

Christmas Eve

Written by

Friday, 24 December 2004 00:00

To a small child, waiting for Santa Claus, today is the longest day of the year. From 1960 to '63, when my sister and I were little, Dad was posted at a radar station on a mountain in Quebec. For the whole long day before Christmas, we believed that Dad's colleagues could track Santa's progress as he started his journey from the North Pole with his gift-laden sleigh. Dad would call the "boys" at the command post who in turn would relay exactly where on the radar Santa could be seen and just how close he was to us. We even spoke with them directly and they all would give us his specifics and we were none the wiser.

When we grew up and had children of our own, we had no radar stations then, but as parents we perpetuated the myth in a different way stirring up the same excitement in our kids. When we lived at [Horseshoe Valley](#), the house had a huge fireplace in the family room. We were always careful not to light a fire on Christmas Eve, lest Santa would burn himself or stay away because of the smoke. We encouraged our children to get to bed early so that he would be able to arrive, undetected. Jim wasn't a "handyman" so the onus was on me to assemble toys while he went about leaving traces of Santa's presence. He would leave a footprint in the ashes in the fireplaces and carrot crumbs on the hearth left by the reindeer when they ate their carrots. He would read their note (often written with his own hand) leaving it crumpled with milk stains and cookie crumbs on it. Because of their restless excitement and their difficulty to fall asleep there were many nights when our preparation of the "evidence" couldn't begin until the wee hours of Christmas morning. Those will always be some of my most favourite memories of Christmas Eve.

In later years the excitement of this special day diminished with the ageing of my children. For the past several years, Christmas Eve has been spent getting last minute details completed and perhaps visiting a few friends. There is no longer the need to assemble gifts last minute and besides Rick is a handyman so anything needing constructing is done by him. Today, we will have a quiet day, perhaps spending some time with Karley and Ian while we wait for the next generation to arrive. Once baby arrives, it won't be long before once again Christmas Eve will become the longest day of the year in our family.