

# A Blue Christmas

I had such a wonderful Christmas this year. Laughing grandchildren and a delightful dinner with family and friends. I reviewed the blessings that had come to me in great abundance. It was a day filled with joy and fellowship and love.

But it wasn't always like this. I remember back over thirty years ago when the Christmas season found me crying.

It was 1943 and two days before Christmas. I was a soldier and stationed in Missouri. I had just arrived at my new post and hadn't had time to make even one friend. And this would be the first time, in all my 18 years of life, that I wouldn't be spending Christmas at home with my family.

I have loved Christmas since my first decorated tree. I feel, to this day, compassion for those who humbug Christmas. To me, it is the most glorious day of the year.

Those long years ago we used to trim the tree on Christmas Eve. I was the youngest, and very tiny, and so I was allotted the lower branches. These branches were always the most heavily decorated and certainly the most unsightly. An over-abundance of balls was more desirable than any artistic effect.

I went to bed on Christmas Eve

## Country Philosopher

**Amos Arthur Holmes**



with great apprehension. Could I possibly get to sleep before Santa came? I knew the dreaded consequences if I couldn't. Had I been a good boy? I knew, as well as any six year old could know, that I had been a monster. But I had buried the dead butterfly...so I hadn't been ALL bad. But there was definitely room for concern.

Christmas morning found us opening our gifts. We talked, and laughed, and we thanked God for the precious love we shared.

But in 1943 I was in a strange place, experiencing my first Christmas away from home. And it was here that I met, and knew, and hated the tragic sorrow of loneliness.

I went into St. Louis and I took a ride on a streetcar. The Christmas spirit was manifest and

joyful on that conveyance. But it was apart from me. I was not included in the smiles or the laughter, the greetings or the happiness.

Soon the streetcar had left the city and we were traveling along deserted streets in the suburbs. I got off the streetcar and started walking. It had started snowing and the air was crisp and cold. There was nobody, absolutely nobody, on the streets. It was as if everyone, and everything, had disappeared and left me alone to combat my misery.

I saw, in every house I passed, a lighted Christmas tree. And in some of those homes I could see the family within. The father stern and quiet with his awesome responsibility, the mother frantically working to complete

her Christmas decorations, and the children smiling in spirited anticipation.

I wanted to walk up to one of those doors and knock. I would say, "May I stand by your tree for a moment? It is so beautiful. You see...I have a family just like yours...but...but..."

I never did knock on anyone's door. I simply tramped through the snow and saw a million Christmas trees, a million families, and a million happy hearts.

I stood in the whirling snow. The tears fell from my eyes and I knew that I would never, if it were possible, feel loneliness again.

And so I have filled my life with wife and children. With grandchildren and neighbors. And with you good people whose friendship I have gained through this column.

Let me, in my mind, take you into my arms. Let me kiss you upon the cheek. And let me shout three words from the warmest place in my heart.

*Happy*

*New*

*Year*