

## “Christmas is Not Like It Used to Be”

By Mike Flynn

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Granny is right when she remarks in Simani's "The Mummers Song" that Christmas is not like it used to be.

But then it would be unrealistic to expect Christmas or any other holiday celebration to remain the same over countless generations. Admittedly, those were pleasant times but we must accept the fact that the old-fashioned Christmas is just a pleasant memory.

And, what wonderful memories for those of us well beyond our childhood years. It is impossible to describe to today's children the joy of walking to the "Coke shop" on Christmas Eve to purchase Coca-Cola to last through the holiday season. For those too young to remember, the coke shop was a soft drink warehouse situated on Bishop's Road alongside Adler's chocolate factory near the present day site of the Bay Roberts recreation complex.

The younger generation will know the area as the venue for the annual Klondyke concert and for its tennis, volleyball, basketball and softball facilities. This annual purchase came just days after our parents would stroll along the colourfully lit Water street business section to purchase the affordable items from every child's long wish list written to Santa weeks before.



Surprisingly, these letters were sent to Santa after being burned in a fireplace or wood stove. We could never understand how he received them. But that was a part of the mystery behind Christmas.

Another was trying to figure out how Santa knew if we were good or bad, but the fear of receiving nothing was dispelled each year when you knew that Mom and Dad had gone shopping at Marshall's store, where I have a pleasant memory of seeing a gun and holster set, complete with canteen. It was under our tree on Christmas morning and I've often wondered if my constant nagging was responsible for Santa's generosity.



There were no trips to giant department stores where, today, toy departments are opened all year. In Bay Roberts, nobody saw a toy in our local merchants' stores until a few weeks before Christmas.

To give our parents credit, most toys were designed to keep us outdoors playing and not stuck in front of some screen.

Toys were not the only thrill at Christmas. It took many years after checking my Christmas stocking to realize that an apple has two halves.

Even the church services were special for children who enjoyed looking at the nativity scene. The priests seemed to get into the spirit by delivering a short sermon so children such as us could get home to play with our gifts. Many of us were often reminded that we were more interested in playing with the cardboard boxes than the toys themselves. Christmas morning was not complete on the Cross Roads until the Salvation Army knocked at your door and in return for a small fee, played a beautiful hymn. I'm sure they would have played even without the fee.

We now say that Christmas will never be the same.

But in another few years, I'd wager that our children will repeat Granny's words. No, Christmas will never be the same for any generation.