

# LESSON IN LIVING

## FAVORITE CHRISTMAS

Elma Allen Milano

My favorite Christmas was in 1934 when I was fourteen-years-old and living in Los Angeles, California. Why was it my favorite Christmas? It was special because it was the year I received an accordion, which launched me on my career and was a great source of satisfaction to me. Hopefully, my accordion and I have brought joy to others.

I first heard an accordion on our radio, which was new at the time. The happy, romantic sound enchanted me. I asked my Dad if I could have "one of those." He asked me how much I thought it would cost. I replied, "About thirty dollars." He replied, "Add another zero on to that." We were struggling to get by on Dad's policeman salary, so I never mentioned it again.

And then, guess what? The very next Christmas, there sat a little purple, 80-bass accordion under the tree. This launched me on my music career. It was as a professional accordionist that I met my future husband, Henri Milano, who was also a professional accordion teacher and performer. He had moved to Los Angeles from Salt Lake City, Utah. After our marriage, we operated the largest accordion studio in Los Angeles until he was inducted into the army during WWII.

In my parent's home, Christmas was a simple holiday. We never saw a single sign of it until we awakened Christmas morning. Mother decorated the tree and put up Christmas stockings by herself while we slept. We each received only one gift under the tree and a small treat in our stocking. In years prior to 1934, I remember receiving a doll one year, a tricycle another year and a bicycle in 1932.

We did not include aunts, uncles or cousins in our celebrations. Most of my folks' family members still lived in Arizona. Our own family lived a quiet, close life. My father never paid me a compliment or embraced me in his life. I knew when he was pleased because his cheeks would get rosy, and he would get tears in his eyes. My mother also never paid me a compliment, but she was a hard-working, intelligent, "straight arrow." I am so grateful for my heritage.

Now, here I am, a great-grandmother with thirty grandchildren and thirty great-grandchildren. One of my two brothers, George, passed away November 20th, after fifteen years of Alzheimer's. The week before that, my final uncle was also laid to rest, leaving me with one aunt. When she departs, I will be next in line to "graduate." 2005 has brought me a bevy of great-grandbabies. They are all healthy, beautiful, and truly a blessing.

Christmas brings me a special feeling of love and warmth. My children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren are very kind to me. A great-grandson asked me to write my favorite Christmas to share at his school. This epistle is the result of that request. It now gives me pleasure to share it with you. May God pour out His richest blessings on you and yours as we honor the birth of God's Precious Son, Jesus Christ.