



# THE YEAR THAT CHRISTMAS CAME TO STAY

By Lorraine Payette

Christmas is a wonderful time of year, a time where everything is important, especially getting out all those treasured decorations that turn our simple homes into magical fairylands.

Our house was certainly no different. My son and I worked together to make snowflakes and paper chains, popcorn and cranberry strings, personalized cards for all the important relatives, and creative wrapping papers out of newspapers and butchers' wrap. This was not a time to be stingy with glitter and glue, and the tinsel and sparkles flew everywhere, as he happily sang "Jiggle Bells!" for all the world to hear.

We had a wonderful collection of assorted ornaments and garlands from years past, in addition to a well-worn artificial Douglas fir tree and matching wreath. All of these special goodies were carefully pulled out of storage, and then piled high in the living room for sorting and assembly. Mulled cider helped add to the fun, and it was always okay to eat a few of the popcorns that just weren't big enough to string.

He had carefully pulled out and checked the garlands in all three colours, as well as having the lights all untangled and ready to go. They went on the tree first, and he would be the one to test everything. When you're five years old, that's a very important job, and he couldn't wait.

But first the other ornaments had to be checked, and the wreath had to be brought out. The wreath was almost as important as the tree itself – when you put it on the door, it made sure everyone knew that Christmas had come to your house.

He pulled the box with the wreath in it into the middle of the room. It was old and dusty, but all good treasures are hidden in uninspiring places. He carefully lifted off the top, and then stopped. A look of complete awe and joy came over his face.

"Oh, wow, Mum, look!" Curled up comfortably inside the centre of the wreath was a small kitten. It lifted its head and blinked at him. Within seconds, kitten and boy were wrapped in an enormous hug. "We're keeping him," my

son said. "His name is Christmas."

We never did find out where the kitten had come from or how it had got into the box, but it was obvious that Christmas had come to stay. There was just no question after one look into those two sets of big bright eyes.

Time passed, and kitten and boy grew like weeds. It didn't take long for the cat to be known as Mussy, and he and my son were inseparable. Wherever the boy went, so did Mussy. Whatever the boy did, Mussy tried to participate. Anything from homework to treks out in the fields and forest, they were together.

Mussy was part of our family for 18 years. The day he passed on was hard on both of us, but we knew he had had a good life, one filled with joy and comfort in his forever home.

We buried him under a fir tree near where he and my son used to play, and from the tips of those branches, I take cuttings to add to my wreath. You can still feel him there, curled up in the centre, just waiting to find his boy and to make Christmas come to stay. [LH](#)