



Just About Anything...

TO DELIGHT THE CURIOUS READER

a blog by Mona McHaney

December 16, 2020 Blog #16
Deluxe Christmas Edition

Photos of Christmas Past



1967—I was almost three months old when my Uncle Objeeg and Aunt Dot in Baltimore, Maryland, dressed me as Santa and put me under the tree for my first Christmas.



1971—This was the year my parents and I moved to a farm in Marion, Virginia. Little did my dog Susie know that she would soon be the one dressed in baby clothes, getting pushed in the stroller.



1973—My Granny used to collect supermarket-issued Green Stamps. She saved up enough to redeem and buy me this globe. I still remember spinning the world on that Christmas morning, letting my fingers skim the bumpy Himalayas.



1978—After we moved to Middletown, Maryland, Aunt Dot and Uncle Objeeg visited us every Christmas. Here they are pictured on the left, with my mother June and me on the right. A friend made me the blue granny doll featured in the center. Aunt Dot was the adult who seemingly never tired of playing new board games with me.



1984—The holidays mean good food and plenty of it. My mother spent days cooking our Christmas dinner. After we all sat down to a beautifully appointed table and gave thanks for our delicious feast, Mom would invariably rise up, walk into the kitchen, and return with a heaping spoonful of peanut butter. That's all she would eat for Christmas dinner! Every year we protested, but she was undeterred, licking her Jiffy straight off the spoon. After a week of cooking, Mom was probably tired of casseroles; but mostly, I think peanut butter was a rare childhood treat for her, and it evoked happy memories. Here she is in her new hat beside my father and me. What can I say? My mother was a pistol!



1985—Throughout my school years, I hosted a Christmas party and sleepover each December for my best friends. My mom always made us lovely things to eat, including my favorite—her chocolate-covered peanut butter balls. Sitting from left to right are Dawn Ann, Cheri, Beth, and me. Thirty-five years later, we are still friends.



1985—For years my widowed Aunt Mae, from Aliceville, Alabama, spent the winter months at our house. I can still hear her laughter when she beat Mom in a game of gin rummy. Pictured from left to right is Aunt Mae, her son Kenny, Mom, Dad, and me.



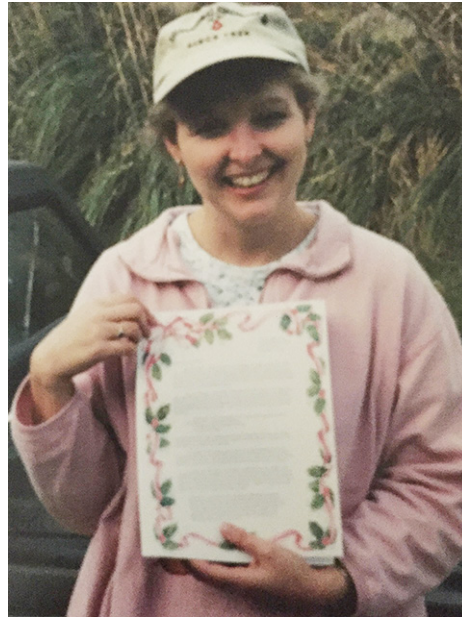
1987—I spent my junior year of college abroad in Oxford, England. It was my first Christmas apart from my folks, but I was lovingly welcomed to spend the holidays with a British and Austrian family, the Gadsbys. I am the one dressed in bright red (such an American!) with my arm around Omi, Mrs. Gadsby's mother from Vienna. Behind us from left to right are Mr. Baker (the Gadsby's dear neighbor), sons Clement and David, Mrs. Christine Gadsby, and Mr. Trevor Gadsby. A third son, Thomas, is the one taking the photo. This was the first time I ever saw real candles lit on a Christmas tree. Beautiful!



1994—While attending graduate school in St. Louis, Missouri, I met and married Mark. He then began a busy residency program in pediatrics, so I didn't see him very often. To keep me company, I bought a pet rabbit. It was so cute that I got another one and another and another.... Imagine sharing an apartment with five bunnies! Here's our Christmas photo with Ranger, Trigger, Badger, Spooky, and Tonto.



1996—Here I am with my Aunt Grey at her home in Chilhowie, Virginia. She was featured in my August blog entitled "The Importance of Naming Cows." When I was a small child living on the farm, Aunt Grey used to sleep with me in my room on Christmas Eve. This gave "Santa" privacy to deliver my presents, enjoy his milk and cookies, and make a little noise on the roof. Grey said my whole body would quiver with excitement when I heard the "reindeer."



1997—After Mark finished his residency program, we moved to Valdosta, Georgia, where he completed his four-year obligation to the Air Force at Moody Air Force Base. (Yes, I was a Moody wife even before I knew I was bipolar. Ha!) It was during this time that I began writing the world's longest Christmas letters. Here I am with a 66-page whopper.



1997—And here is Mark carrying copies of that whopper home from the print shop!



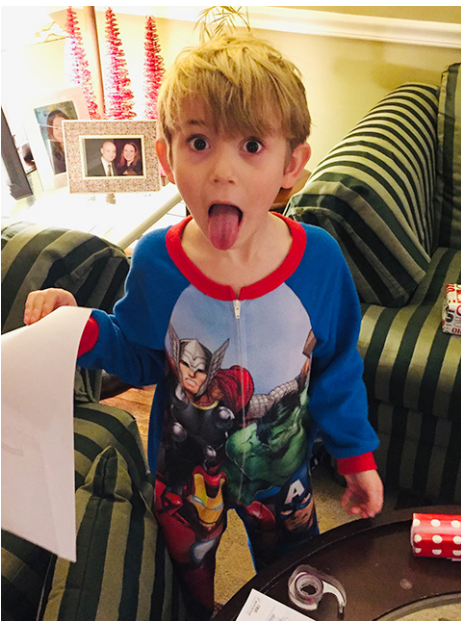
2006—We've only spent one Christmas together as a couple in Mark's hometown of Fresno, California. And we almost didn't make it in time. A blizzard in Denver postponed our flight, and we spent Christmas Eve sleeping in the LAX airport in Los Angeles. Normally this sprawling airport is hectic and crowded, but that evening it was surprisingly quiet and nearly deserted. Mark greeted me Christmas morning with a Chai Latte from the Starbucks stand beside the benches where we bedded down. Later this photo was taken of us with Mark's two sisters, Cheryl and Angela. Mark is holding our nephew Noah, and I'm holding our niece Joy—both children of Cheryl and her husband Andy.



2011—The first time we lived in Africa, I bought myself a red and green malafah for the holidays. I enjoyed planning our team's annual Christmas Eve party and sleepover.



2017—New seasons call for new traditions. In recent years, Mark and I started spending Christmas with his sisters and their families in Chicago. Mom Marilyn would fly in from California to join us. I especially enjoyed baking gingerbread cookies with our niece Ariana and nephew Dylan, the children of Angela and her husband Stel. Here's a photo of sweet Ariana displaying the cookies she decorated.



2017—This photo of our nephew Dylan makes me smile.



2018—For Mom's last Christmas, I dressed her up as Santa and parked her under the tree. Next to us in the photo is our dear friend Judy, who helped me care for Mom and Dad before they went home to be with the Lord. "June Bug," as we affectionately called Mom, became more and more child-like as her Alzheimer's progressed. You'll see she has a surprisingly good grip on that basket of chocolate candy in her lap.



2019—I love unpacking our Christmas tree ornaments and reminiscing. The angel tree topper was one that perched on my family tree when I was a little girl. Mark has named her "Phyllis" after the comedian Phyllis Diller. The needlepoint snowman in the center was made by my friend Dawn Ann over 40 years ago. The cotton ball angel beside it was a memento of our years in Georgia. Everything has a story that recalls the various seasons of my life. When we return to the U.S. this summer, Lord willing, I hope to bring my ornament collection back with me to Africa.

As Christmas of 2020 draws near, I would love to receive a favorite photo of you and your family. Please email it to me at encouragemona@gmail.com or download WhatsApp for free and text it to me at my WhatsApp number: (276) 791-7639.

Lord willing, Mark and I will be hosting our team's Christmas party on December 24th. Please pray for the health of our teammates and us in this season of COVID-19.

We wish you a blessed Christmas and a happy—and healthy—New Year!