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# Our most memorable Christmas moments

I enjoyed the Christmas celebration with my Mum last year, in her rest home in St.Gallen. The staff there is very caring, they put a lot of effort into making the afternoon special. A couple of their residents got their instruments out and played a few violin / piano duets. Everyone seemed so content, despite many of their essential functions having declined drastically - ability to move, vision, hearing, quick thinking. A different world. Being together with others, be it close family or strangers, sharing tunes, stories, food, gives me the greatest pleasure in this season. I hope to experience a lot of it in December.

From Nelly



I still cherish the first Christmas here in New-Zealand as a complete family watching Orlando unwrapping his first present in his young life. I still see his joy in his eyes as he saw what came to light. We also "celebrated" some great Christmas's in Bagdad (Iraq) and used to overcome the hangover during our flight back to Switzerland in time for New Year's Eve.

From Henry



There was one very memorable Christmas when I was about 7 years old. It was a time when my parents were still together, being a perfect small family. The parents woke me up at midnight announcing that the Christmas child came for a visit and dropped off some presents. Among them was an ice hockey stick, marking the time when I seriously started playing ice hockey. There would have been other presents, but that, the beautiful candle lit tree and happy parents is all I can remember.

From Daniel



In 2003 I was an expat in a Muslim country, where Christmas was not an official holiday. But as many of the employees at my work were Europeans there was no way we were going to skip Christmas. Our office closed on 25 December and we had an official work Christmas celebration. We also had a small dinner at our house with other expats, including local friends (of any religious affiliation). That year was the first (and only) I spent Christmas away from any family. But it felt ok being with friends. It felt strange that outside our small group, that day was nothing special at all.

From Odile



Christmas was very special as we had most of mum and dad's family living around us, so Christmas was a wonderful family time. Our presents from the extended family were a bag of goodies (oranges and

other food). We are pleased now to have grandchildren to have that wonderful time again!!!

From Lisette



Christmas is a special time because our families get together and we have fun. I really love the food ... Nana's Christmas pudding with custard, and Meme and Mum's delicious Swiss Christmas cookies are just out of this world!!!

From Daniel and Richard



I really love the day well before Christmas when mum and I prepare and bake a huge variety of Christmas biscuits (the bonus is I get the milking off ... so it shows you how much Adrian loves the biscuits too!!!) ... we always hope that there will be sufficient left for Christmas Day as we would hate to have to have a second session of baking!!! They make great Christmas gifts ... as long as we don't give away Dad and Adrian's favourites!

From Marianne



X-mas Time in Basel

As for most families of my vintage in Switzerland, the x-mas season was quiet and festive, starting early in December with the "Adventskranz" (advent wreath) being lit and opening the little windows on the advent calendars, one by one. We children spent time making hand-made x-mas presents. "Heilige Oobe" or Christmas Evening was the time for our main family x-mas celebration. My sister Ruth and I had to wait in our shared bedroom for a couple of hours, hopping around like mad with the stress of anticipation. Finally the door opened, we raced into the living room where the x-mas tree was all decorated and lit up with real candles, baubles and chocolates. Our most pressing interest was to catch a glimpse of the "Chrischtchindli" (christ child) - but every year it had just escaped through the open door out onto the terrace and alas we never saw it. Next on the agenda was the admiration of the x-mas tree and the lovely "Krippe" (nativity scene) which my father had made with a whole host of figures, from Mary, Joseph and Jesus, to the three kings, shepherds, cows, donkeys and sheep. We sang a few x-mas songs and my sister and I each recited a x-mas poem by heart. Then it was present time - never a whole lot but somehow always just right. There were always books to be relished and exchanged with each other over the quiet x-mas period. Finally we had a beautiful meal of "Paschtetli" (vol-au-vents) made from my mother's secret recipe which was an all-time favourite well into our adult lives. X-mas day was much quieter - church in the morning and

then a roast lunch with the wider family, all decked out in their Sunday best (and unfortunately that included us). The x-mas tree was always relit a few times over the coming days, we slowly picked the gorgeous chocolates and played around with the extra-large baubles which were a bit like convex mirrors - great for making grimaces. All too soon the festive time was over, but with a bit of luck there was snow outside and our friends and we hooked up long rows of sledges with our feet and raced down empty city streets at night time, not that any of our parents had the slightest inkling of it!

From Susie



The best thing about Christmas as a child: to go for a walk in the snow on the evening of the 24th of December only to find a lavishly decorated Christmas tree (with presents underneath) when returning to the living room. Enjoying the seemingly endless days to play with the presents before school began.

The best thing about Christmas as an adult: going for a run in the snow in the early afternoon of the 24th of December only to find mom and dad rummaging the attic for decorations. Preparing the Christmas meal together while sipping on champagne. Enjoying the few hours to sit together and rekindle the memories of the days when we had endless time to play with the presents before school began. Oh - and my dad playing the harmonica to which my cat had a strangely strong attraction to. On hearing the first sound, she came running down, rubbed herself against my dad's leg and purred affectionately. By playing the harmonica my dad, involuntarily, made cat mating calls on Christmas Eve.

From Luzia



My first Christmas away from Switzerland was probably the funniest one to remember. We were married for only a few months and even though I did mention that "Our Christmas" was on the 24th of December, this rather crucial information clearly didn't sink in with my husband. I made all the preparations to celebrate on Christmas Eve (as you do!) with wonderful dinner and dessert and then the waiting began.... all on my own in a small London flat. No mobile phones in those days but apparently they did have late night shopping in London's Oxford Street! Without going into too much detail, you can imagine that from this day on Dave would always remember which the Swiss Christmas day to celebrate was! And he was well trained thereafter to have the Christmas shopping done and dusted (including wrapped) no later than the 23rd December.

From Tanja