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RAY & JUDY BURDEKIN

As long as we can remember, Christmas as a family celebration has always been an important event in our growth and development of important values. This tradition continued as an integral part of our married life. To maintain its importance we soon learnt that in our situation, the exact date of the celebration was not as important as the spirit of gathering, when ever held, attested to its value.

Due to our employment, a bonus for Christmas has been, sharing this remembrance of the Lord Jesus with folk as they gathered for their renewal at a reunion over many years. It was with joy and happiness we were able to meet people arriving, expectant, and joyful as they anticipated the coming experience of sharing together. For us the location greatly varied from Huia Vale in New Zealand, Grace Valley in Adelaide, Tallebudgera & Koonjewarre at Springbrook in Queensland, Mountain Hut in Victoria, and Tiona in New South Wales. Christmas at Reunion for us, was always enriching and inspiring as we gathered, shared, and worshiped in the name of our Saviour.

PAMELA THOMPSON

The Christmas season is now upon us. I relate more to the idea of "Christmas the Season" because it is so much more than the day itself. I believe Christmas has a different meaning depending on the seasons of your life, Christmas as a child; as a young woman, as a mother, and now as a senior person, now in my ninety-third year, I have seen many Christmas seasons come and go. Sometimes the season would begin with lots of cooking, preparing fruit cake a month before, then peanut biscuits and all the preparations for family gatherings. Then of course there were times festive decorations were essential, attending church events, shopping for presents and then the massive job of packing to go away for a month. A constant during the years was that Christmas always involved a journey, and I could always relate to the Mary and Joseph Christmas story of their long and arduous journey to Egypt. My family travelled to Tiona in the early days crossing rivers by punt and traveling in the Summer heat, the car was not the only thing that got overheated, between broken fan belts and punctures sometimes the journey would take days. Later as a mother with

three toddlers living under canvas at Tiona in very Spartan conditions along with five hundred other campers celebrating Christmas together in loving community, those Christmases were some of the best times of my life. The Christmas season is now filled with memories collected over many, many years, precious and colourful as the Christmas lights that Bob, my husband would spend trying to fix every year. The laughter that once echoed around our table is somewhat muted as in this season of my life there are less plates set out to share. This year will bring some family together and one or two old friends during the Christmas season and a lot of time will be spent looking at photo albums by myself. My Christmas "journey" this year, will be one that I take in my mind's eye, but what wonderful memories and precious friends to be remembered, it is a bittersweet time of the year. Whilst the Christmas season is a little tinged with some sadness at the loss of many friends and family, especially my twin sister Patricia, I still have many moments of joy, and I am very grateful, which reminds me how grateful I am that I still have my teeth, so I can go and enjoy another peanut biscuit. Merry Christmas!



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