



# HOUSTON VISITING CHRISTIAN SCIENCE NURSE SERVICE, INC.

December 2021

## Christmas Remembered and Always Here

When I was fourteen and living on my grandparents' farm, Gram saw to it that my dream of having a horse came true. She bought Buck from friends down the road for the kingly sum of \$250. He and I soon became inseparable.

For a couple of years, I subscribed to a horse magazine. The Christmas issue always featured artists' renderings of cowboys on a wintry range. One image displayed a cowboy on his horse walking under a full moon. They were dragging a Christmas tree through the snow toward a lamp-lit cabin nestled in a pine forest. To me, it was the perfect Christmas tableau.

The same scene came to life when, just a few days before Christmas, six inches of snow blanketed our farm. I could barely contain my glee as I saddled up Buck, grabbed a hatchet and a rope, and headed off to the stand of pines atop a small hill overlooking one of our distant fields.

My experience wasn't quite like the magazine's idyllic depiction, though. It took me forever to worry through the stubby trunk. The dull hatchet blade—which kept falling off the handle—probably couldn't have hacked through a stick of frozen butter. When the tree *finally* toppled over, sacrificing an impressive pile of pine needles in the process, I tied my nifty rope around the trunk, wrapped the other end around the saddle horn, and mounted up—just like a real cowboy!



The trek back home being nearly half a mile, I did what any impatient boy would have done: rode faster! The tree in tow became airborne—a pine tree kite that alternately flew and bounced over the snow, trailing branches and needles the entire way. Not until Buck and I got home did I notice that one half of the tree had been stripped bare. No worries. The flat side would face the wall.

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Christmas Eve was my favorite part of the holiday. Our small family cozied up in the front room around a fire blazing in the 150-year-old fireplace. Pop would wave an ancient, long-handled basket back and forth over the flames to make popcorn, and my sister and I tried our best to string the kernels into strands with the sewing needles and thread Gram gave us. When tree-trimming festivities came to an end, Gram would read aloud Mary Baker Eddy's "What Christmas Means to Me." As I listened, I lay in front of the fire, watching its glowing embers and feeling completely loved.

The peace I felt on that special eve is what Christmas means to me. It's a peace that originates in and emanates from God, who is Love—a peace that cloaks us in like-minded love for God and for one another. This peace and love were epitomized by the Bethlehem babe, who grew into the man regarded by Christians as the most peace-giving, love-living Son of our heavenly Father. Sure, secular traditions are fun and often meaningful, but the real joy of Christmas lies in our quiet confidence that Christ's love, which Jesus so perfectly embodied, is forever and everywhere.

Embracing one another as dear friends—especially those precious members of our church family who are facing challenges—is the way we reflect divine Love. As a kid, I understood the healing import of such unselfish love, for I always saw my grandmother quietly comforting others, both in our church and in our neighborhood.

Christian Science nursing is Christmas in action. It is the tender touch of the Christ. It is merciful love for our fellow man. It is the healing Truth that lights up a sick room and soothes a suffering heart. We are so grateful to behold the spirit of Christmas behind every call our *Journal*-listed visiting Christian Science nurse, Susie Petersen, takes and makes. She loves her clients in a Christly way—year-round. Merry Christmas! Joyeux Noël! Feliz Navidad!

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*Christian Science Hymn 324*