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The *HoHoHo* Factor!



by Bernadette Dimitrov
The HoHoHo Expert



www.HoHoHoChristmas.com

Christmas Trivia - Everything you'll love to know about the most celebrated event in the world! Plus Secret Xmas Blessings & Creeds reveal how to manifest love, happiness and prosperity Fast like magic in your Life!

Company Creed:

Connecting family and friends to a world of fun, humor and curiosity for the world we live in. Incorporating enlightened spiritual and human development for the new millennium!

Chapter 4.

Christmas Trivia -

“WOW” everyone this Christmas!

Wassailing

King Henry VIII was believed to have made the Wassail drinking bowl a Christmas custom. In his day at the Christmas feast he presented a lavishly ornamented bowl decorated with greenery and filled with a hot spiced wine. It was passed onto each guest and before drinking each person would cry out “Wassail” then all the other guests would reply “Wassailing”. Wassail belongs to an old English **greeting meaning “here is to your good health”**. However “Wassail” originally came from the old Norse “ves heill” meaning “to be of good health”. The Norse had a much loved tradition of visiting neighbors on Christmas Eve and drinking to their good health as they joyously declared “ves heill” before each drink. It was associated with merry making!

At Christmas in old England, the well to do households filled their Wassail bowls with a brew called “lambswool”. It was a hot ale with added sugar, eggs and spices with toast and roast apples floating on top!

An old Christmas custom for the poor – The Wassail Song!

A common Christmas tradition for the poor was to sing “The Wassail Song”. Hear and see the wassail song at:

<http://christmassongbook.net/s7256.asp> It was mostly performed outside the homes of the rich at Christmas. While singing the poor would bring a mug to the doors of the rich hoping for their generosity

to fill their mugs with the favored steaming hot drink! Most commonly for the poor the practice of "Wassailing" usually meant sharing a hot spiced punch from a single mug or cup. It was taken in the spirit of building strong friendships and connections within a community. Today we can see **the spirit of "Wassailing" still alive practiced by the clergy with the sharing of wine in a single cup during the mass.**

An old Christmas custom for the rich!

Many writings tell of the presentation of a large boars head presented by waiters on a platter as the highlight of the dinner feast. It was a time honored tradition for King Henry VIII who had the boar presented as choirs sang and minstrels played. All would wait with eager anticipation for the King to choose who would carve the boar. It was always a man the King believed to be the most outstanding in courage and virtue for that year. The boar caver was greatly anticipated, admired and honored by all.

The Christmas "Feast of Fools" Outlawed!

This was mostly a British holiday custom. The "Abbot of Misrule" also known as the "King of Misrule" and in Scotland "Abbot of Unreason", an official (generally a peasant chosen) who managed Christmas festivities and revelries (often drunken wild partying, pantomimes, signing and dancing) known as "The Feast of Fools". This official generally had an assistant a "Fool" who presided as the mock officials of the Twelfth Night celebrations. In some British areas celebrations included "**Wassailing the fruit trees**" which basically meant to go to the orchard with jugs of cider offering toasts of good blessings to the apple trees to ensure a good yield! The Abbot of Misrule served from 12 days to 3 months arranging and overseeing festivities and entertainment. The Feast of Fools was **outlawed by the Council of**

Basel in 1431 yet **survived** and the tradition was **put down again by Catholic Queen Mary I in England in 1555.**

Carol Singing

The tradition of singing at Christmas comes from the belief that angels sang when they appeared to the shepherds at Bethlehem to announce the birth of Jesus. The tradition of Christmas carols hails back **as far as the thirteenth century.** The word "carol" came from a Greek dance called a "choraulein" which was accompanied by flute music. The dance spread throughout Europe becoming especially popular with the French who replaced the flute with singing. By the 1600's, carols involved singing only and Christmas had become the main holiday for carol singing. **Most of the carols sung today** were originally **composed in the 1700's and 1800's** such as "O Little Town of Bethlehem" and "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing". Popular non-religious carols include "Jingle Bells" and "White Christmas."

Carol singers today are a popular sight in streets, markets and in churches. It is also popular for people to go "caroling" from house to house in small groups and receiving small gifts or sweets in return. **Carol singers tell a simple story of the birth of Christ during the days leading up to Christmas.** Other older carols popularly performed today include "The Holly and the Ivy", "The First Nowell" and "God Rest You Merrie Gentlemen". Free on-line carols to sing and play visit: <http://christmassongbook.net/>

Attempt to Ban Carols in Shopping Malls in Australia!

In 2003 the Australian Trade Union Federation, representing 100,000 workers, claimed that the non-stop playing of Christmas carols in shopping malls was "psychological terror". They were demanding

stores limit the hours they play carols. The workers claims were dismissed! Full article: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3291889.stm>

Christmas Music

Originally the most famous was from 1731 when Handel wrote the "Messiah". It was overshadowed when in 1818 in Oberndorf, Austria, Franz Gruber (a teacher) and Joseph Mohr (Parish Priest) composed "Stille Nacht" for their Christmas mass. The story recalls that one Christmas Eve it was discovered that the Oberndorf church organ was not working. The leather bellows that were used to pump the air through the pipes were full of holes. Christmas without music would not do so Joseph Mohr showed the organist Franz Bauer a new Christmas hymn he had written. Franz at that moment composed a tune to go with it that could be played on a guitar and so Christmas was not without music that year! **Silent Night rose to become the most beloved Christmas song of all time!** Some how it was forgotten for a period of time until an organ repairer at Joseph Mohr's church found and revived the song. One of the most beautiful pieces of Christmas music that is rarely performed today is "The Christmas Vespers" written around 1610 by Monteverdi. In 1857 the popular Christmas song "Jingle Bells" was composed by James Pierpont. This song was originally called "One-Horse Open Sleigh" – **A great free music resource for you to visit:** www.christmassongbook.net

Christmas Song with a Double Meaning!

"Twelve Days of Christmas" is today a popular fun Christmas song that most of us sing a long to without really knowing its origin or its meaning. While many may consider it a childrens nonsense song it was written in England with hidden meanings to help English Catholic children remember different articles of faith during the persecution by Protestant Monarchs in the 16th century. This was a time when to be

caught with anything in "writing" indicating adherence to the Catholic faith could not only get you imprisoned, it could get you hanged. "True love" represented "God", the gifts represented different ideas as follows:

The "Partridge in a pear tree" was Jesus.

2 Turtle Doves = The Old and New Testaments of The Bible

3 French Hens = Faith, Hope and Charity - the Theological Virtues.

4 Calling Birds = the Four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

5 Golden Rings = The first Five Books of the Old Testament, the "Pentateuch", which relays the history of man's fall from grace.

6 Geese A-laying = the six days of Creation.

7 Swans A-swimming = the seven sacraments - gifts of the Holy Spirit.

8 Maids A-milking = the eight beatitudes (solemn blessings)

9 Ladies Dancing = the nine Fruits of the Holy Spirit.

10 Lords A-leaping = the ten commandments.

11 Pipers Piping = the eleven faithful apostles.

12 Drummers Drumming = the twelve points of doctrine in the Apostle's Creed.

How many gifts altogether does "Twelve Days of Christmas" recount?

364 gifts with 184 of them being birds!

Silly Christmas Hats

Interestingly **the "silly hats" idea** commonly found in crackers for Twelfth Night Christmas celebrations and dress-ups (see Chapter 8.) has its **roots dated back to pagan times**. People back then believed that they needed **protection from evil forces** out to get them! So they devised bizarre and devilish masks and hats including pointy hats to pretend they were also evil and thus confuse the enemy who would depart! Outrageous masks and hats were commonly used during Christmas Twelfth Night celebrations. Today paper hats are

commonly found in Christmas crackers.

Crossword Puzzle Christmas Crackers

In the 1920's crossword puzzles became a popular craze. To accommodate the demand for this new "craze" a Christmas cracker was released in December of 1925 which contained crossword puzzles for the first time!

Biggest Christmas Cracker

In 1998 the world's largest Christmas cracker record of 55.45 meter long and 3.6 meter high was **first held by the Australian's**. In 2001 a group of English parents set a new record and built a 63.1 metre long and 4m high Christmas cracker containing 300 balloons, small presents, a giant hat and a joke. The cracker was publicly pulled on 20th December 2001 by 44 children and the Saracens Rugby Team and raised money for local charities.

Popular Mystery Plays

In the Middle Ages it was popular to attend "Mystery Plays" which depicted a dramatic story telling of Christ's birth. The plays were held between Christmas and the new year.

Passion Play

The closest resemblance to a Middle Age "Mystery Play" surviving today is the "Passion Play". Held in Germany at Oerammergau, its cast is drawn from the towns people not professional actors and around 2,000 people participated in the last play held in 2000. It runs for 7 hours and tells the story of Mary, Joseph and Jesus' birth. The play began in 1634 and is performed as close to that of a Middle Ages performance and is only **held once every ten years keeping to an original vow**. The town folk believed they would be spared by God

from the ragging bubonic plague if they kept to the 10 year vowel. More than 530,000 people from all over the world have visited mostly on package tours. Admission fees were first introduced in 1790.

Christmas banned!

In 1647 British Parliament officially abolishes the celebration of Christmas making it illegal. Oliver Cromwell in England banned Christmas carols and parties between 1649 and 1660. He believed it was a solemn day and that the past feasting and revelry was immoral. Until the ban was lifted, once the Puritans lost power in 1660, if you were caught celebrating you were arrested! English Puritans who came to America influenced Christmas to be outlawed in Boston from 1659 to 1681. At this time if caught in a festive spirit of any kind you were fined five shillings! It took until more than one hundred years later for the popularity of Christmas to resurface in all its might with the declaration of a Federal holiday declared on June 26, 1870. As you see celebrations, fun and gaiety are the norm around the world today!

"Christmas" is "Christ's Mass" and mass was banned in Scotland for a lot longer than in their neighboring England. For 400 years Scotland kept this attitude. There are records of charges being brought against people for keeping "Yule" as it was called in Scotland. Up until the 1960's Christmas day was a typical working day for most people. It has only been in recent times that the Scots observed December 25 as a special day.

Christmas starts to resurface

Early nineteen century newspapers and magazines made little mention of Christmas day. It was the middle class who started to make it popular by introducing celebrations around the 1830's. In 1837 Queen Victoria had a Christmas tree yet hardly anyone else had one.

Christmas was re-introduced mostly in the mid-nineteenth century.

Where did the Greeting “Merry” Christmas come from?

The term “Merry Christmas” was coined as the very first known Christmas greeting meaning to wish someone a blessed and peaceful Christmas season. “Merry” was a term that originally meant “blessed” and “peaceful”. The phrase “Merry Christmas” was first seen in 1699 in an informal letter written by an English Admiral and later in 19th century England where it appeared in the first Christmas card. This new term then became popularized by Charles Dickens in “A Christmas Carol” written in 1843.

“Christmas Eve” – Past & Present - Two Different Meanings!

In the early days, a “day” started at sunset hence the “eve” happened first. The term “Christmas Eve” referred to the beginning of the sacred Christmas day. Later days changed and were started at midnight. Today “eve” is the evening of the previous day. So Christmas Eve is related to the day before Christmas and not Christmas day as in the early times.

Christmas Eve Visit from the Departed!

In olden times in Scandinavia Christmas Eve was the time when the dead were believed to revisit their old homes. With mixed feelings re their coming the living prepared the home to make them welcome. The beds in the home were freshly re-made and the living slept on straw on the floor while baths were filled with water in case the departed wanted to wash! No one wanted to upset the visiting departed as they feared the anger of the supernatural.

The Most Famous Christmas Story Ever Written -

Charles Dickens wrote "**A Christmas Carol**" which was published in 1843. He continued to write more Christmas stories in fact one each year. However scholars claim that no other book or story by Dickens or anyone else (save the Bible) has been more enjoyed, criticized, referred to or more frequently adapted to other media than "A Christmas Carol". It is believed that in the USA and England, **the invention of the modern Christmas holiday as we now know it was the direct result of this famous Dickens story.** He transformed a sacred holiday (where lavish celebrations cited from the past was at his time of writing nothing more than a distant and almost forgotten memory) to a family feast where people could directly participate in the celebration rather than merely witnessing it in a church service.

Dickens adapted the twelve-day manorial (Yule) feast to a one-day party any family could hold in their home. Instead of gathering together an entire village, Dickens showed immediate family and close friends, perfectly happy alone. Its themes are not exclusive to Christianity and it inspired a tradition for decades in Christmas books and celebrations that appealed to many non-Christians which opened up the celebration to the wider community with celebrations of good will shared by all. You can **download a free copy of the story at:** <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/46>

Biggest "Selling" Christmas Song

According to the Guinness Book of World Records, Bing Crosby's recording of "White Christmas" in 1942 sold over 100 million copies around the world with at least 50 million sales as singles. The latest chart success with the song was in December 1998 when it charted for three consecutive weeks in the UK reaching No. 29 on the hit list!

Positive Presents

In 2007 a new gift idea started in American schools called “positive presents” that emphasizes the giving and not the getting! It means to give and exchange compliments and gratitude for things over the past year such as “Thanks for sharing your beautiful smile over the year – your smile lights up the room” or “I really appreciate your friendship over the year; thank you” . Children are not just verbalizing “positive presents” but they are also writing them out to be given and kept as a keep-sake Christmas mementos. Some are making home-made calendars or Christmas tree shaped cards with positive comments, poems or stories of compliments and gratitude. A great gift gaining momentum that will leave lasting, joyous and cherished memories.

Julebukking

Is an old tradition from Norway. People dress in masks and costumes (Julebukkers), disguise their voices and body language and go door to door visiting neighbors who attempt to identify them. It is custom for holiday treats and drink to be offered to the Julebukkers. This was originally a pagan tradition related to the worship of Thor and his goat. Christian missionaries modified it for the Christmas season.

Winnebukking

Winnebukking is a modernized version of Julebukking. Today a recreational vehicle dressed up as a Christmas tree is used to drive revelers from house to house in neighborhoods. The revelers sing Christmas songs outside each home until the door is opened. They then rush in to consume drinks and treats then kidnap the homeowner and travel to the next home. It’s a lot of fun!

Funny Christmas Superstitions!

In some countries they believe that to prevent a family from quarrelling on the festive day, shoes require to be placed side by side Christmas Eve. It is also believed that all animals can speak on Christmas Eve. However it is considered bad luck to test this superstition!

Spider Web Christmas Tree Decoration

Ukrainian's place a silver spider web for good luck over their Christmas tree as their legend says that a poor woman with nothing to put on the tree woke to find branches covered with spider webs which turned to silver with the rising sun!

Salvation Army Santa's Hit the Streets in the USA!

At the beginning of the 1890's in New York City, the Salvation Army famous for its free Christmas meals they provided for the poor, was running out of money. To help things along they dressed unemployed men in Santa suits and sent to the streets to ask for donations. Since this time the Salvation Army Santa's can be seen ringing bells on street corners in most American cities to this very day.

Secret Santas

Larry Stewart from Kansas City, USA, a successful businessman was known for years as "Secret Santa". He revealed himself in 2006 before he died of cancer in 2007 at age 58. He wanted to inspire others to do random acts of kindness. For 26 years he roamed the streets in December anonymously handing money (often \$100 dollar bills) to people he thought could use a lift. He gave a total of \$1.3 million. He believed in philanthropy; that we should help each other. "Secret Santas" are being trained to continue Stewart's work

www.secretantausa.com Donations are made to the Secret Santa Foundation by visiting <http://secretantausa.com/MakeADonation.asp>

How Saint Nicholas became the patron of Children

Legend tells that in a time of famine three little boys were captured by a wicked inn-keeper. He chopped them up and pickled them and was about to serve them as dinner to a group of guests when Saint Nicholas arrived and startled him by asking what was in his dinner. The inn-keeper new the game was up! Saint Nicholas quickly reassembled the children and delivered them back to their parents and all lived happily ever after. From here on the Saint was deemed the "Patron of Children".



Oldest Santa School in the World

Tom Vallent (above) is not only a famous Santa Claus but the current Dean of the oldest Santa School in the world, the "Charles W Howard Santa School" in the USA. The school teaches people from all around the world who wish to portray the spirit and image of Santa and more recently they are also teaching Mrs Claus! The school was established in 1937. It is the world's oldest and longest running Santa School dedicated to the art of portraying Santa Claus. A famous saying of Charles Howard the founder that has been passed down to all their Santa's to declare to the world: "I am the spirit of Christmas, I stand for love and giving". Charles Howard was also the technical director of the famous Christmas movie Miracle on 34th Street. Charles W Howard Santa School website: <http://www.santaclausschool.com>

Santa Tim & the International University of Santa Claus!

Founded by Santa Timothy Connaghan in 2003. Tim is the current Chancellor. Tim is also the owner of RealSantas.com (a company who supplies real bearded Santa's all over America) and the Executive Director of Amalgamated Order of Real Bearded Santas! Tim is the reigning Santa in the annual Hollywood Christmas Parade and is a famous Santa whose appearances include Dr. Phil, the Tonight Show and Jay Lenno Show.



**Chancellor Tim awarding a student
with his Santa Diploma!**



Chancellor Santa Tim

Tim Connaghan, aka Kris Kringle, has played Santa Claus for more than 36 years. A former charitable fundraiser and producer of major special events raising millions of dollars for major charities. He's also the author of "Behind the Red Suit – The how-to book on the Business of Santa Claus" part of the curriculum at IUSA. For workshop info:

<http://www.realsantas.com/iusc.htm>

Amalgamated Order of Real Bearded Santas (AORBS)

Founder, Santa Tom Hartsfield



Founded by Santa Tom Hartsfield in 1995, an international organization currently listing over 1300 "real bearded" Santas from throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia and New Zealand, who carry on the history and traditions of Santa Claus. A place where members can educate, share and perpetuate the spirit of love and

giving. AORBS is dedicated to the "joy of being Santa". Its goal is to provide members with resources that allow them to further define and improve their individual presentations of Santa Claus. They held the first ever Santa convention for real bearded Santa's called "Discover Santa" in 2007. <http://www.aorbsantas.com/>

Santa Surveys!

Pretzel franchiser Auntie Anne's located primarily in malls in the USA, conducted a survey which polled more than 330 members with the Amalgamated Order of Real Bearded Santas (AORBS) of which the average real bearded Santa respondent was 59-years-old, 5 feet 10 inches tall and a healthy 257 pounds. Here are some survey highlights:

- More than 60% are sneezed or coughed on up to 10 times a day
- 74% have up to 10 children cry while on their lap each day
- Nearly 90% of mall Santas have their beard pulled each day to see if it's real
- 45% of Santas see camera "flash" spots more than 25 times a day
- Nearly 30% of mall Santas have more than 100 children sit on their lap every day

What's in The Santa Survival Kit

In December 2006, Auntie Anne's Pretzel franchiser provided USA mall Santas nationwide with the "Santa We Got Your Back" Survival Kit to help them through the crying, sneezing, toe-stomping, pant-wetting and beard-pulling children's visit to Santa. The Santa Survival Kit:

- Boot polish kit
- Hand sanitizer
- Cherry lip balm
- Shout® wipes
- Beard grooming kit
- Battery-operated fan

- Roll of mint Certs®
- Backup red light bulb for Rudolph's nose
- Official reindeer pooper-scooper
- Chilled bottle of Dasani® water
- Mrs. Claus peppermint foot lotion
- Free Auntie Anne's Cinnamon Sugar Pretzel cards
- Ricola® throat drops (for the ho, ho, ho-ing)
- Absorbent Santa tissue pack

More Mall Santa Facts:

- Fresh breath is of top priority for 20% of Santas who eat four to six mints each day
- 52% of Santas believe girls are more shy than boys



Santa's Official Airline!

Finnair is the official airline of Santa Claus. It is a very modern fleet that connects to nearly 50 international destinations world wide. Not only a superb state of the art airline you will want to travel the world but the best way to travel to visit Santa Village, Finland – the famous home of Santa Claus in the modern world open 12 months of year. Check out Santa television for the best online free videos of Santa in Finland – a magical and memorable experience for the whole family - visit:

<http://www.santatelevision.com/index.html>

and for Finnair visit: www.Finnair.com

Who Said Santa Lives at the North Pole?

A cartoon by Thomas Nast (a historical newspaper artist) in 1882 showed Santa sitting on a box addressed "Christmas Box 1882, St Nicholas, North Pole". According to Nast it was the perfect place for

Santa! Nast is also famous for being the first person to paint the first definitive portrait of Santa Claus in 1870.

North Pole Trivia

There are actually two North Poles: a **geographic North Pole** being the true northernmost point on earth and the **magnetic North Pole** which is recognized as north on magnetic compasses. Both poles are located in different positions. However the North Pole generally is located in the middle of the Arctic Ocean which is about 4000 meters deep and covered with 2-3 meter thick ice floes and surrounded by Alaska and the countries of Canada, Greenland and Russia. Temperatures range from -30° Celsius in winter with no sun to 0° Celsius in summer. While most of the land in the far north is under snow and ice, a large portion of the arctic is comprised of forested and tundra regions where numerous plants, shrubs and trees grow. Generally most of the North Pole is an inhospitable place to live. However a good place for magical Santa and his family to hide!

Letters to Santa

It was not until the latter part of the eighteenth century that children started a new tradition of writing letters to Santa. By the 1890's Post Offices each December were overflowing with letters to Santa. Great confusion arose as to where he lived. The North or the South Pole? Mail clerks gravely stamped the letters with "addressee could not be found" and they went to the "Dead Letters Office". Today letters are received by Santa usually via email and responded to promptly thanks to modern day technology! Want to get a letter from Santa – visit:

<http://www.santaclaus.com/letter-from-santa.php>

Modern Santa

The fat, happy red-clad white bearded Santa of today has been said to be a 20th century invention by illustrator Haddon Sunblom. He was a designer hired by Coca-Cola to create an image for them using Coca-

Cola's official colors; red and white. The image was a hit and its popularity grew swiftly throughout the world and continues on today!

Mrs Claus - Santa's wife!

She made her debut in 1889 in poetry, verses and books such as "Santa Claus on a Sleigh Ride" written by Katharine Lee Bates. Some suggest her maiden name was Mary Christmas! However **her true identity is revealed in "Bluey's First Christmas at The North Pole"** by Bernadette Dimitrov 2007. As a relatively new creation she was also further popularized to the masses by George Melachrino with his 1956 song "Mrs Santa Claus". Mrs Claus has since become a much loved figure now seen accompanying Santa more and more! Today Mrs Claus is more popular than ever with her fun radio podcast show called "Conversations with Mrs Claus" visit www.TheFamilyYak.com for details.

First Official Website for Santa Claus

The first Santa specific website was officially listed in 1994 (www.santaclaus.com) which also boasts his first email address: (santa@santaclaus.com). During 1994, 1995 and 1996 this domain had close to 50 million people look at the web site and write to Santa. This site is still very popular today!

Advertisement Creates New Custom!

Christmas advertising started in 1820. However the most famous advertisement were created in 1910. It was for Ivory Soap and it created a fun new custom. It showed a child sitting in front of the fireplace with a bowl of water, a towel and a bar of Ivory Soap so that Santa could wash up after coming down the chimney. Children followed the advertisement to the letter and it soon became popular and a lot of fun for soiled wash cloths and dirty water to be found on Christmas mornings!

Boxing Day

December 26th traditionally is St Stephens Day which later became known as Boxing Day. The **popular theory is that it came about due to "alms boxes" being placed in churches during the festive season to collect money for the poor.** The boxes were collected from the Churches after Christmas on the 26th December and their contents distributed swiftly thereafter to the needy and the poor. Hence this day become popularly known as Boxing Day due to the collection of money from "alms boxes".

Boxing Day **started in England in the Middle Ages** and there are many other theories as to the origins of this day including:

- The day after Christmas a "Christmas box" was given to workers who served them Christmas day. Servants were given the day off to spend with their families since they could not celebrate together Christmas day. A box full of left over food was given to them to enjoy with their families. The **boxing of food** became known as "Boxing Day".
- Servants in England once carried boxes to their employers the day after Christmas. **Employers placed coins in the boxes** as a special end of year gift much like a bonus today. Hence "Boxing Day"!

Boxing Day is largely celebrated in and is a public holiday in Australia, New Zealand, Africa, Canada and the United Kingdom where Boxing Day has been a Bank Holiday in Britain since 1871. Boxing Day is not practiced in Russia, other European countries or America.

St Stephen's Day Christmas Racing Festival!

In Dublin St Stephen's Day, 26th December is the first day of Leopardstown's most famous horse-race meeting called the Christmas Festival, which lasts for four days. St Stephen is the patron saint of horses, so it is fitting that this day has become synonymous with horse racing.

Little Christmas

In Ireland "Little Christmas" is the traditional name for Epiphany (January 6th). It is called this because Epiphany was up until the adoption of the Gregorian calendar the day on which Christmas day was celebrated.

Christmas Shoe Myths

There are many myths related to shoes at Christmas. Our "superstitious" ancestors never gave shoes for Christmas gifts. The old wives tale is if you give a friend a new pair of shoes then they are sure to walk away from you. In Greece, people burned their old shoes during the Christmas season to prevent misfortunes in the coming year. Unmarried girls at Christmas would throw a shoe over their shoulder and towards the door. If the shoe landed with the toe pointing towards the door the girl was thought to be blessed with marriage within a year!

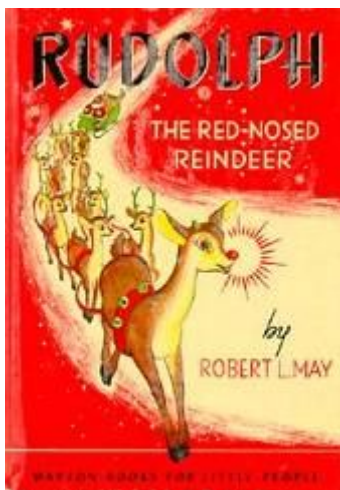
It was the Victorian upper classes in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century who were famous for giving miniature porcelain shoes as keepsakes for good luck on the Twelfth Night of Christmas. Later the shoes were also crafted in leather, pottery, alabaster, silver and brass. The miniature shoes were a symbol of contentment and prosperity and a popular Christmas-time gift.

Modern Yuletide Defenders

The latest Yuletide defenders are the Elves in Black (E.I.B.). They are commissioned to protect the spirit of Christmas. These elves dressed in black armed with elfin intellect, tools, charm and good looks defend the spirit of Christmas against naysayers including grinchers, heat mizers, scrooges and of late pure commercialism. They are sworn by the EIB code and must remain unseen whilst defending the spirit of Christmas! Children can join and be a member of the world's most elite team dedicated to keeping the spirit alive. They are issued with official EIB Agent Certification and receive fun training! **To join the club visit:** <http://www.christmas.com/pe/6> and for more sensational Christmas fun visit their home page at www.christmas.com

Rudolph The Red-Nose Reindeer

A story book for Christmas was created in 1939 during the time of the great depression. The story was created for the Chicago based



Montgomery Wards Department Stores featuring a new character called Rudolph. One of the highlights for the Christmas season was for parents to take their children for a visit to large department stores such as Montgomery Wards to visit Santa, sit on his knee and receive a gift. For many years the Montgomery Wards Santa gave away from his Christmas sack a specially printed Christmas color-in book. The store wanted to save money and do

something different so it gave one of its stores copywriters, 34 year old Robert L May the job of coming up with a story. May was said to be taunted as a child because he was shy and small in stature. It is believed that the idea of being ostracized came from his own personal

experiences. May created Rudolph with similar problems who in the end rises above his problems and is transformed.

Originally May wrote the story as a rhyming verse which his young 4 years old daughter Barbara loved. Originally store owners thought a red nose may be inappropriate as generally a red nose was associated with drinking. However after illustrations surfaced this suggestion was dismissed and the story was approved. The story book of Rudolph soon filled Santa's sack as a give-away; a new gimmick for promotions which took on immediate success in the Montgomery Wards stores.

Upon release in 1939 2.4 million copies of the story was distributed. Due to war time paper shortages, minimal copies were printed over the coming years. However by 1946 it was estimated that a total of 6 million copies had been given away. The story later went on to be translated into 25 languages.

Rudolph was created during a difficult time for May as his wife had a terminal illness (cancer) and died. Writing Rudolph was a distraction that brought him and his young daughter Barbara together in a magical way. May changed the story as he wrote it depending on Barbara's reaction. May received no royalties for Rudolph because copyright was held by Montgomery Wards for whom he was an employee only. May was snowed under with medical and other bills. He went to Montgomery Wards to seek release of the rights to Rudolph. It was in 1947 that his request succeeded. May was able to transform his financial circumstances as he had the story printed commercially in the same year. The following year a nine minute cartoon was shown in theatres. This soon followed by May's brother in law Johnny Marks, a songwriter, developing a song to go with the story. His song "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" was recorded and

made famous by Gene Autry in 1949. It sold two million copies in the first year. It became a Christmas classic and one of the best selling songs of all time. In 1964 Burl Ives narrated a TV special about Rudolph which is still popular today. May secured a good life from Rudolph. He quit his copywriting job in 1951 to concentrate on Rudolph yet returned a number of years later and stayed until his retirement in 1971. He died in 1976.

Rudolph came along more than 100 years after the flying reindeer made their debut. Although loved and cherished by his family, Rudolph was a misfit, teased and later ostracized by the reindeer community because of his unusual glowing red nose. The story unfolds with Santa discovering Rudolph by accident when he noticed a glow emanating from Rudolph's room while delivering presents to his home one Christmas Eve. As the thickening fog was already the cause of several accidents and delays Santa was worried he may not be able to complete his rounds. Rudolph was recruited as the light of the way leading Santa's reindeer team to successfully fulfill all deliveries. The message of Rudolph proved popular, that is, a perceived liability is often an asset waiting to be discovered!

The Reindeer – who are they?

They were first named in the poem "A Visit from St. Nicholas" also known as "The Night Before Christmas" first published in 1823 and were named:

1. **Dasher** is the fastest. He was the right-hand leader of the sleigh before Rudolph was included.
2. **Dancer** can't stop dancing and the left-hand leader before Rudolph was included.
3. **Prancer** is elegant and good looking and the third reindeer on the right in the second row.

4. **Vixen** is the practical joker and the fourth reindeer on the left-hand side in the second row.
5. **Comet** is the day dreamer looking upon stars and making wishes and the fifth reindeer on the right-hand side in the third row.
6. **Cupid** is the love reindeer – Santa’s second favorite and the sixth reindeer on the left-hand side in the third row.
7. **Donner** is the lover of poetry, giggles and having fun and the seventh reindeer on the right-hand side in the fourth row.
8. **Blitzen** was the last reindeer in the original line-up and his motto was: “Santa saved the best for last” and the eighth reindeer on the left-hand side in the fourth row. Note “Blitz” is German for “lightning” and Blitzen was known to be lightning fast!

The 5 other reindeer later added to Santa’s team:



1. **Rudolph**

Added in 1939 - he has a bright glowing red nose that lights the way on delivery runs and is said to be Santa’s favorite! (See page 104 for the full story.) Available in various media including book and DVD.

To purchase from Amazon: <http://www.amazon.com/dp/B000A345E4?tag=wwwwhohohochri-20&camp=14573&creative=327641&linkCode=as1&creativeASIN=B000A345E4&adid=0V3MTGW7PRAQTR4EWGXZ&>



2. **Annabelle’s Wish**

1997 Ralph Edwards Films brings the charming story of an adorable calf who wishes to be one of Santa's reindeer. Annabelle the calf was born on Christmas Eve. She encounters Santa and his majestic reindeer and brings magic to a little boy in need. This is charming animated movie for the holiday season. The Annabelle’s Wish video is the recipient of many

awards including the VSDA Video of the Year Award, Film Advisory Board of Excellence Award and National Parenting Seal of Approval. To

purchase from Amazon: <http://www.amazon.com/?&tag=wwwwhohochri-20&camp=15345&creative=331689&linkCode=ur1&adid=15122YD03C89JNQTBDX&>



3. **Olive, the Other Reindeer**

Released in 1999, a 2D animation movie starring Drew Barrymore as Olive and based on the 1997 book by J. Otto Seibold and Vivian Walsh. Olive is a dog who frustrates her owner to no end by not acting like a dog. She mis-hears a radio broadcast announcing that Christmas might be cancelled due to an injured reindeer and a call for "all of the other reindeer", (or "*Olive* the other reindeer"), to come to Santa's aid, the devoted dog sets off for the North Pole to lend her paw to help in the crisis. The only one happy about the cancellation of Christmas is a bitter postman tired of carrying all the extra Christmas mail. When he learns Olive wants to help get Christmas back on track, he does everything in his power to stop her! To purchase from Amazon:

<http://www.amazon.com/?&tag=wwwwhohochri-20&camp=15345&creative=331689&linkCode=ur1&adid=15122YD03C89JNQTBDX&>



4. **Robbie the Reindeer**

Robbie is Rudolph's son and is the title character in two animated BBC Christmas comedy television specials. The programs are based on the story of "Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer" starring Robbie as Rudolph's son and the tenth of Santa Claus' reindeer. "Robbie the Reindeer in Hooves of Fire" DVD was released in 1999 starring Robbie Williams. The hardcover book "Robbie the Reindeer" by Glenn Dakin and Daphne Thomas was released in Oct 23, 2000. To purchase from Amazon:

<http://www.amazon.com/?&tag=wwwwhohochri-20&camp=15345&creative=331689&linkCode=ur1&adid=15122YD03C89JNQTBDX&>



5. **Bluey** the Blue Kangaroo – **the latest and newest reindeer recruit!** Created by Bernadette Dimitrov 2006. He jumps high delivering Santa between tall buildings to access lobbies and windows to deliver Christmas presents to children in high-rise buildings in cities all around the world - the one's **without chimneys!** This was a real dilemma for Santa! Also a secret undercover agent for Santa who becomes a **“hero” and saves the world’s “Wish Connections”** from The No Ho Ho’ers.



To purchase a copy of this enlightening fun filled book and get added **BONUSES** and **FREE gifts** – visit:

http://www.hohohochristmas.com/Bluey_the_Blue_Kangaroo.html

Kangaroos lead the way for Santa Claus in Australia

A century ago in Australia it was usual for drawings to depict Santa Claus lead by a wagon harnessed to a team of kangaroos with no reindeer in sight!

Wally Bronner, Founder of the World’s Largest Christmas Store!



<http://www.bronners.com> Bronner’s founded in 1945 is the world’s largest Christmas store. It is located in Frankenmuth, Michigan, USA. It is a third generation family business and many of its employees also have their family members working there too. Open 361 days of the year, Bronner’s features over 50,000 trims and gifts, including Christmas ornaments from more than 70 nations, artificial Christmas trees, Christmas lights, Nativity scenes, Christmas

decorations, collectibles, and more. Every evening Bronner's ½-mile long Christmas Lane glistens with thousands of twinkling lights. Over two million people, including 2,000 group tours, visit Bronner's attraction annually.

Bronner's has an official replica (pictured below) of the original "Silent Night Memorial Chapel" in Austria which marks the site where the most beloved Christmas song of all time "Silent Night" was first sung in 1818. It was built with permission from the Austrian government. **Wally was awarded a silver medal** for Science, Culture and Religion from the University of Salzburg for his presentation to them **of "Silent Night" in over 300 languages.**



Each year Wally holds a Christmas party for all his staff in a chosen countries theme as they would celebrate Christmas. They go to a lot of trouble to authenticate traditions, meals, sayings etc. They have held Christmas parties in the traditions and customs of eg: 1993 Australia, 1968 Italy, 1972 Germany, 1980 Austria, 1971 Holy Land, 1992 Spain and 1985 Egypt. It is an incredible and exciting experience whether as a customer or as a staff member at Bronners!

Bronner's has grown to the size of over 5.5 football fields – view a map of the site: <http://host488.ipowerweb.com/%7Ebronners/prpages/storedirectory.pdf>

Where did the idea of gift giving come from?

The Three Wise men (the Magi) brought gifts to the baby Jesus. Later Saint Nicholas popularized the idea of gift-giving. As we know,



December was originally a celebrated Roman festival of Saturnalia a time when gifts were popular to be given as good luck emblems. Early Christians frowned on this pagan ritual and would not partake in popular gift

giving during December. However many of the converts to Christianity continued to give gifts and related it's importance to the Magi and later St Nicholas. By the Middle Ages, gift giving became widely accepted. In the 19th and early 20th century nuts, fruit and candy were the most popular requests. This is evidenced from early letters written to Santa printed in newspapers. Today the most popular gift requests from boys and girls are toys. From the early **1900's the most requested gift for boys and girls was a Teddy Bear which is the most popular stuffed toy of all time.** An interesting survey taken in 1995 in England found that pet owners popularly give gifts at Christmas to their pets. 7 out of 10 British dogs get Christmas gifts from their owners! for a great **Cat lovers gift** check out:

<http://www.hohohochristmas.com/Cat%20lovers%20Christmas%20gift%20details.html> for a great **Dog Lovers gift:** <http://www.hohohochristmas.com/Dog%20Lovers%20Christmas%20gift.html>

Christmas Spending!

While most retailers **make 70% of their annual revenue at Christmas,** the average American takes **six months to pay off their holiday purchases** on credit cards. Even though "Christmas Club" savings accounts started around 1905 the average person today prefers to rack up credit bills rather than save and plan for Christmas!

Biggest Spending Increase at Christmas

What's one item that has its biggest spending increase at Christmas? **Diamonds** – they are purchased more at Christmas than on any other holiday or occasion during the year!

The Christmas Yo-Yo Toy

One of the oldest known toys is the yo-yo. Originally made of stone yo-yos are more than a thousand years old. In the 1700s, the yo-yo provided entertainment for the French royal court. By the 1800's it

was popular with children in Victorian England then slumped and picked up again in popularity in the 1920's. In 1998 there was a yo yo Christmas boom with sales of more than 50 million proving it to be one of the most popular Christmas toys for that year.

Early Christmas Toys

Many of the early toys popular for Christmas in the modern world were in fact **tin toys** which were hand painted and stenciled. Commercial production began in 1848 by the "Philadelphia Tin Toy Manufactory" and tin toys became a sort after gift item for Christmas.

Dates of Original Creation of Some Popular Christmas Toys:

Yo-yo - 1000 B.C.

Jigsaw Puzzle - 1767

Teddy Bears - 1902

Crayola Crayons - 1903

Pogo Stick - 1919

Monopoly - 1935

Frisbee - 1948

Silly Putty - 1949

Legos - 1949

Mr. Potato Head - 1952

Play-Doh - 1956

Hula Hoop - 1958

Barbie Doll - 1959

Hot Wheels - 1966

Trivial Pursuit - 1979

Cabbage Patch Kids - 1983

Pictionary - 1986

Top Selling Computer Game at Christmas

Microsoft sold 4.4 million Xbox 360 game consoles during the fourth quarter (Christmas season) in 2006! The Xbox was the most highly prized and sort after computer game gift for Christmas in 2006.

The Nutcracker - Popular Christmas Gift

In the 19th century German author E Hoffman wrote many stories in which dolls played important roles. The Nutcracker was one of them. Because of this Christmas story the wooden nutcracker doll dressed in soldier's finery became a popular Christmas gift. Hoffman's dolls lived human dreams. The Nutcracker story tells of Clara's jealous brother crushing the doll. Still loved yet broken, the doll is gently left beneath the families Christmas tree where it magically comes to life at the stroke of midnight. A battle is then fought with toy soldiers then victorious, the doll finds himself to be a Prince and takes his beloved Clara on a magical journey to his homeland. This is a story still beloved today at Christmas time.

Tchaikovsky "**The Nutcracker**" is the most famous Christmas ballet and dramatizes this children's Christmas story and is frequently presented during the festive season. This ballet was **first performed in 1892 in Russia**. It achieved great popularity around the mid-1960's and has now become a holiday tradition which many families enjoy. Today these Christmas wooden dolls have become collector items.

Women's Christmas

In the **Irish county of Cork** a unique tradition still strong today is called "Women's Christmas" which is celebrated on 6th January. **Irish men take on all the household duties on that day** while giving their spouses a day off! Women either go out or hold parties to celebrate with their friends, mothers, aunts (all women folk). Clientele in bars and restaurants on this night is near to 100% female. Children buy presents

for their mothers and grandmothers (with similarities to “Mothers Day”).

When to Put Up the Christmas Tree

Traditionally, Christmas Eve, December 24th is the time when Christmas trees were brought in and decorated. This custom continues today in many countries such as Germany. It was considered bad luck to do so earlier. Although commercialization has resulted in trees going up much earlier such as from October in stores in the United Kingdom. In the USA the tree usually goes up right after Thanksgiving (the 4th Thursday in November). In Australia, the Christmas tree is usually put up on the 1st of December.

Date to Take Down the Christmas Tree

January 6 is not only the celebration of the Epiphany but also the traditional end of the Christmas holiday symbolized by the taking down of the Christmas tree and decorations in the west. It is said that to do so earlier is thought to bring bad luck for the rest of the year. The related tradition of children raiding the tree of candy canes and other sweets before it leaves the home (as often people burnt them in bonfires yet today they are mainly taken away to be recycled) is popular throughout Europe and the United States. In the USA they take down their tree right after New Year. While in some European cultures the greenery put up at Christmas is taken down at Epiphany, (January 6th) and in other cultures it remains up until the **February 2nd “Feast of the Purification of the Virgin” or “Candlemas” when their Christmas season closes.** Superstitions suggest negative consequences if Christmas greenery is not removed by “Candlemas” eve.

“Lightstock” the Poor Man’s Christmas Tree!

In the Middle Ages woodcarvers in the Erzgebirge region of Germany fashioned the first Weinachts pyramid or lightstock: a pyramid-shaped

stand made from 2-5 wooden rods and 3 shelves holding candles and Christmas related figurines. Sometime later they attached a pinwheel to the top of the central rod. As the heat from the candles rose it would rotate the pinwheel and the shelves making a delightful display. Small lightstocks (the average pyramids stand about 50 cm) were soon seen to be placed beside Christmas trees. However many poor woodcarvers could not afford Christmas trees and thus the lightstock came to be known as the "poor man's Christmas tree".

Lightstocks soon gained popularity in Dresden Germany and its surrounding villages. Multi-storied pyramids began appearing in town markets as villagers competed for the best town pyramid. The Lightstock shelves displayed scenes illustrating their village's history, the story of Christmas and/or other holiday themes. Lightstocks are available for purchase in a variety of shapes and sizes. The world's tallest pyramid stands in Striezelmarkt in Dresden. Lightstocks are a tradition over 300 years old in Dresden and is a tradition that continues to this very day.

First Christmas Tree Decorations

Roses were the first Christmas decorations recorded to be placed on Christmas trees. Fruit particularly **apples and nuts were the next** most popular decorations that were added. It was the **Germans who popularized Christmas trees and ornaments**. They began baking hard cookies in the shapes of fruit and decorating them before placing them on the tree. The first to mass produce Christmas ornaments were glass blowers in a little town called Lauscha, Germany. They became most famous in this craft and they have a **famous legend** attached to them called **"The Famous Pickle Ornament" (read below)**. They were also the first to import Christmas ornaments to America where their glass ornaments were a huge hit and sold out

quickly. In 1890 Mr Woolworth purchased more than two hundred thousand ornaments to meet the new demand at Christmas. **It is said that imports and sales of Christmas ornaments contributed to making Mr Woolworth's huge fortune!**

The Most Famous Christmas Tree Ornament Legend

Lauscha, Germany is famous for its hand-blown glass pickle ornament. A folk story says for generations people were hiding a glass ornament in the shape of a green pickle somewhere on the Christmas tree. When the go ahead was given, family members quickly scuffled through the tree. Whoever finds the pickle gets to open the first Christmas gift and is bestowed with a special blessing for good luck the following year. Often the finder also receives an extra surprise gift said to be from St Nicholas creating much fun and merry-making. This is a fun tradition widely practiced in America today.

Who thought of placing lights on Christmas Trees?

Protestant reformer Martin Luther is said to have first adorned trees with light. The story says that one December evening, the beauty of stars shining through branches of a tree inspired him to recreate the effect by placing candles on the branches of a small fir tree inside his home. Luther known as a visionary reignited the symbolism of light inspiring vision and hope for peace, unity and freedom for all!

In **1882 Edward Johnson** (Thomas Edison's assistant) **created electric tree lights** just 3 years after Edison publicly demonstrated electric lights. However it was **Ralph Morris in 1895 who invented the string of electric Christmas lights** commonly seen today. The **first lights were a string of switchboard lights** placed on a Christmas tree. Morris came up with the idea while working at a telephone company and being mesmerized by the beauty of the flickering lights on a switchboard.

It was not until after World War II that electrically lit trees became “universal”. Interestingly most of the major Christmas lighting companies were owned and operated by people of the Jewish faith. Early Christmas lights were so expensive that more were rented than sold. In the early 1900’s an electrically lighted tree was a status symbol. However the early electric lights burned so hot that they were as dangerous as the candles they were advertised to replace and many house fires and deaths were reported.

First Retailed Christmas Trees in the USA

Mark Carr in 1851 Pennsylvania is recorded as having set up the first retail lot of Christmas trees. From his land at Catskills to the side walks of New York he hauled two ox sleds loaded with freshly cut trees. They quickly sold and this was the start of a new and now lucrative business industry in the USA today.

Farming of Christmas Trees

Christmas trees today are seen in just about every home that celebrates Christmas. The farming of Christmas trees has become a growing business around the world **employing more than 100,000 people in the USA** alone! Approximately **34-35 million Christmas trees are produced each year**. Celebrations still favor the real tree even though there are tinsel and plastic trees appearing in modern times. For every real Christmas tree harvested there are 2 to 3 seedlings planted in its place each year. **Each hectare of trees provides the daily oxygen requirements of 45 people!** The best selling Christmas trees are Douglas Fir, Noble Fir, Balsam Fir, Fraser Fir, Scotch Pine, Virginia Pine and White Pine.

Christmas “Tree of Life” Legend

There are many legends re the Christmas tree. One story tells of an **English monk who became Saint Boniface**. One day he found

himself in front of an oak tree surrounded by pagans who were preparing to sacrifice a child. Pagans revered oak trees. Saint Boniface stopped the sacrifice and saved the child with one blow of his fist which flattened the oak tree. A small fir sprang up in its place. Saint Boniface declared to the pagans that it was the Tree of Life and represented the life of Christ. St Boniface taught converted people that the triangular shape of the fir tree was representative of the Holy Trinity (God The Father, Son and Holy Spirit). Some believe this is the reason for the fir trees popularity at Christmas.

Guinness Book of Records – Tallest Christmas Tree

According to the World Guinness Book of World Records, the world's tallest cut Christmas tree was a 67.36 m (221ft) a Douglas Fir erected and decorated at Northgate Shopping Center Seattle, Washington, USA, in December 1950. It took two days to clear 32Km (20 miles) of streets between the logging merchant and the shopping center. A dedicated generator provided electricity for the thousands of lights that adorned the tree and guidelines were needed to keep the huge tree in place. So impressive was the final decorated and lit tree that it made the cover of Life Magazine.

The Upside Down Christmas Tree Tradition

The way Christmas trees are placed in a home is one of the most unusual traditions seen in some parts of Eastern Europe. It began in the 12th century being displayed point down and hung from the ceiling in the central part of a room from Krakow to the Carpathian Highlands!

Christmas in July Phenomenon

Countries such as Australia are in the midst of a hot summer on December 25. In recent times a new custom of celebrating "Christmas in July" has been adopted. July being the coldest month in Australia

offers an opportunity to capture the atmosphere of a traditional cold weather Christmas usually experienced in the northern hemisphere (logged fires, a hot roast and hot plum pudding). For many people who yearn to experience a traditional Christmas feast, "Christmas in July" is the only way they can experience it without having to spend lots of money to travel to another country in the northern hemisphere. Christmas in July is the perfect alternative! Retailers are now holding "Christmas in July" sales. Many restaurants offer Christmas in July celebrations and traditional Christmas dinners. There is even a television shopping channel "QVC" that has a show names "Christmas in July".

Operation Christmas Drop

A new tradition started in 1952 by the USA Air Force and continues today and also serves as a training mission. It started when USA air crew parachuted cargo to islanders waiving to them on their way to Guam. Today boxes of 400 pounds each are dropped with donations from residents and businesses of Guam to help meet the needs of the poor islanders which is mainly clothing, toys, food and school supplies.

Eggnog Christmas Drink!

Historically a winter beverage associated with Christmas celebrations to toast one's health. A warm spiced and sweetened ale popular particularly in North America and the UK. Eggnog, an English creation is today made of milk, cream, sugar, whisked eggs, nutmeg and rum, brandy or whisky. In the early days of its inception the average person rarely saw milk, there was no refrigeration and thus too expensive and uncommon for the lower classes however popular among the aristocracy. Eggnog is believed to have derived from a 17th century ale called "nog" (from "noggin" meaning strong ale) which was widely beloved by the Irish at Christmas.

Whacky Named Christmas Beers!

Brewers all around the world make unique and special Christmas labels and beers that are considered by many to be the **most sort after and best beers of the year!** Many of the top Christmas beers are on display at the **number one Christmas beer festival in the world** held in **Essen, Belgium each year in December**. A great place to visit for the true beer connoisseur! Visit: <http://www.kerstbierfestival.be/ENG/index.htm>

Some interesting named beers:

- **Very Bad Elf Special Reserve Ale!** A classic English bitter ale. It has a slightly sweet body with a spicy flavor based on a recipe from 1795 which uses Fuggles hops (dates back to the mid 1800s). A highly recommended beer! www.sheltonbrothers.com
- **Beer Man sez: Merry Christmas and a Hoppy New Beer!** A weaker strength beer for those watching their alcohol yet it is rich with creamy chocolate tones and a slight toasted flavor (English-style hops). www.bigskybrew.com

Origin of Christmas Clinking of Glasses!

One tradition many of us enjoy at Christmas is the clinking of glasses with friends and family preceding a drink or after a Christmas toast. The origins of this tradition go back long ago to our ancestors who were superstitious and were always worried about evil spirits possessing them and the devil knocking on their doors. They feared that their alcohol consumption during times of celebration had the potential to leave them open to attack. So every time they had a drink, they used to "clink" glasses to make a loud noise and frighten away the evil spirits!

Christmas Gingerbread Houses!

During the 19th century after The Brothers Grimm released the story of

Hansel and Gretal, gingerbread houses became a popular holiday gift seen in many countries around the world today. Since the 17th century “gingerbread” has been baked in Europe. A spiced cake sometimes dark, light, sweet or spicy. In Medieval England gingerbread simply meant “preserved ginger”. It was an adaption of the French “gingebras” derived from the Latin name of the spice “zingebar”.

Custom of Santa Eating Cookies Christmas Eve!

This custom originated in Germany where trees were in the early days decorated with home made cookies and other confections. Once Santa had left gifts for good children he helped himself to cookies on the tree. Children delighted in viewing missing cookies on the tree the next morning!

What’s Advent?

In the early Middle Ages the forty days before Christmas became the “**forty days of St. Martin**” (it began on November 11, the feast of St. Martin of Tours) which is now known as Advent. St Martin (once a Bishop of Tours) is one of the most familiar and recognized Roman Catholic saints. He is the patron saint of soldiers. Advent is from the Latin “adventus” meaning “coming” as in the coming of Christ’s birth.

Advent today is a holy season of **preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ at Christmas**. It begins on the Sunday closest to November 30th (St. Andrew's Day) which is also the beginning of the church year. It is a tradition during this time to adhere to **4 weeks of fasting**, no meat, dairy products or sweets prior to Christmas. Also during this time it is tradition to have an Advent evergreen wreath with four candles on display. The first candle lit is a symbol of hope and the others, peace, love and joy. A candle is lighted each Sunday prior to Christmas generally before the evening meal and a prayer! A fifth white or gold candle called the “Christ Candle” is often lit in the center

Christmas Eve and/or Christmas day to signify Christ's birth.

Advent Calendars

Christmas was **once marked off from December 1 with chalk** on believers doors to count down the days to Christmas. Then in the 19th century came the birth of the Advent Calendar. According to the Austrian (NÖ) Landesmuseum the year 1903 is the year of the first printed Advent Calendar. An Advent Calendar was inserted in the newspaper "Neues Tagblatt Stuttgart" in 1904 as a gift for their readers which started its popularity.

The first printed calendar sold commercially was produced in 1908 by Gerhard Lang in Germany which consisted of miniature colored pictures that could be attached to a piece of cardboard each day in December. He recounts the excitement as a child when his mother gave to him on December 1st, 24 little candies attached to a piece of cardboard. Each day he would take one off adding a heightened sense of expectation for the coming Christmas day celebrations.

At the beginning of the **First World War** when cardboard was rationed and only allowed to be used for strictly necessary purposes, the Advent calendar **came to an end**. In 1946 rationing began to ease following the end of the Second World War. At this time a printer named Richard Sellmer once again introduced the colorful Advent calendar and again it was an immediate success.

Originally Advent calendars were based on 24 days with Christmas Eve as the last night to either put up a picture, read a bible verse or take a candy. Today, the traditional German calendars still show 24 days while it is not uncommon to find 25 day calendars in the United States with the last opening to occur on Christmas day.

Calendars were and are still produced today with either a small piece of candy or chocolate, a Christmas picture, a religious picture or a bible verse usually behind cardboard doors on a calendar. It is believed that around 1958 Advent calendars filled with chocolate were introduced.

In the USA when **President Eisenhower** was in office he was **credited with helping to popularize the Advent calendar** tradition in the United States. A newspaper article at the time showed Eisenhower's grandchildren with an Advent calendar which created instant appeal and demand.

Visit the German company that started the comeback of the Advent Calendar after WW II. They have more than 110 different designs:
<http://www.advent-calendar.com/>

Visit Incredible calendars that are three dimensional houses that often sell out more than a year in advance: <http://www.theadventhouse.com/>

Little Saints or Santons

The town Aubagne in France is famous around the world and visited by many to see its craftsmen make unbaked clay figures called Little Saints or "santons" which are popular in nativity scenes. They are hand painted and about 70 millimeter high and include 19th century French Provencal characters. The ancient art of santon making continues to be lovingly practiced to this very day. Workshops are on offer where you can watch santons being made such as by the most famous and oldest santon maker Marcel Carbonel in Marseille in France. He also boasts a boutique and a museum – open all year for visitors and buyers. With santon fairs springing up throughout the region, it is noted that the **largest and oldest of these fairs, founded in 1803 in Marseille, still exists** and is popularly visited by many from Advent through Epiphany.

Santon making is said to have **began as a popular act of resistance during the French Revolution to the closing of churches during this time**. Creches were before the French Revolution big business and were displayed in the churches where crowds flocked to view the elaborate designs. With the churches closed the people's beloved creches were no longer available for public access. It was Jean-Louise Lagnel (1764-1822) from Marseilles who started to make the beloved creche figures for people to purchase for display in their own homes. Today santons are collector items and many are often handed down from one generation to the next. Visit Macel Carbonel online at: <http://www.santonsmarcelcarbonel.com/>

Location of the Manger

In Israel there is a 14 pointed star marking the location of what is believed to be the site of the original manger where Christ was born. The current star was donated by a Turkish Sultan after a previous star had disappeared! To view a picture visit here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_the_Nativity

Germany's famous Christmas Cake "Christollen"

The German's have their own **special Christmas loaf called Christollen** which has now become popular around the world. Historians suggest Christollen **dates back to around 1400 to Dresden, Germany**. The first stollen was made in accordance with Church doctrine only oats, flour and water no butter or milk was allowed making it bland and tasteless. A request was made to the Pope by Ernst of Saxony and his brother Albrecht for the ban on butter and milk during the Advent season to be lifted. The Pope replied in what is known as the **famous "butter letter"** stating that "milk and butter can be used to bake stollen with a clear conscience and God's blessing for a small fee".

Stollen was originally called Striezel or Struzel referring to a oval shape braided and folded in half with tapered ends which is said to represent

the Baby Jesus wrapped in swaddling clothing. Around 1560, a custom for bakers of Dresden started. **Each year they would give their King, the ruler of Saxony, two 36-pound stollens as a Christmas gift.** It took 16 men to carry the bread to the palace safely. The custom continued for almost two hundred years.

In 1730 a giant stollen (1.8 ton) was commissioned by the prince of Saxony and the King of Poland for a farewell dinner which **fed over 24,000 guests.** Commemorating this event, **a Stollenfest is held each December in Dresden** with a 2 ton stollen around 4 yards long. The stollen is paraded through the market square then sliced and sold to the public. The proceeds are given to local charities.

There are many recipes for stollen. Today it is usually a long loaf of bread bursting with nuts, raisins, dried fruit, ginger, spiced bars and marzipan. Visit these sites for free stollen Christmas bread recipes:

<http://www.divinerecipes.com/recipe.cfm/recipeid/10151/holiday-recipes/Christollen-Bread> and

<http://www.giftsfromyourkitchen.com/bread/christollen-bread.html>

The Abbreviation of Christmas to Xmas

This has been a real controversy and a matter of dispute amongst western Christians who many still today believe that the word "Xmas" is disrespectful. It is actually a modern day misconception as its origin shows this is not true. For the past 1,000 years the word "Christ" has been abbreviated and often written as "XP" or "Xt" as chronicled as far back as 1021 AD. The Greek word for "Christ" is "Xristos" and the letter **"X" was frequently used as a respected religious symbol.** "X" as an abbreviation for "Christos" can be seen in many manuscripts of the New Testament. "X" was added to "mass" (Anglo-Saxon for "festival" or "religious event"). "Xmas" was first used by the Europeans in the 16th century. So somewhere along in modern times the much respected

understanding of the word "Xmas" got lost!

Kings College Chapel in England - Famous Christmas Eve Festival of Nine Lessons & Carols!

The Christmas Eve Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols was first held in 1918. It is held yearly at Kings College Chapel, Cambridge, England with increasing popularity. Apart from seats reserved for members of the College and their guests, seats for the public are only available for those who are prepared to queue and demand for seats always outstrips the number available. Queues start at 5.00am for admission at 1.30pm.

The service **was first broadcast in 1928 and continues annually today** live on BBC Radio 4. Since 1963 a shorter service has been filmed periodically for television. It is estimated that millions listen world-wide. Recordings of carols by Decca and EMI have also served to spread its fame. The main theme of the 9 lessons and carols is "...the development of the loving purposes of God ... seen through the windows and words of the Bible". Its broadcasts have become part of Christmas for many far from Cambridge. One correspondent wrote that he heard the service in a tent on the foothills of Everest; another in the desert. Many listen at home, busy about their own preparations for Christmas. Visitors from all over the world identify the Chapel as "the place where the Carols are sung". KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL was **begun by Henry VI in 1446** and is an important part of national heritage. It is famous for its architectural majesty and the extraordinary musical quality of the Choir. To attend this service or apply for a seat visit:

<http://www.kings.cam.ac.uk/chapel/ninelessons/index.html>

The first Christmas Card to Commercial Christmas Cards!

The first hand-written Christmas card was believed to have appeared in **1840**. However, in 1843 an Englishman Henry Cole too busy to write individual holiday greetings, commissioned John Horsley, a well

known London artist to design the first printed Christmas card. It was a three part painting with acts of charity on either side of a family having dinner in the center. 1,000 copies sold.

While a German immigrant, Louis Prang is said to have brought the idea of Christmas cards to America in 1875 by presenting a printed card with the words "Merry Christmas" accompanying a picture of Killarney roses. In **1915, it was Hallmark who introduced the first Christmas cards commercially**. 69% of people who send Christmas cards say they do so to help stay connected with family and friends. Today more than 2,200 Hallmark Christmas designs are produced by more than 100 Hallmark artists and writers annually.

Eastman Kodak began 'the home photograph' Christmas card in 1902.

Post Man tries to get a limit on how many Christmas cards can be sent per person!

In 1922 card sending to family and friends had become so popular that the postmaster of Washington, DC in the United States of America complained that he had to add 16 mailmen at Christmas to deal with the cards alone. He advocated for the number of cards a person could send to be limited by law: "I don't know what we'll do if this keeps on" he wrote. In the 19th century British Post Offices were so overflowing with Christmas mail that they were making deliveries of Christmas cards on Christmas mornings!

How Many Christmas Cards are Sent Annually?

Today in America the average house-hold mails 28 cards and receives approximately 28 cards in return. A total of more than **3 billion cards** are sent **annually** in the **USA** alone! 50% of greeting cards sent each year are made by Hallmark (largest manufacturer of cards in

USA) who estimate they sell 1.9 billion Christmas cards annually making Christmas the largest card sending occasion in the USA!

Popular “Robins” Deliver the Christmas Mail!

Popular in Victorian England was for the then **red uniformed postmen** to be affectionately called “Robins”. “Robins” were considered such an integral part of the joyous Christmas festivity that they were often depicted on the Christmas cards themselves as the deliverers of joy and goodwill!

First Christmas Postage Stamp

In 1898 the first Christmas stamp was released in Canada. While in Europe it was in Austria in 1937 that the first postage stamp to commemorate Christmas was issued. This was the beginning of a trend now seen around the world today where countries print special runs of their own unique creative stamps depicting Christmas each year. Many are collector items today!

Origin of Christmas Seals

Christmas seals were invented in 1903 by Einer Holboell, a Danish postal clerk. While sorting great piles of Christmas mail he had a sad heart thinking about those in need. He imagined parcels carrying an extra stamp and the money from the tens of thousands of stamps helping unfortunate children.

Supporting his idea was popular King Christian IX. He supported the idea by suggesting that the first issue of seals would have his and popular Queen Louise's picture as a sign that he and his wife fully endorsed the idea. In 1904 the seals went on sale and were a huge success. It was a time when drives for funds were almost unheard of. The Danes purchased more than four million stickers. All money

raised was decided to go to supporting the children in most distress, the thousands who were crippled by tuberculosis (a leading cause of death at this time). The first two "Christmas Seal" campaigns funded two hospitals for treatment of tuberculosis children which was a turning point in the world history of this disease. Denmark's neighbors, Norway and Sweden were the next to take on the Christmas seals to support the tuberculosis cause.

Then in 1907 Miss Bissell bought the idea to America in the hope of saving a sanatorium in Delaware, full of infectious patients from closing due to lack of funds. The first design was a simple wreath of holly in the brightest of red to be sold at a penny each. She was not fully supported as postal authorities would not allow postmen to sell the seals. She crusaded on with knock back after knock back until at last success came after a young columnist supported her idea and enlisted the support of his newspaper for the sales of the seals. The idea soon spread to Canada. Christmas seals are now used in over forty-five countries.

In 1927 it was agreed that the Christmas Seal campaign was to be the official method for tuberculosis associations to appeal to the public for funds. Today funds cover the whole field of respiratory illnesses. If you would like to support Christmas Seals visit:

http://www.lung.ca/involved-impliquez/christmas-noel_e.php

The Christmas Pie

Christmas festivities for hundreds of years always included mince pies. In the old days they were made of chopped pheasants, hares and partridges and were in an oblong shape of a cradle to represent the manger. As time went on sugar, apples, raisins and spices were added. It is believed that the crusaders bought spices with them from

the Holy Land which they suggested was appropriate to be added to the pie as **the spices were from Christ's native land**. Three spices (**cinnamon, cloves and nutmeg**) were chosen to be added to the recipe to represent the three gifts given to the Christ child by the Magi. Since the 16th century eating mince pies in Britain has been popular during Christmas. Today they still believe that to eat a mince pie on each of the "Twelve Days of Christmas" will bring 12 happy months to follow!

Goose Clubs

Long ago traditional meat for Christmas lunch in South England was goose. Goose Clubs emerged where poor people paid the local Goose Club a small amount from their weekly wage. At the end of the year they received a goose and could participate in celebrating with the favored dish of the day!

Local baker cooks the festive meat!

In the old days poor people did not have ovens. The prized Christmas meat was cooked at the local bakery. There were long rows of people lined up outside the bakery with their covered pots of meat (such as Goose or Turkey) in hand!

Candles

An old custom for children in Labrador was to receive gifts of candles at Christmas made of deer tallow stuck into turnips. They considered the candle a treat to be eaten! Later only the turnip was eaten.

A Tradition Almost Lost - The Christmas Eve Holy Supper

The Christmas Eve Holy Supper was once a central part of holiday celebrations for many families. Today its observance has dwindled. It is celebrated with varying customs in different countries. A very strict

24-hour fast traditionally precedes the Christmas Eve Holy Supper which begins after the sun has set. Members present are often sprinkled with holy water. Candles (which represent "Christ" as the "Light of the World") are lit at the table. Special foods are prepared consisting of 12 dishes, each representing one of the twelve apostles. Many families leave an empty spot at their dining table for the baby Jesus. In Poland it was customary to exchange gifts before eating Christmas Eve Holy Supper. This was not the case or the primary focus in other countries. The special foods play a greater importance.

The Declining Christmas Gubas Performance

A century long tradition declining today. Gubas performance consists of Orthodox Christian church male parishioners traveling to members of their parish both on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. In some regions it is performed on January 6th and January 7th depending on which calendar is followed. Dressed in costumes relevant to the manger scene, the Gubas in word and song tell the story of the birth of Jesus (similar to Christmas caroling where a group would travel from house to house bring the spirit of Christmas alive). Traditionally Gubas was performed in the Slavonic language. Many pastors a few decades ago developed English versions of their performance to appeal to younger parishioners who were not familiar with the Slavonic language. This contributed to keeping the Gubas tradition alive since participants didn't need to be bilingual anymore. The Gubas are essentially re-enacting the journey many people made in search of Jesus after they heard of his birth.

Movie "How the Grinch Stole Christmas"

Astoundingly there were nearly 2,000 candy canes, more than 52,000 Christmas lights and approximately 8,200 Christmas ornaments in this

visually enchanting Christmas movie made in 2000. It starred Jim Carrey and was based on the famous Christmas story by Dr Seuss.

Plum Pudding

Originally this popular Christmas sweet was established in England and dates back to the Middle Ages. It was made of plum porridge consisting of chopped cows tongues, meat broth, raisins and spices. The reason it was called "Plum Pudding" is because the word "plum" referred to putting all the ingredients into a cloth that is tied at the top, then boiled until the ingredients are "plum" which meant enlarged so that it would fill out the cloth. Once unwrapped it was sliced like a cake. Today it is still popular in many countries but the meat has gone and it is more like a sweetly spiced, heavily fruited moist cake usually warmed and eaten after the main festive meal.

Stir-up Sunday' Christmas Pudding Tradition

Christmas pudding was **traditionally made on the Sunday five weeks prior to Christmas day** and was coined "Stir-up Sunday". This Sunday pudding making day was looked forward to by all the members of the family and especially the children. Tradition was for **every family member to take a turn to stir the pudding as they made a wish**. It is a British Christmas tradition that a wish made while mixing the Christmas pudding will come true only if the ingredients **are stirred in a clockwise direction**.

Christmas pudding is also known as "Plum Pudding" and is traditionally eaten in Britain and Ireland as a desert on Christmas day. Recipes vary from family to family and often are guarded and handed down as prized recipes through the generations. The pudding generally has a dark appearance and is often black, thick in texture and full of nuts, raisins and suet and moistened with brandy while some recipes call for dark

beers such as stout! Today it is common practice to make Christmas pudding boiled in a cloth.

At the beginning of the 12th century puddings were prepared in basins to produce the traditional round shape on top that we know today. Once prepared, holly was placed around the pudding, it was drenched in more brandy or other alcohol and set alit as it was delivered to the Christmas table after the main meal. The entrance of the pudding was a most exciting event. Everyone would applaud or sing as it was delivered to the table. Later people added caster sugar sprinkled on top to resemble snow which is often associated with a winter Christmas.

Once upon a time a silver coin was placed in the mixture while stirring and it was commonly a sixpence. Once cooked and served, whoever found the coin was believed to have good fortune the following year especially in relation to wealth and money! The practice of placing coins in the pudding ceased once the production of "silver" coins ceased. No-one wanted to risk ruining the pudding or health with the new alloy coins. Later various types of trinkets were added for fun such as a wishbone for good luck! Due to concerns of health and safety it is not a practice that is commonly taken up today and for most families this practice of placing coins has now ceased. However you can now purchase pure silver (safe) coins for your pudding visit Christmas token designer Simone Walsh here:

http://www.etsy.com/view_listing.php?listing_id=536186

The Yule Log

The Yule log was part of the Winter Solstice festivals before it later became part of the 12 days of Christmas festivities.

It was once common that every home had a fire place. A practice that went on for centuries was for a great log to be placed and lit in the

main room of the home on Christmas night. Part of the Christmas “Yule Log” tradition was for the log to be lit from a piece of the “Yule Log” specially kept from the previous year. The log is kept burning for 12 nights until the “Twelfth Night” (January 6th end of the season) and to do this was considered to bring extra luck the following year.

Some believe the history of this tradition comes from the Celts who thought that the sun stood still during December because days grew shorter and shorter. They thought that burning the log for 12 days would persuade the sun to move again so the days could grow longer. The burning log itself was a symbol of the rebirth of the sun. They considered it very bad luck to let the log go out during this time. Other sources suggest that the origin of Yule log is associated with an ancient Scandinavian fertility god. They believe the large single log is representative of a phallic idol. Tradition states that this log was required to burn for twelve days and a different sacrifice to the fertility god had to be offered in the fire on each of those twelve days. **“Yule” is an old word for “winter festival”** which dates back to Viking times.

In earlier times Europeans sprinkled the Yule log with oil, salt and mulled wine before lighting it and saying a prayer. They believed that as long as the Yule log burned, the house would be protected from malevolent powers of the devil. The ashes that remained from the sacred Yule log were saved and over the year scattered over fields to bring fertility, used to help cure various sicknesses and protect the house from storms, lightning and demons. Families would sing as they together went to the forest to cut the Yule log. Their songs asked for blessings to be bestowed upon their crops and their flocks. The **popular custom** for the people of Provence was

to carry the log around the house three times before christening it with wine and setting it ablaze.

You may also hear “Yule logs” referred to as a log shaped chocolate cake. In France they call it “Bûche de Noël” and it is a classic French holiday desert at Christmas. For a free recipe by Martha Stewart visit:

http://www.marthastewart.com/portal/site/mslo/menuitem.fc77a0dbc44dd1611e3bf410b5900aa0/?vgnextoid=7130759a3ac0f010VgnVCM1000003d370a0aRCRD&autonomy_kw=Buche%20de%20Noel&rsc=ns2006_m1 or for another Buche de Noel recipe visit:

<http://allrecipes.com/Recipe/Buche-de-Noel/Detail.aspx>

Unique to America is a new tradition where a TV screen in one's home shows a video of an actual Yule log burning in a real fireplace. The video usually is accompanied by actual crackling fire sounds, Christmas music or both at the same time. This began in New York City in 1966 by Fred Thrower, former TV programming director. He wanted to offer a Yule log for the majority in New York City who had no fireplace of their own. It has been offered for several hours each year (on Christmas Eve and/or Christmas day) as a video greeting card to viewers and is syndicated across the USA. Many others have offered their own versions over the years on TV, and in all video formats. It is also is now available on DVD.

Snap- Dragon – an old Christmas Game Tradition

You have probably never heard of “snap-dragon” however it was popularly played on Christmas Eve and later on Christmas day. A plate would be piled high with raisins and other dried fruit then brandy was poured over it as the lights were turned off and a flame would set it alight. The game began. You had to snatch the fruit from the flames, blow out the flames and then eat the fruit. Accompanying the game was a “snap-dragon” song that sang the praises of being bold,

not greedy and you won't get stung!

Hot Cockles – Popular Medieval Christmas Game

"Hot cockles" was a popular game at Christmas in medieval times. It was a game where one player is blindfolded and asked to either kneel or lie face downward in the centre of the room. The other players take turns striking the blindfolded player with their hand who has to guess the name of the person delivering the strike. In later times it became more like a tap on the shoulder! When a person is guessed correctly, that person takes his/her turn blindfolded and the game continues. "Hot cockles" was still a Christmas pastime until the Victorian era.

Mistletoe Game – old Christmas Game

It was once common place to have a suspended Mistletoe hung in the main room especially before Christmas trees were popularized. For this game everyone would assemble in a circle around the Mistletoe. The first player (a male) has to slide a slipper and aim so it will land under the Mistletoe. If he fails another takes their turn. If he succeeds, even more fun begins as there is a scramble in the direction of the lady towards which the slipper points. She must seize the slipper and get away before being caught!

Famous People Born on Christmas Day:

- 1642 Sir Isaac Newton – (English) mathematician and physicist. Famous for his discoveries in gravitation, planetary motion, optics and the development of calculus.
- 1821 Clara Barton (nurse & founder of American Red Cross)
- 1887 Conrad Hilton (hotel magnate)
- 1899 Humphrey Bogart - An American film actor best known for his films *Casablanca* (1942) and *The African Queen* (1952).

- 1932 Little Richard – singer (Good Golly Miss Molly, Tutti-Frutti, Long Tall Sally, Lucille)
- 1945 Alice Cooper – theatrical singer/performer known for his best selling record "*School's Out*" which headed the music charts in July, 1972 and is still popular today!
- 1946 Jimmy Buffett (songwriter, singer)
- 1949 Sissy Spacek (Academy award-winning actress)
- 1954 Birth of pop singer Annie Lennox

Famous People who Died on Christmas Day:

- 1921 Hans Huber, composer dies at 69 years old.
- 1946 W. C. Fields - An American film comedian.
- 1977 Charlie Chaplin - An English, multi-talented film star.
- 1979 Joan Blondell actress (Real McCoys) dies at 70.
- 1979 Lee Bowman actor (Ellery Queen, Miami Undercover) dies at 64 years.
- 1980 Archbishop of El Salvador, Oscar Romero murdered
- 1983 Miro (Joan) Spanish surrealist dies at 90 years old
- 1995 Dean Martin singer/actor dies at 78 years old
- 1997 Denver Pyle actor (Dukes of Hazzard) dies at 77
- 1998 Bryan MacLean, rock & roll singer/guitarist The Birds