Tam's Front Porch Ponderings
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Santa's Best Helper

Christmas traditions are as unique as snowflakes, no two are alike. One house may celebrate on Christmas Eve, while another gathers on Christmas Day. Some have turkey, some serve ham and one family I know of, sits down to hot roast beef sandwiches with mashed potatoes, gravy and Cole slaw. Once finished, they each wash their platters and take them home. The Lady of the House shops all year, searching antique stores for vintage platters with one of a kind designs, then these platters become part of her families Christmas gift.

Our family has its traditions too, we come together for Christmas brunch at Mom's. With some of us still in our pajamas, we enjoy country ham and biscuits, a hot pot of coffee and our daughter's sinfully delicious, bread pudding. We linger over a big cup of Spice Tea and talk about what we'll eat for supper! And, sadly, there is one tradition we will not celebrate this year.

Years ago when Sarah Beth was just a little girl, right before Christmas, there came a knock at our door. As Corky opened it Sarah's eyes grew wide when a 'right jolly ol' elf' stepped into our living room. With a friendly "Ho, Ho, Ho," he began fumbling in the large bag he carried and drew out a candy cane for her. Warming himself by our fire, he winked at me as he explained to Sarah Beth he was one of Santa's Helpers and was checking on all the little boys and girls in the neighborhood. Dressed all in fur, from his head to his feet, I had no idea who could pull off such a treat. Then *to my wondering eyes it appeared, it was our neighbor Lee Hamblin, come to spread Christmas cheer!*

For years, Lee made his yearly visit. Sarah Beth grew older, and then, joined by her brother Dylan, they looked forward to our Christmas guest. Before long our family grew and Santa's helper made an appearance at Mom and Dad's each Christmas Eve where he passed out candy canes and shared his Christmas cheer with the six Muncie grandchildren.

One year Dylan came to me after such a visit, I think he was five years old.

"Mom?" he asked, "that man doesn't have a sleigh does he?"

"No sweetie, he drives his car," I told him.

"Does he visit lots of boys and girls?" he asked.

"Oh yes, lots and lots," I assured him.

Without saying a word, he went to his piggy bank and brought back a five dollar bill. Then he took me by surprise when he said, "Mom, help me write a letter to Santa's helper. Tell him here's some gas money to help him out and tell him I said, "thank you," for coming to my house."

My heart filled with pride as I wrote my son's letter and Dylan printed his name. We carefully sealed and stamped it and placed it in our mailbox. Years later, Lee told me he had saved the letter and planned to give it to Dylan when he got married. Sadly, that will never happen.

As I sit here, watching the snow fall, I miss Santa's helper and his simple gift of a candy cane that made a lasting impression in the lives of the Muncie grandchildren. He passed away this year and although he won't warm himself by our fire, he will always warm our hearts.

In loving memory of Santa's Best Helper, Lee Hamblin.

The Muncie Grandchildren Christmas 2005 with Santa's Helper, Lee Hamblin
Left to right, back row, Kelsey O'Hair, Taylor O'Hair, Dylan Terry. Front, Scarlett O'Hair, Santa's Helper Lee Hamblin, Jon O'Hair, and Sarah Beth Terry.

ESTILL COUNTY SCHOOLS MENUS

Milk is included with every meal; plus assorted juices included with breakfast

MONDAY Dec. 16	TUESDAY Dec. 17	WEDNESDAY Dec. 18	THURSDAY Dec. 19	FRIDAY Dec. 20
SOUTH IRVINE BREAKFASTS				
Breakfast Pizza Assorted Juice	Sausage & Biscuit Applesauce	Cereal & Toast Assorted Juice	Cereal & Toast Assorted Juice	Pop Tarts Cereal
SOUTH IRVINE LUNCHES				
Fish on Bun French Fries Slaw Oranges	Pizza Corn Cucumber Slices w/Dip Peaches	Sloppy Joe on Bun Mashed Potatoes Green Beans Applesauce	Ravioli w/Breadstick Romaine Salad Glazed Carrots Mandarin Oranges	Chicken Fajita w/Shell Salsa Refried Beans Fruit Cocktail
ESTILL SPRINGS & WEST IRVINE BREAKFASTS				
Funnel Cake Assorted Juice	Biscuit & Sausage Assorted Juices	Mini Pancakes Assorted Juice	Toast, Cereal Assorted Juice	Pop Tart, Cereal Assorted Juices
ESTILL SPRINGS LUNCHES				
Taco with Shell or Deli Turkey Wrap Let./Tom/Cheese Refried Beans Pears	Pizza Corn Broccoli Bits Grapes	Hamburger on Bun Let../Tom./Pickles Baby Bakers Apple	Chili w/crackers Peanut Butter Sandwich Carrots/Dip Banana	Hot Dog/Bun Chips Dill Pickle Spears Pork & Beans Mixed Fruit
WEST IRVINE LUNCHES				
Taco with Shell or Deli Turkey Wrap Let./Tom/Cheese Refried Beans Pears	Pizza Munchable Marinara Sauce Broccoli Bits Grapes Mini Rice Krispie	Nacho Cheese & Chips or Bologna Sandwich Chips, Salsa Carrot Sticks	Ham/Roll Mashed Potatoes Green Beans Apple Crisp Ice Cream	Hot Dog/Bun Chips Dill Pickle Spears Pork & Beans Mixed Fruit
ESTILL COUNTY MIDDLE SCHOOL BREAKFAST				
Blueberry Mini Muffins, Pop Tarts Yogurt	Sunrise Flat Bread, Cinnamon Toast, Pop Tart	Sausage Biscuit Applesauce Juice	Funnel Cake Cereal Assorted Juices	Reece's Puff Cereal, Pop Tarts Assorted Juices
ESTILL COUNTY MIDDLE SCHOOL LUNCH				
Big Daddy Pizza or Chicken Quesadilla Romaine Salad Carrot Sticks Oranges	Corn Dog or Stromboli on Bun Baby Bakers Cauliflower Grapes	Chicken Rings w/Biscuit or Bologna Sandwich Corn Steamed Broccoli Peaches	Ham w/Roll Mashed Potatoes Green Beans Cooked Apples	Cheeseburger or Deli Turkey on Bun Let./Tom./Pickles Baked Beans Potato Wedges
ESTILL COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL BREAKFAST				
Cereal Pop Tarts Yogurt	Sausage Biscuit, Cereal, Yogurt Banana or Apple	Chicken Biscuit Cereal, Pop Tart, Yogurt, Fruit	Egg & Cheese Biscuit, Cereal Pop Tart, Yogurt	Breakfast Pizza Cereal Pop Tarts
ESTILL COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL LUNCH				
Chicken Pattie on bun or Chicken Quesadilla Steamed Broccoli and Cheese Salsa, Fruit	Spaghetti w/meat sauce, breadstick Romaine Salad Grape Tomatoes Apple or Orange	Buffalo Chicken Tenders, Texas Toast or BBQ on bun, Corn Glazed Carrots Pears, Apple	Ham, Rolls Green Beans Mashed Potatoes Cooked Apples Peaches	Corn Dog or Fish on Bun Baked Beans Potato Wedges Pineapples Applesauce

Letters to Santa,

There's still time for children ages 0 to 12 to send a letter to Santa. Just write the message below and be sure we receive it no later than **Monday, December 16th** order that it can be published in our special Christmas Edition on **Wednesday, December 18th**

But hurry! Santa can't wait much longer!

Dear Santa,

_____

_____

_____

_____

Parents' Names _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Signature of Parent or Guardian _____

Mail Santa Letters to: The Estill County Tribune
6135 Winchester Road, Irvine, KY 40336
or send by e-mail to <News@EstillTribune.Com>

Santa's Little Angels

For kids ages 0 to 17 To be published in color Wed., Dec. 25th
Just send by mail or bring any size, quality photo (disk preferred)
no later than Friday, Dec. 20th
$10.00
Photos may be Emailed
But payment must be made by Dec. 20th

CODY SMITH
Son of Jake and Melinda Smith
We Love You, Merry Christmas!
Grandparents: Ralph & Millie

Child's Name _____

Parents' Names _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Six word message _____

Signature of Parent or Guardian _____

Mail early or bring with $10 payment by
Friday, December 20th
The Estill County Tribune, 6135 Winchester Road,
Irvine KY 40336