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## **Grandpa's Corner**

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by Randy Welch

Ho! Ho! Ho! Merry Christmas! I love saying that. It always brings to mind the things we used to do when I was just a kid. My Mom used to come up with some of the best ideas for decorating our house. We lived in the far northern piece of the Texas Panhandle. If you have ever been through those parts, you know that there is one thing that is in ample supply – tumbleweeds. Those round balls of dried up weed blew all over the place. Well, my Mom decided that she would just make use of these high rollers of the Plains. We gathered a few of the best looking tumbleweeds and brought them back to the house. She took out some cans of spray paint and commenced to paint some of those weeds. Once they were dry, we hung some little ornaments on them and set them out. Some we even hung from the ceiling! That may

sound silly to some, but it has stuck with me all of these years. Maybe it is because we did it together.

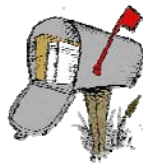
Speaking of being together, Mom came up with another project that involved the whole family. Where she got the idea I don't know, but she had us blow up a bunch of balloons – some small and some really big. We then took cotton twine – that's heavy string for those who might not know – and wrapped it all over each balloon. It wasn't solid wrapped. We left a lot of holes. Then, we took the balloons wrapped in string and dipped them in a thick mixture of laundry starch and water. We let the starch dry for a couple of days, and then we popped the balloons and carefully pulled them out through the openings in the twine. It left a shell of stiff twine that you could hang around the house. Some of them we put little ornaments inside. I hadn't thought about that in years; nor have I seen anything like them since.

When Christmas morning came at our house, I was always the first one up. I would run in and look under the tree to see what was there. Then I would wake up my kid sister and baby brother so we could go get Mom and Dad up. For some reason they always looked like they had just gone to sleep. Anyway, we kids would run to the tree and start looking for which gifts were ours. We didn't touch anything right then because we had one other tradition at Christmas. Daddy would take his Bible from next to his chair and read the story of another Christmas from long ago – the first Christmas. He read about a little baby and a manger and angels singing to some shepherds. It was the story of the gift that God gave to all mankind.

When Dad was finished reading, we would dive into the packages. After all the gifts were opened, we would eat breakfast and head for Grandma O'quin's house. My Mom had eight brothers and sisters, so there were always a lot of people there. We had our big meal there for lunch and later that afternoon, we would drive to Grandma Welch's house. Dad had nine brothers and sisters, so it was crowded there also – but we didn't mind. We were with family and that was what it was all about. There was always laughing and singing and lots of hugs. It didn't

matter who you were, when you walked through the doors of Grandma's house, you were family. I guess what it is all about is tradition – not musty old ritual, but time honored things that you look forward to when you are a kid and look back on fondly as you grow older. Traditions tie generations together with a golden thread of shared experiences. They create in each of us that are blessed with the privilege of having families of our own, a desire to build the same framework of anticipation and remembrance around our children and grandchildren. Tradition does not bind us, but rather it sets us free to create the unique tapestry of life that stretches across boundaries of time and space. It all started some 2,000 years ago in a little town called Bethlehem – and we continue to keep the tradition alive today.

Well, I guess that is about enough of an old man's ramblings. I need to start getting ready for Christmas at Grandpa's house. But first, I need to sit down and rest a while – if I can find where Grandma put my rocking chair. She's always moving things around at this time of year so she can put the decorations up. I hope she doesn't have it all covered up with wrapping paper and bows again. When she starts wrapping gifts, she sometimes gets a little carried away. Have a Happy Christmas and a blessed New Year. Now where is that chair?



Randy Welch is a freelance writer whose writings are meant to entertain, enlighten, and inspire. In addition to his other writings, he writes a daily inspirational article and a weekly worship thought, posted on his web site – [www.chronicworship.com](http://www.chronicworship.com).