner drive.

New ideas and challenges are always just around the corner as you grow older and realize you are no longer a child. Responsibility becomes a measure and takes much away from the magic that once seemed so consistent with the dreams and visions of self-image. The Christmas spirit that happened as a child turns to stress in many homes as holidays heighten expectations. I often go back and watch those old classic animations from childhood to rediscover the magic. It gives me a sense of perspective in that we are all still children at heart, no matter our age. Wishing Everyone a Merry Christmas and take time to reflect on some of your own special collective memories.





Now it's my time

Haddon Sundblom Defining SANTA

Artists such as Thomas Nast, J.C. Leyendecker, and Norman Rockwell all played an integral role illustrating and portraying a vision of Santa Clause, but none more than Haddon Sundblom had as much impact upon society. His first painting for Coca-Cola in 1931 was an immediate success as mass public appeal embraced the advertising campaign which soon became it's own tradition.

Sundblom went on to create hundreds of paintings and images for the Coca-Cola company through advertisements, which ultimately became the most-defined image of the "Jolly Old-Elf" from which truly had it's basic origins from Clement Clark Moore's "A Visit from St. Nicholas," which is now commonly referred to as "The Night Before Christmas."

Artist Thomas Nast was the first to provide images based on the literary vision, and many others have embellished upon his original work, but as Santa had now become so iconic in sales and advertising, his image was becoming know worldwide through the paintings of Haddon Sundblom.



“Merry Old Santa Claus”

Thomas Nast

First published in *Harper’s Weekly*
January 1, 1881

A few years ago, the Coca-Cola Museum in Atlanta had Haddon Sundblom’s paintings on exhibit. As an artist myself, it was one of the most impressive collections I have witnessed. It was during a time when painters and illustrators had more influence as publications and advertising would utilize artistic skills to entice viewers and increase sales. Sundblom’s vision of Santa along with the powerful marketing through his paintings established the iconic representation of Santa Claus as he is known so widely in many cultures today.

“Merry Christmas to you”
Haddon Sundblom
Oil on canvas, 1944





On A Personal Note...

In 1989, I was commissioned to create a Christmas Card for Machine Kinetics, Inc. in which my mom was the Office Manager for the engineering firm. I was still working towards my BFA degree in Graphic Design/Illustration at East Tennessee State, and had worked through a paid internship at Visual Impact providing much insight into the world of commercial art and design.

The idea for the card was open to what I could create, but would need to be black and white to minimize printing costs. Color had always been my strength in school and this would be a challenge to illustrate a design for one color printing. The card would be beneficial for the business and mutual to my own ambitions as I was beginning to put my skills to test in the real world. It is always a personal touch of gratitude to receive a card during the holiday season from family, friends, and business associates.



The idea for the card illustration came from a set of candles that my parents used as decorations in their living room. Intricately carved and highly detailed, the candles were a gift from my aunt who had been living in Germany while my uncle was serving military duties. I composed the scene of musicians that were randomly placed on the candles to portray them as a band in a single image. Having created a holiday card as part of my portfolio and being so well-received boosted my confidence.

Years later while working as a freelance artist for publishers, I decided to go back and incorporate my airbrush technique and skills to create a painted color version of the illustration. It was just a personal ambitious effort as further practice while time allowed with no specific purpose. I included the airbrushed painted version in my portfolio presentations and it was always the one piece that made an impression.

Years later in Graduate school at the Savannah College of Art and Design, the colored version was selected as student work for the college and was printed as their Holiday card to distribute to patrons and potential recruiting students. It was an honor to have been chosen for my work to become an image of holiday spirit as both cards had been a blessed gift to my own career and ambitions.



Happy Holidays!
From Chris & Gidget