

# Fellowship Village residents share memories of past family holidays

By SANDY STUART  
Staff Writer

BERNARDS TWP. — For some Fellowship Village residents, the most vivid Christmas memories are those of their own childhoods long ago.

For others, the most unforgettable holidays occurred when they were serving in the military far from home, or when their own children were little.

The Christmas stories of some 65 residents were collected by resident Betty Frair as part of a holiday program at the continuing care retirement community.

Many of the stories involve family traditions: burning a bayberry candle for good luck, placing a miniature nativity scene at children's eye level in the middle of the Christmas tree, or creating an old-fashioned Christmas tree

with real candles instead of electric bulbs.

Some of the stories are about Christmas gifts received and given, the cherished ones as well as the disappointing ones. Some memories are of moments of great joy, while others have to do with making the best of a difficult situation.

The following is a small sampling of the Christmas memories.

## 'Outpouring Of Love'

For Bob and Helene Williams, the most memorable holiday was the one nearly 20 years ago when their house burned down a few days before Christmas.

Although it could have been a terrible Christmas, the Williamses said it ended up being the opposite because of the kindness of friends and strangers.

"The neighbors got a list from

us of all the Christmas presents we lost in the fire and, miraculously, within just two days before Christmas, purchased every gift that had gone up in flames," they recalled.

"We got two Christmas trees and all kinds of decorations — some of them homemade by children. Someone gave us a toaster, another gave us a radio — which we still use to this day." A little boy in the neighborhood sent a note with a quarter taped to it.

"We were overwhelmed by the outpouring-of love of the people in the neighborhood and the community — and half of them we didn't even know. It was a Christmas we will always remember ... and it could just be the best Christmas we ever had," they concluded.

## Lifelong Friend

All Christmas presents are not created equal. Some may be broken or discarded by children within days, while others become friends that last a lifetime.

Such is the case with the teddy bear that occupies a prominent place in Betty Boughton's living room at Fellowship Village.

She recalls that the cuddly

stuffed bear she named "Woofy Woof-Bear" was left under the tree for her when she was a little girl of about 4.

"Woofy quickly became my favorite," Boughton said. "He even attended college and has been loved by three generations. He sits in a child's antique captain's chair that was used by his admirers when they were small."

## Special Delivery

Dorothy McCoy said her best Christmas present was a little bundle of joy who arrived a bit earlier than expected.

McCoy said she and her husband were in the midst of a family Christmas Eve celebration at their home when she went into labor. The guests — her brother and his family — quickly departed.

"In no time at all, we were on the way to the hospital," McCoy remembered. "While my husband was registering me at the front desk, I was rushed up to the delivery room ... and in minutes, we were the proud parents of a bouncing baby boy who arrived just in time for Christmas."

The baby's name? "What else could be call him but Noel!" she said.