

December, 2007

Volume 11

Issue 12

Issued Monthly

Meeting Dates/Time: Friday, December 14<sup>th</sup> (5:00 P.M.) and Wednesday, January 23<sup>rd</sup> (10:00 A.M.)

Location: Wellston Center - 152 Maple Street | Warner Robins, GA 31093

### [A Soldier's Christmas](#) – By Michael Marks

The embers glowed softly, and in their dim light,  
I gazed round the room and I cherished the sight.  
My wife was asleep, her head on my chest,  
My daughter beside me, angelic in rest.

Outside the snow fell, a blanket of white,  
Transforming the yard to a winter delight.  
The sparkling lights in the tree, I believe,  
Completed the magic that was Christmas Eve.

My eyelids were heavy, my breathing was deep,  
Secure and surrounded by love I would sleep  
in perfect contentment, or so it would seem.  
So I slumbered, perhaps I started to dream.

The sound wasn't loud, and it wasn't too near,  
But I opened my eye when it tickled my ear.  
Perhaps just a cough, I didn't quite know,  
Then the sure sound of footsteps outside in the snow.

My soul gave a tremble, I struggled to hear,  
and I crept to the door just to see who was near.  
Standing out in the cold and the dark of the night,  
A lone figure stood, his face weary and tight.

A soldier, I puzzled, some twenty years old  
Perhaps a Marine, huddled here in the cold.  
Alone in the dark, he looked up and smiled,  
Standing watch over me, and my wife and my child.

"What are you doing?" I asked without fear  
"Come in this moment, it's freezing out here!  
Put down your pack, brush the snow from your  
sleeve,  
You should be at home on a cold Christmas Eve!"

For barely a moment I saw his eyes shift,  
away from the cold and the snow blown in drifts,  
to the window that danced with a warm fire's light  
then he sighed and he said "It's really all right,  
I'm out here by choice. I'm here every night"

"It's my duty to stand at the front of the line,  
that separates you from the darkest of times.  
No one had to ask or beg or implore me,  
I'm proud to stand here like my fathers before me.

My Gramps died at 'Pearl on a day in December,"  
then he sighed, "That's a Christmas 'Gram always  
remembers."

My dad stood his watch in the jungles of 'Nam  
And now it is my turn and so, here I am.

I've not seen my own son in more than a while,  
But my wife sends me pictures, he's sure got her  
smile.

Then he bent and he carefully pulled from his bag,  
The red white and blue... an American flag.

"I can live through the cold and the being alone,  
Away from my family, my house and my home,  
I can stand at my post through the rain and the sleet,  
I can sleep in a foxhole with little to eat,  
I can carry the weight of killing another  
or lay down my life with my sisters and brothers  
who stand at the front against any and all,  
to insure for all time that this flag will not fall."

"So go back inside," he said, "harbor no fright  
Your family is waiting and I'll be all right."  
"But isn't there something I can do, at the least,  
"Give you money," I asked, "or prepare you a feast?  
It seems all too little for all that you've done,  
For being away from your wife and your son."

Then his eye welled a tear that held no regret,  
"Just tell us you love us, and never forget  
To fight for our rights back at home while we're gone.  
To stand your own watch, no matter how long.

For when we come home, either standing or dead,  
to know you remember we fought and we bled  
is payment enough, and with that we will trust.  
That we mattered to you as you mattered to us."

**Author's Note:** "A *Soldier's Christmas* was the first in this series of patriotic writings, drafted on Pearl Harbor Day (December 7, 2000) when in the wake of the 2000 Presidential Election our nation saw the right of US Armed Forces personnel openly questioned and debated. I felt it unconscionable that at the onset of the Christmas season, those serving to defend our nation would hear anything but our love and support. It is our challenge to stand for their rights at home while they stand for our lives and safety overseas. This poem went out and quickly spread around the world in emails, letters and magazines. I received letters from Marines in Bosnia, soldiers in Okinawa, from a submariner who xeroxed a copy for everyone on his sub. Moms wrote, dads, brothers and sisters. I have saved and cherish every letter and set out to continue writing throughout the year." **Never Forget ... There is A Price For Freedom!** ☺ ggd

**Attention Readers Of This Newsletter:** "Local Chapter Membership" Has Its Rewards And Privileges! 2008 is "right around the corner!" Please renew your dues (only \$5.00/year) and update your membership directory information (birthday, address/phone number, etc). If you are NOT a member of our local chapter **but** you are a member of AARP please consider joining us ... only \$5.00/year! **Advertisers:** Thank You, Thank You, Thank You!! ggd ☺

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## Christmas

**Christmas** is an annual holiday that celebrates the birth of Jesus. **Christmas** festivities often combine the commemoration of Jesus' birth with various secular customs, many of which have been influenced by earlier winter festivals. The date as a birthdate for Jesus is traditional, and is not considered to be his actual date of birth.

In most places around the world, **Christmas Day** is celebrated on December 25<sup>th</sup>. **Christmas Eve** is the preceding day, December 24<sup>th</sup>. It is unknown exactly when or why December 25<sup>th</sup> became associated with Christ's birth. The New Testament does not give a specific date.

The word "**Christmas**" is a contraction of two words "Christ's mass" and is derived from the Middle English *Christemasse* and Old English *Cristes mæsse*, a phrase first recorded in 1038. In early Greek versions of the New Testament, the letter X (chi), is the first letter of Christ (Χριστός). Since the mid-16th century X, or the similar Roman letter X, was used as an abbreviation for Christ. Thus, *Xmas* is an abbreviation for **Christmas**.

Modern traditions have come to include the display of Nativity scenes, Holly and **Christmas** trees, the exchange of gifts and cards, and the arrival of Father **Christmas** or Santa Claus on **Christmas Eve** or **Christmas** morning. Popular **Christmas** themes include the promotion of goodwill and peace.

The story of **Christmas** is based on the biblical accounts given in the Gospel of Matthew, namely Matthew 1:18-Matthew 2:12 and the Gospel of Luke, specifically Luke 1:26-Luke 2:40. According to these accounts, Jesus was born to Mary, assisted by her husband Joseph, in the city of Bethlehem. According to popular tradition, the birth took place in a "stable", surrounded by farm animals, though neither the "stable" nor the animals are mentioned in the Biblical accounts. However, a "manger" is mentioned in Luke 2:7 where it states "She wrapped him

in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." Shepherds from the fields surrounding Bethlehem were told of the birth by an angel, and were the first to see the child. Christians believe that the birth of Jesus fulfilled many prophecies made hundreds of years before his birth.

Remembering or re-creating the Nativity is a central way that Christians celebrate **Christmas**. Nativity scenes traditionally include the Three Wise Men, Balthazar, Melchior, and Caspar, although their names and number are not referred to in the Biblical narrative, who are said to have followed a star, known as the Star of Bethlehem, found Jesus, and presented gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

In the U.S., **Christmas** decorations at public buildings once commonly included Nativity scenes. This practice has led to many lawsuits, as groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union believe it amounts to the government endorsing a religion. In 1984, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a city-owned **Christmas** display, even one with a Nativity scene, does not violate the First Amendment.

**Christmas** is typically the largest annual economic stimulus for many nations. Sales increase dramatically in almost all retail areas and shops introduce new products as people purchase gifts, decorations, and supplies. In the U.S., the "**Christmas** shopping season" generally begins on Black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving, though many American stores begin selling **Christmas** items in October and early November!

**Christmas** is a fascinating event and season with a fascinating history. As you learn more about **Christmas** don't be surprised to "discover" the real reason for the "**Happy Holiday**" season! ☺ ggd

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Last month we received valuable information about the **“Critical Conditions Planning Guide”** – a resource to help anyone discuss and make final health care decisions. I encourage everyone to read/refer to it often ... don't forget to visit the website: **www.critical-conditions.org!** There are several other resources available such as the website **“All Things In Time”** (**www.AllThingsInTime.info**) – with its comprehensive lawyer-approved services dedicated to the private and secure creation of online **Wills, Power Of Attorney, Living Wills, Funeral Wishes, Messages, Personal Tributes** and **Memorials!** Individually and collectively with those resources you'll be able to give your loved ones the information they need to act on your behalf! ☺ ggd

**Holiday Shipping ... Time Is Of The Essence!** Now that you've managed to purchase (or if you're still shopping for) the items on your gift list, make sure you don't drain your bank account in order to ship them! When it comes to shipping your gifts, there is no shortage of options. But the faster you need your items to get there, the more you're going to pay! Holiday mailing guidelines for the U.S. Postal Service For “Anywhere In The U.S.: Letters/Cards/Priority Mail/Express Mail: Dec. 20<sup>th</sup> | Parcel Post: December 15<sup>th</sup> Visit **www.usps.com** for additional guidelines! ☺ ggd



Worth Repeating!

**Merry Christmas!** | **Happy Hanukkah!**  
**Happy Kwanzaa!** | **Feliz Navidad!**

**Happy New Year!**

(2008)



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