

12-12-14 Christmas Memories

For many years now I've been attempting to simplify Christmas and since 2009 have been writing about that process. At that time I wrote, "As a mother, it has required great effort for me to step away from the equation of "more stuff equals proof of love". For several years now, in an effort to give to others in ways that are friendlier to the environment and reduce unnecessary stuff, including wrapping, I've tried to come up with themes for Christmas exemplifying fun and love, aging hippie that I am."

The funny thing is, that my children don't receive this paper and despite their online savvy, they have never known the theme via this column. Since I don't announce it on Facebook, don't tell them, okay?

So here is this year's theme, publicly broadcasted to our local readers: *Movies and Memories*.

I know my children have access to On Demand, HBO, DVR, and can go to the Red Box on any given day and, yet, I began to wonder if they actually owned movies. Some are worth owning. The more I thought about it, the more I wanted my grandchildren to see and experience certain movies, for they provide the opportunity for life lessons and family discussions and silliness and songs. It was so much fun choosing, that it was difficult, once again, to rein myself in.

Once the selections took shape, I began to see them through a current lens, different from the original viewing. They were now viewed with political correctness and a sensitivity to children's uncertainties. The old Disney cartoons, so masterfully drawn, often contained stereotypes and frightening scenes. *Dumbo* was removed from the list. It is too sad, anyway. Even *Bambi* and *Snow White* have frightening scenes. I moved on. The *Yearling* is so sad and yet contains such powerful lessons of survival. I discovered that the original movie *Flipper*, while not approaching the Academy Award category or the likes of Gregory Peck, Jane Wyman and Wil Horneff, it contained the same lesson, with a happy ending and a song to sing. Unforeseen, but it made the list.

The list began with *The Black Stallion*, for it was the story most requested for me to tell at bedtime. The first movie I ever took a child to was *Lassie Come Home*. My son cried happy tears upon Lassie's return. When he saw *E.T.* he was only six years old and I was uncertain if he was old enough. He was so pleased with that movie. I was once again convinced that it is better to see a whole movie with good resolution of conflict than to see parts and leave children with fears and doubts. That boy later became a film major at Emerson College. *Lassie* and *E.T.* made the list.

Some movies allow me the opportunity to tell my grandchildren about their parents watching it as youngsters. One such story is of the hot summer day I promised my children we would rent a video. This was a real treat back in the day with little money to spare. Six children agreeing on a movie was challenging enough but also meeting my requirements that it be of interest to all and appropriate for all made the choice even more difficult. No one could agree, so

I finally took over, much to their chagrin; those children of little faith in their mother. I chose *It's a Mad Mad World* and they loved it! It was a good mothering moment, I must admit.

Silly movies like *Flubber*, and *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* were included and Shirley Temple and Pollyanna for the girls and Mr. Limpit because there's no one like Don Knox. *National Velvet* was chosen for the acting, the story and the courage shown by a girl with a strong mother and *Captains Courageous* for the strength of character learned by a boy and appreciation by his father.

For my grown children I've purchased some favorites of mine, including *Walkabout* and *Rabbit Proof Fence*, *Stand by Me* and *Lean on Me* and *Boy's Town*. *The Russians Are Coming* made the list so that we can all use the quote, with a Russian accent, "Everybody to get off of street". Two cartoons included *Watership Down* and *Iron Giant*. I never got around to *Pink Panther* or *Being There* but did get *The Party* with Peter Sellers because he reminds me of my father who would not have fit in at an exclusive Hollywood party.

I had to finally stop ordering films when I realized the list was still growing. There's nothing wrong with learning what else you want to watch with your family.

I know my selections will be like that day at the video store so many years ago. My grandchildren will think I chose boring, old fashioned movies. We'll see. I can't wait to make the popcorn.

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