

## A Visit from the Spirit of Christmas

by Lynne Delaney



I will always remember Christmas 2006 as an extraordinary time of magical happenings.

There was nothing unusual on Christmas Eve as we turned out all the lights and candles and tucked ourselves into bed. It all started later that night, when my husband and I woke up to use the bathroom. Walking down the hall, I glanced into the living room and saw one of the candle lights on the window sill flicker.

My husband and I looked at each other and conferred. Yes, we had definitely turned that light off. But as I looked at the candle, the light grew brighter. In fact, it was pulsating, dimming then shining and getting more and more dazzling. The last illumination was the brightest. It filled the room. Then it slowly dimmed until it turned off completely.



A window candle glows with the Holiday spirit

The display itself was amazing, but the feelings that went with it were even more amazing. I felt such joy and peace like I'd never felt before.

We went back to bed smiling happily, like two little kids waiting for Santa to arrive. When we awoke the next morning, the feeling was still in the air - a palpable sense of enchantment and immense happiness. We couldn't stop smiling. Everything seemed so clear and wondrous.

We went out into the living room, sat in front of our small tree and prepared to exchange a few gifts. For a long moment, we were both silent, just absorbing this overwhelming energy of love and joy.

Suddenly, a bell on our Christmas tree started to ring! A little jangle and then another. A moment later, it sounded as if someone was patting one of the presents under the tree. We could hear the paper crunching with each touch of the invisible hand. Our jaws dropped. We wondered aloud if this was a visit from relatives in spirit or perhaps some Spirit of Christmas.

Whatever it was, it was something astounding and beautiful. It was the best gift of the day. Since then, we've had many wonderful holidays, but nothing like the experience of that year.

Yet, the gift remains. I go back to that place and can bring the energy I felt into my heart. That is the energy we are meant to experience and share not just during special times in our lives, but every day.

Lynne Delaney is a regular contributor to this magazine. She is a Conscious Living Advisor & Reiki Master who combines intuitive energy work and crystals. Lynne lives in Brewster with her husband and their dog.

## Snapshots of a Perfect Christmas

by Nikole Jalbert

What is the perfect Christmas? I don't know how to answer because there is no way to compare different ways of expressing love. Everyone's holiday season is different. For me, Christmas is about family, love, and togetherness.

Some people may assume that holidays for a broken family are somehow flawed or not perfect. I have never liked that term, broken family. There is so much love all around me, how can anyone call that broken? I've learned to appreciate everyone who loves me.

It has been hard, at times, having to choose between the people who love me. Thanksgiving was always a choice between a nice quiet dinner with my mother, brother, her sister, my grandfather and cousin, or the raging free-for-all of love and competition that is my father's family of six brothers, their wives, children, and grandparents. I hated choosing because I loved them all so much, but it has allowed me to have so many different happy memories.

Just as important and memorable are some of the pre-Christmas traditions, like selecting the tree, decorating it, and the annual cookie baking.

Choosing the Christmas tree was always a really big deal. My brother, mother, and I would all go to pick it out. We'd tie it to the top of my mother's car and drive it home, occasionally tying the rear doors closed in our attempts to help.

One year we had thirty dollars to spend on a big tree. I was eight years old or so, and spied some scraggly ones for fifteen dollars. I said to my mother, "Why don't we get two of the fifteen dollar trees so we can give one to someone who can't afford a tree?" We did. My mother still gets tears in her eyes when she talks about it.

Decorating the tree was a long and messy procedure. We would play Christmas music and grab the big black box of ornaments out of the basement. After stringing the lights around the house, searching for the dead one shorting the whole strand, my brother would string them on the tree with me holding the bundle and feeding the line to him.

Our tree was covered with hand-made ornaments: our footprints in green paint, clay figures of questionable design. The ornaments made by my maternal Grandmother, whom I never met, were my favorite. She'd taken eggshells and cut the fronts away, gluing in elaborate paper cutouts of Christmas scenes.

One of my favorite traditions was the annual cookie making. We would make a variety, but mostly peanut butter bon bons. One year my brother built a sling shot contraption using tinker toys to launch the peanut butter balls into the bowl of melted chocolate. (It should come as no surprise that my brother is now a mechanical engineer.)

Making those cookies became a tradition that I continue on my own. It is now a very large undertaking that requires boxes of Rice Krispies, tubs of peanut butter, bags of confectioner sugar and enough butter to clog the most resilient artery. Everyone knows that when I get to Grandma's house, there will be cookies!

I can't go over my memories of Christmas without thinking of my dog Shiva. She was the one who chased the cats into the Christmas tree, knocking it over at least once a year. The dog was abandoned when she was a few months old, and not knowing her real birthday, we always celebrated on Christmas Eve.

Shiva had her own stocking with her name on it. She had to sniff all the presents before we could open them. Each year my Mom would wrap dog treats for her and we'd have her tear the paper with her mouth. I can't find a picture of Christmas morning without her in it.

Every year I still expect to see Shiva riffling through the Christmas presents. She lived a very happy seventeen years, and I couldn't have asked for more than that. When she passed she took a part of me with her.

Some people may scoff and say she was just a dog. But the day I walked out of the vet without her was the first time in my remembered life I hadn't had her with me. I was twenty years old. We had her cremated and spread her ashes on a local beach.

On Christmas Eve last year my mother and little brother and I went to the beach to sing Happy Birthday. I often go to that beach to feel her spirit, and Christmas always reminds me of her.

Christmas has always been the one day of the year where I get to see everyone I love, and all it takes is a little driving. I love making eight batches of cookies while listening to Christmas music and singing off-key.

I love decorating my tree and look forward to the day I will have little green footprint ornaments to put on it. I love being with my entire family all in one day. It's chaotic and exhausting, but I dare anyone to think it is not a perfect Christmas.

Nikole Jalbert is a poet and prolific writer from Eastham. You can read one of her poems in the Fall 09 issue of CapeWomenOnline.com magazine.

## Nikole Jalbert's Peanut Butter Bon Bons

### Ingredients (for one batch):

- 1 cup butter
- 2 ½ cups peanut butter
- 3 cups Rice Krispies
- 3 cups confectioner sugar
- bag chocolate morsels \*

Melt butter and peanut butter, and mix together. Crush cereal and mix with confectioner sugar. Mix wet and dry together (you can try a spoon but I recommend getting it over with and using your hands.) Roll dough into bon bon sized balls.

Put the balls on wax paper-covered cookie sheets and refrigerate until hard. Melt the chocolate morsels, and put in a bowl. Roll the balls in the chocolate a few at a time, completely covering them. Place them on wax paper covered sheets and put them back in the fridge to harden. They can be left out for a fair amount of time before they start to melt at room temperature, but they should be stored in the fridge. Enjoy!

\*I recommend using semi-sweet chocolate morsels, but I also use white chocolate and milk chocolate.

Editor's note: Be careful not to burn your fingers on the melted chocolate! Use bamboo skewers, tongs, or a spoon to pull balls out of bowl of chocolate. An alternative would be to pour small amounts of chocolate into a separate bowl and roll the ball around until covered.

