

## Christmas Is For Sharing

by Richard Warner

I knew that Homer had wanted canyon boots for as long as I could remember. He was eleven and I ten, and we had spent many nights under the blue quilts at the cabin talking about how great it would be to have some real boots--boots that would climb through thorny bushes, that would ward off rattlesnakes, that would nudge the ribs of the pony; we had planned the kind of leather they should be and what kind of decoration they should have. But we both knew it was just talk. The depression had been hard on Father's business, and even shoes for school were usually half soled hand me downs.

Christmas that year had promised as always to be exciting, though mainly because of the handmade things we'd worked on in school for our parents. We never had money to spend on each other, but we had caught early in our lives a sort of contagion from our mother. She loved to give, and her anticipation of the joy that a just right gift would bring to someone, infected our whole household. We were swept up in breathless waiting to see how others would like what we had to give. Secrecy ruled--open exaggerated secrecy, as we made and hid our gifts. The only one whose hiding place we never discovered was my Grandmother's. Her gifts seemed to materialize by magic on Christmas morning and were always more expensive than they should have been.

That Christmas I was glowing because Mother had been so happy with the parchment lamp shade I'd made in the fourth grade, and Father had raved over the clay jewelry case I had molded and baked for him. Gill and Emma Lou had been pleased with the figures I'd whittled out of clothes pins, and Homer had liked the Scout pin I'd bargained for with my flint. Then Grandma started to pass out her presents.

Mine was heavy and square. I'd been in the hospital that year and then on crutches, and I'd wondered how it would be to have an erector set to build with. Grandma had a knack at reading boys' minds, and I was sure that's what it was. But it wasn't. It was a pair of boots, brown tangy smelling leather boots.

I looked quickly to Homer's package. His was a sweater. He'd needed one all fall. I wanted to cover my box before he saw what it was. I didn't want the boots; they should have been his. He came toward me, asking to see, and I started to say, "I'm sorry, bruv."

But he was grinning, and he shouted, "Hey everybody--look what Richard's got." He swooped the boots out of the box, fondled them like treasure, and then sat on the floor at my feet to take off my half soled shoes and put on the brand new boots.

I don't remember how the boots felt, nor even how they looked. But Christmas rang in my soul because my brother was glad for me.

