

Betty Ann Johnson Zay Remembers:

I cherish so many wonderful memories, especially the 4th of July reunions and Christmas. I will share my Christmas memories for Christmastime was the most memorable time of all for me.

I remember **Christmas Eve**. Arriving late night after the long drive from Pensacola, the house was full. So I was told to crawl in the big bed in the sitting room. Many of you know that room was just inside the front door (of the front hallway). Somehow, when we awakened the next morning a roaring fire was blazing in the fireplace so the floor was warm to my bare feet, unlike the previous evening when I crawled into bed.

I remember **Christmas Day**. Across the hallway in the parlor (the 20' X 20' room just to the left of the Great Hallway) there stood **"the most enormous Christmas tree in the world."** Piled almost two feet high were presents wrapped in all kinds of Christmas colors. We checked the names on the packages - it was too hard to peek inside.

Hearing noises across the Great Hallway, we ran to the dining room. We were trying to get a glimpse of the turkey; but, instead we were amazed at the sight before us - the longest table you could ever imagine; all was set for the very special meal, *our Christmas Dinner*. On the sideboard thirty-two tall stemmed compotes were filled with vanilla pudding (Charlotte) each topped with a cherry. I learned later that *Charlotte* is a tradition.

After breakfast, the adults were becoming visible and it became evident that we were going to go someplace. It was a long drive to early Uncle Dave and Aunt Mae's for eggnog. The best part of the early morning adventure was exploring the attic and peeking into the blanket trunks. Back at Carol Villa Christmas dinner was beginning. I didn't know what was going on in the dining room because we cousins were all in the kitchen enjoying ourselves with many stories.

When we finally did open presents, I remember that it took a very long time! Grandmama's presents were so beautifully wrapped - but it wasn't the presents that made it so special, it was the *cousins!*

During the afternoon, we walked all the way to the mail box. Sometimes we would saddle Carmage and the lucky one got a horseback ride (sometimes we didn't even bother with a saddle).

Then later, at night, we cousins played "SMUT." I can't remember exactly how it was played, but I think that each time you didn't have the answer to the question, some one put SMUT on your face from an old burned out log in the fireplace. ☺