



PAUL NEFF

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**Christmas Traditions**

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## Christmas Traditions

Traditions have been very important to Kathy, me and our entire family. We have many traditions we follow throughout the year and especially at Christmas. Some of our Christmas traditions are as follows:

1. Years ago I took over being responsible for Christmas Eve dinner. For years I've made macaroni and cheese on Christmas Eve. The kids all love macaroni and cheese and it was a meal I completely took care of to make Christmas Eve easier on Kathy.
2. Kathy loves jewellery and I love giving gifts. Early on in our marriage, I set the tradition of always giving Kathy a piece of jewellery for Christmas. She anticipates it; however, wouldn't admit it. The kids anticipate it and Kathy truly appreciates it.
3. This isn't necessarily a tradition, however, Kathy and I have always worked on being very fair with our children and not playing favorites. Therefore, I kept detailed track of how much was spent on each child for Christmas, ensuring that we spent the same amount on each child. If we had to increase the amount for a child we would give them coupon that was good for the amount of money needed to balance the accounts which could be used for clothes or other items.
4. Church service is always an important tradition around Christmas and we have generally attended the service together as a family.
5. It was always special knowing exactly what you were going to eat for Christmas and Thanksgiving and we all looked forward to it. For thanksgiving the main dish was turkey and for Christmas, it was prime rib with specific accompaniments on each holiday.
6. On Christmas Eve everyone in the family receives a new Christmas pyjamas that we all wear on Christmas morning. It makes for great photos and is a fun tradition that continues to this day.

7. One of the best traditions I would say I came up with for Christmas is this idea of the clue finding gift game. I started it when our kids were still at a pretty young age. The way it works is simple. I write down eight clues and the first clue is wrapped in a box; the remaining seven are hidden in different places around the house. On Christmas morning, we usually open all our presents together. Once done with unwrapping all the gifts, I then hand the kids the wrapped box. They open it up and they find their first clue. The rule is they must read each clue loudly in front of the whole family so everyone can share in the excitement. I write clues based on their age and level of understanding; so it could be as simple as: "You hate to put things inside me." That would be either the dishwasher or the washing machine. They search and when they find the right place, they find the next clue there. They then come back and read it in front of the family. They solve each riddle and eventually get to the final clue, at the end of which they find their big Christmas gift.

One year when our children were adults, I stopped the tradition and didn't write any clues. Ashley, (our oldest), said to me 'What's the deal? There are no clue gifts? We'll take a break and you have to do some clues.' The other two agreed! They are now all in their 30's and I'm still doing the clues each Christmas! I can't wait for my grandchildren to be old enough so I can start the clue game with them!

I've shared this idea with a lot of friends and every year I receive messages from dads saying how much fun the clue game was for their family.

8. About 25 years ago I recognized that cooking a big Christmas meal on Christmas Day was cutting into family time we had for opening and playing with gifts and hanging out together. Kathy would often miss out on the fun we were having as she would leave and start working on Christmas dinner. We changed this and Christmas day is now a family day of being together. We have soup on Christmas Day that Kathy prepared a few days earlier and then we enjoy the Christmas meal the day after Christmas. This has been absolutely fabulous for Kathy and the entire family spreading Christmas out over two days. Another benefit of having the meal the day after was that as the kids got older it afforded time for them to participate in preparing the meal.

I hope some of these ideas inspire you as you create your own additional family traditions. They are a wonderful way to slow down, enjoy family and friends; and make memories that last a lifetime.