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# My 46 Year Old Christmas Tree

Friday, December 25, 2015

Christmas 1969 was bleak. Our baby was 3 months old. DH had left for Vietnam a few weeks after she was born. In those days you weren't allowed to stay in base housing once he was deployed so we sent most of our stuff into storage, loaded the rest into a U-Haul, and drove 300 miles to my parents' house with a colicky newborn in the back seat.

As the holidays approached, my mood was dark. It was probably partly post-partum depression, but since my husband was out in a jungle with people trying to kill him, depression seemed like an appropriate emotion to me.

I wasn't exactly the Grinch, but I didn't want anything to do with Christmas myself.

My Dad decided we should buy a tree, our first artificial tree. Their new house had "radiant" electric heat from the ceiling and no amount of water could keep a real tree in decent shape.

So off we went to Sears where he bought a 6 foot scotch pine that looked very much like the type he used to buy off the lot. I remember that it cost \$30. We decorated it with the ornaments from my childhood. I took pictures and sent them to DH, trying to look happy and hopeful for the future, but I wasn't. I was sad and angry and miserable.

Fortunately, my worst nightmares never materialized. DH came home and we had 2 more children. Our 6 grandchildren are 14 - 21.

Over the years the tree has been set up in 6 different houses in 4 states. I read that artificial trees last an average of 10 years, but this one is approaching a half century and still looks the same as it did when we bought it.

It has seen happy times and sad ones. My Dad died just before Christmas in 1997. Although the grief fades over time, there is still a shadow for me as the holiday approaches.

However, there's one other Christmas memory that brings me hope and peace.

Christmas 1962 was difficult for me. I had been sent to live in a small town in PA with my grandmother while my parents sorted out Dad's job situation and where we would live. Not only wouldn't we have a tree. We didn't even have a house.

Grandma didn't decorate for Christmas. She lived in an apartment heated only by a coal stove. I remember that we had ice on the INSIDE of the windows. How she cooked such delicious food on and in that stove is amazing to me.

She didn't speak much English either, but now I credit that time with her for my ability to communicate in Slovak when we travel to Eastern Europe and reconnect with the land and family she left behind in 1900.



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It's the kind of silver lining that Dad always looked for. Just before Christmas Dad brought me a present - a bell that played Silent Night. He bought it from a guy on the street for \$2.

I still have it, but I don't wait for Christmas to display it. It hangs in my house all year long as a reminder of the past and hope for the future. Strangely sometimes the bell plays all by itself. DH the engineer explains that the change in temperature/humidity in the room affects the mechanism. I have a different thought - Hi Dad!



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#### **MARYJEANSL**

That is a beautiful story - and such a lovely memory of your dad. It really tugged at my heart, perhaps because, although I am very proud of my dad and of his long service to our country, I don't have many happy memories of him, mostly just of his disciplining me, or sometimes one of my siblings.

1978 days ago



## LIVEDAILY

I really like how you have the bell displayed year round, and like you, I would say "Hi Dad!" too!! In our family we would play a game while we were driving. We called it "Pa-diddle". The first person to spy a "one eyed monster" (a motorcycle with it's headlight on, or a car with just one headlight) shouted out Padiddle! and everyone else had to blow that person a kiss! Both my folks are gone now, but I still play Padiddle with them while I'm driving!



1988 days ago



#### CD4114015

Love these memories as I LOVE all your blogs...you don't blog nearly enough for me...but understand! LOVE family histories....John and I are HISTORY NUTS...well, he taught me....but this was amazing!

Happy New year to a WONDERFUL friend! Oh, and we LOVE old things too....our home is FULL





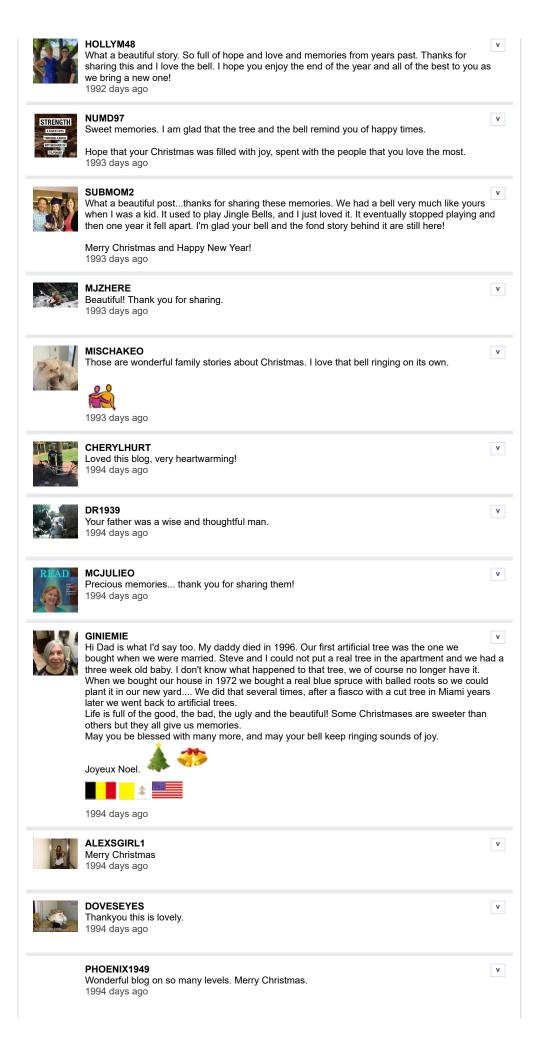
#### **MEADSBAY**

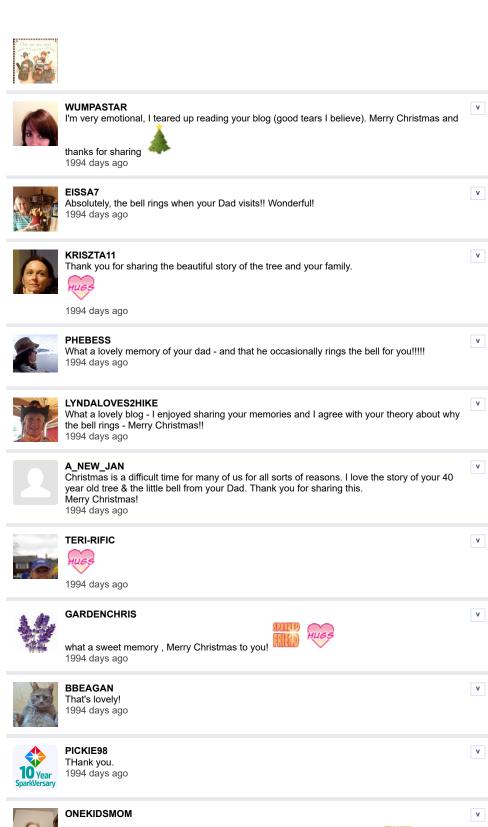
Thank you so much for sharing this true story about the normal ups and downs of life.



1992 days ago

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What a lovely retrospective on Christmasses through good times and bad!

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Christmas! May that tree last another 50 years, and the bell even longer! 1994 days ago



## **KEERAKYRAM**

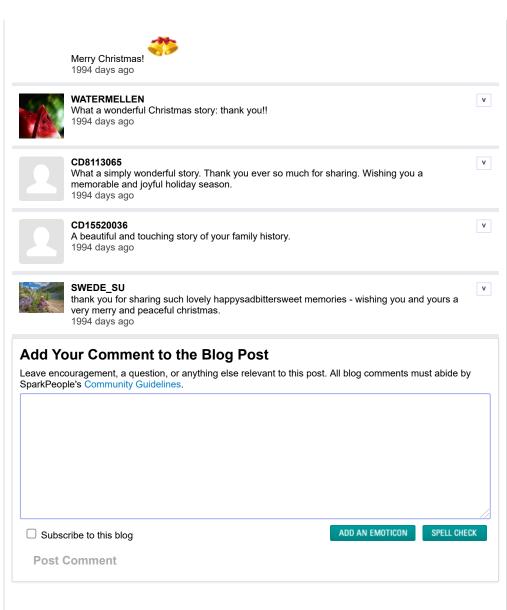
That was a wonderful story.

1994 days ago



### HELEN\_BRU

Always enjoy reading your posts. Both my parents were Slovak and we went back and forth in the 30's only to settle finally in Canada and made it our home. Still have relatives back there.



Disclaimer: Weight loss results will vary from person to person. No individual result should be seen as a typical result of following the SparkPeople program.