

The Memoirs of

Louise Andrus Knapp

Christmas 2006

The rocking horse story



To Louise
Dec. 25, 2006



To Louise Andrews

Christmas 1944

Sorry its late.

Santa Clause

May the peaceful spirit of the season
light your way throughout the new year

SANTA RETURNS

by Bernie

Twas Christmas Day, 2006, Early in the morning Grandma returned from a graveyard shift of work to find a large box neatly wrapped in front of the mantel in the living room. As she entered the room she asked, where did that package come from? Her husband didn't know. A daughter came into the room, and seeing the box asked the same question. No one knew. When the box was examined there was a tag attached which read: To Louise (grandma's name) from Santa. Open in front of the family. It had been a tradition in her home to draw names among the family members and gather and open the gifts on the evening of Christmas Day. All that day as family members arrived the same question was asked over and over again...Where did that package come from? That evening when all family members were present the opening of presents began with the presents for the children being opened first from the youngest to the oldest. After all of the children had opened their presents then the adults began to open their presents also from the youngest to the oldest. So the suspense lasted until grandma's turn came. Only grandpa was left.

Borrowing a knife from a family member grandma began cutting away tape and box flaps until the wrapping was off and the box flaps were loosened. When the lid was fully open there was a sea of styrofoam packing peanuts. Reaching gingerly into the box grandma's hand came upon a small round handle. She lifted it up through the loose nuts. Two small furry ears emerged and a rounded forehead with eyes and a mane between the ears. She stopped lifting it up and began to cry. In her mind she had an instant flashback. She knew it was a rocking horse. She also instantly knew the source of the gift, the giver and the heartfelt bond between the giver and herself.

She then brought the furry little spotted horse from its box and placed it on the floor in front of the box. It was elaborate! Shiny black mane and tail, a small brown leather saddle with matching martingale and bridle and shiny silver stirrups. A furry white pony with patches of brown spots, (a paint pony) on a nice pair of dark brown wooden rockers. It would have been a prize possession for almost any small child on this special holiday.

Just as everyone was gazing in wonder someone noticed a tag fastened to one of the legs. She removed it, opened it and read: To Louise Andrus (her maiden name)

Christmas 1944
Sorry I'm so late,
Love Santa

Now she cried even more. As tears welled in her eyes she told all of us she knew it came from her son, Joseph who lives with his family in California and was unable to come to be with the family in Utah this year.

Now, the background of this story. When Louise was 4 years old she accompanied her mother to the home of a relative at Christmas time. A cousin had a beautiful rocking horse. It appeared bold and handsome as the carousel horses she'd seen at the Merry-go-round at the State Fair. As she gazed at the beautiful horse she thought Oh, how I would love such a horse! But then she realized her parents could never afford such a horse. But then she thought...Oh, but Santa brought this one. Here is my chance. Surely, if Santa brought a horse to her cousin he

could bring one to her.

Next year she wrote to Santa. She asked for one gift only, a rocking horse, just one request. When she went off to bed on Christmas Eve she dreamed about it and then fell comfortable to sleep.

That night in the little farm house where Louise lived, her mother was very concerned knowing that in her letter to Santa she had made only one request. After the smaller children were tucked into bed her mother was nervous and told her father of her concern since no rocking horse was there to put out as a gift. Her father happened to have a bad cold and chills that night but finally asked the oldest daughter if she would go out into the farm yard and bring in some boards and some of his tools. She did and they fashioned a horse from rough lumber gathered from the yard. Working late and into the wee morning hours, a tail of real horse hair was made and fastened with a fence staple to the end of the board used for the body. Then her sister painted it and it was placed next to the kitchen stove to dry.

Morning came. The children came into the front room and looked around. Louise spotted the rocking horse nearly hidden from sight next and nearly behind the stove. Her first reaction was a stunned look of disappointment. It was nothing like the horse she had seen at her cousin's house the year before. Even though her heart sank, she knew that in her family people acted brave and mature. They didn't whine, complain or feel sorry for themselves. She somehow realized this even at the tender age of five years and displayed no frown, took possession of her tender feelings and ran to the horse. Then one more surprise...she couldn't ride it until the paint dried!

In the days, weeks and years following, she crossed many a meadow and over hills and streams and on and on into many a sunset. She had a pair of hand me down sheep skin chaps and a cap gun. She would ride her little wooden horse and shout, "Buckin Reybold"

She had told the story to her son, Joseph a few years ago. He had asked to hear the story repeated a few times since then. He was perhaps the only member of her family that had been intrigued by the story. Hence, the first thoughts that flooded into her mind when she saw the ears, the mane and the forehead of the little pony emerging from the box was "This is a rocking horse from Joseph and it is a message of love from his heart to mine."

Since none of the other members of the family knew anything about how the box got into the house which was locked, and Joseph finally admitted he had seen the horse but had not told any of his siblings...it leaves one thing clear: Santa did deliver!

This part was told to us
by Erma

Account of Rocking Horse to Louise
from Joseph & Merri
2006

From: louiseknapp@comcast.net
To: Andrus <rockhaven@3rivers.net>
CC: louiseknapp@comcast.net
Subject: Re: Louise and her Awesome Christmas
Date: Wednesday, December 27, 2006 2:23:00 AM

December 27, 2006

Ben,
Would you like to send this out to your email list?

My awesome Christmas

I got off of work at 7am Christmas morning and got home about 20 minuets later.

When I arrived home there was a huge box in my living room in front of the fireplace. It was all wrapped in Christmas wrapping paper.

A note on it said, "To Louise from Santa Clause. Open in front of the family."

Soon Kathy entered the room and asked about the package. I told her I didn't know anything about and had supposed that she and the other kids at home (Shaun, and Tim) had worked together to surprise me. She said she didn't know anything about it.

Next Bernie entered and asked me about the box. He claimed he also didn't know anything about it. He said that he had been up late and didn't see how the box got there. The front door had been locked. (The garage door was not locked).

Shanna said that Lisa had come over at 1:30 am. Shanna had let her in the house and there was no box at that time.

We began to speulate as to who had brought the box. I decided it was a conspiracy between Joseph and Shaun. Shaun came into the room and denied any knowledge of the box and how it got here. Tim also claimed he didn't know any thing about it.

I tried to estimate how big the box was.

I called
Joseph ~~called~~ on the phone for Christmas. He denied knowing any thing about it. I described the box to him and Tim said, "The way you tell it the box is growing." So I got a tape measure. The box was 36 in x 26 in 20 inches.

We tried to guess what was in the box. Kathy said she hoped it was a son-in-law. The big box was the subject of conversation and fun all day.

That evening the family gathered for a meal and gift exchange. We took turns from youngest to oldest. When it was my turn to open the box I made a big deal of getting the wrapping paper off and the tape cut etc. When I got the box open all I saw was a huge box full of styro-foam packing peanuts.

I reached in to feel what was there. My hand touched a wooden handle. I took ahold of it and began to lift it out. First emerged ears and then a forehead. At that moment I knew with a flash of insight that it was a rocking horse and that it was from Joseph as a message of love from his heart to my heart. I began to cry.

I knew it was Joseph who sent it because he had taken special interest in a story from my childhood that I had shared with him a couple of years ago. Here is the story. Ken remembers this too.

When I was a young child, (probably age 4) we went to Ralph Winterton's home on Christmas night for a visit. Dee who was about a year older than I, had gotten a rocking horse from Santa. The horse was absolutly beautiful. It was like horses on a merri-go-round. It was flashy and had a black leather saddle and bridle on it. They were decorated with sliver metal spots like fancy Hollywood cowboys had on their saddles. To me that rocking horse was as beautiful as if it had belonged to Roy Rogers himself.

I knew that my parents could not afford a rocking horse like that BUT this horse was from Santa. So here was my chance. Next Christmas I asked for a rocking horse.

I got up Christmas morning and went into the living room and there was my rocking horse. It was short. Its body was a 4x4 chunk of wood. Its legs were 1x4s. Its head was made from a 1 inch plank. Its rockers were made of a plank and sawed in the shape of a crescent on the bottom. It was absolutly nothing compared to the one Dee Winterton had. My hear sank. But only for a split second. I did not cry, complain, or even feel sorry for myself for more than a second. I was however still disappointed because I had to wait for a while to ride it as its paint was still wet.

I had a wonderful time with that rocking horse. I rode it and rode it. I had some sheep skin chaps that I think had been Ken's, a cap gun, and I think I also had a cowboy hat.

I rode and rode and rode my horse in the kitchen while Mom was cooking, cleaning, and washing dishes. I would ride the horse, shoot my cap gun and yelled, "Buckin Ryebold"

I rode it out side in summer. I put our army pack saddle on it. The gap in the pack saddle just fit on the 4 in, body of my horse. I think I rode that horse 100,000 miles. I loved it.

After the initial shock of not having the kind of beautiful rocking horse that Dee Winterton had, I never felt bad about my horse. I don't know if I could have had any more heart fulfilling experiences on a more beautiful horse or not but I doubt it.

Now back to Christmas 2006. As I pulled the cute rocking horse out of the box, I immediately knew it was from Joseph because of this story. That is why I cried. Then some one handed me the card that was attached to the horse's leg. It read, "To Louise Andrus. Christmas 1944. Sorry I'm a late. Love Santa Clause". Of course that just made me cry all the more.

The other family members in the room seeing how touched I was were also touched and many of them cried also.

We still kept wondering how the big box got into our living room. Many family members speculated. We had many guesses. We thought that Jess had to be involved because we thought that the box was too big to fit into a car so it would have come in Jess's truck. All of the family members denied knowing anything about it.

The next day after I told Joseph that the instant I saw the ears and forehead I knew it was a rocking horse and that it was a message of love from his heart to my heart, admitted that he and Merri had picked out and bought the horse. He said however that the other kids were correct. They did not have anything to do with it. Joseph said the even though he and Merri picked out the horse, it was Santa who delivered it.

We can not figure out how the box got to our house. Honestly, I am content to leave it at that. It brought back the magic of Christmas as a child and the magic of being an adult and experiencing Christmas and Christ and His love. After all it is Christ's love that touches us and it is often through the actions of His children that He blesses the lives of others of His children. He did that for our family this Christmas. Thanks be to Him for everything.

Louise Andrus Knapp