

VAL MORLEY

For me Christmas cannot be separated from Tiona. I have a wealth of Christmas/Tiona memories. My mother took my brother and me as young children. It was a great adventure. First the taxi ride, an unheard of extravagance, to Central rail station. The Newcastle Flyer train trip and then the bus that went through Bulladelah where supplies were purchased by families, then onto Tiona. If there were not enough seats for the children we would sit on bundles in the aisle. This became the my Christmas/Tiona journey for the rest of my life, until recent years, although the transport mode changed significantly. To draw out a Christmas memory, from the many, I recalled a time as a child. We always celebrated Santa and my brother and I hung our pillow slip at the end of our bed. This particular year John had stated very firmly that Santa would bring him a fishing Rod. This was way beyond my mother's war widow pension. John had loved going to the beach and watching the men fish. Christmas morning there was no fishing rod. After awhile John got up and went to the front of the tent, and there stood a rod and reel. I think the entire camp heard his yells for joy. We never did find out who the special Santa was. Just one of the many wonderful memories of my Christmas/Tiona memories.

JANINE STOCKHAM

When I think of Christmas I remember so many joyful memories from the past, from nativity plays at church and skylarks to being scared Santa would see I'm awake and not leave any presents. As I got older we had some fabulous Christmas's at My Aunt and Uncles banana plantation in Grassy Heads with heaps of relatives.

When I had children of my own some of the best Christmas's started with my best friends on Xmas Eve, one of us would dress as santa and we would travel around in our van to where we knew kids were and santa would throw lollies out the sunroof. Then Christmas morning I was the first awake and still am, I would wake the kids and they would open their santa sacks, then we would leave at 6am to our friends and the kids would have even bigger santa sacks from them, a bacon and eggs breakfast and some games then back to mum and dads for lunch and more presents and then my family would join my husbands family for Christmas dinner and more presents. This was a tradition that lasted for years. We always played Xmas carols and watching both lots of carols by candlelight. One year at Tiona the 3 kids sang a baby Jesus song and A Xmas tree song and I was so proud of them. What I loved most was watching the joy on peoples faces when they opened their presents especially the children.

Christmas changes with time the children got older and not so into Christmas but then the wheels changed with the arrival of grandchildren and it brought back all the joy, love and peace that comes with Christmas and makes the day special as it is much more fun giving than receiving and the prawn, chicken, ham and salad lunch is not as big an effort as the roasts used to be.

Each Xmas Eve my gift is the gift of blood which I like to do regularly anyway.

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