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Christmas memories

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Everyone has that favourite Christmas memory.

Maybe it was that time you really did find a Red Ryder Carbine Action 200 shot Range Model air rifle under the Christmas tree and your mother warned you to be careful or you'd shoot your eye out.

Maybe it was that one white Christmas when all of your relatives ? aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins, everyone ? could make it out, and for that one day you were all together before you all went on with your lives and you would only see them occasionally when someone married or died.

I have many memories of the season with family and a big feast with a turkey and all the trimmings and exchanging gifts.

There is one Christmas memory that stands out in my mind. It has nothing to do with presents or singing carols or greeting relatives I hadn't seen since last year.

It really is a just a moment in time that captured the essence of the season and a short period in life that will never be repeated.

It was late December, only a couple of days before Christmas day. I was a student living in the big city and still marveling at moving to a metropolis that was all new to me and it was an exciting place in an exciting time.

I had a tall blonde girlfriend with legs that went from here to there and back again and a group of newly minted friends from college.

School was over for the semester and as a last fun day out before leaving town, my girlfriend, her friend, and my roommate decided to head downtown to take in the sights and sounds of a big bustling city frantically trying to get all those last-minute things done before the big day.

We had lunch in a restaurant then enjoyed an afternoon of watching events on the street and visiting different stores on the Yonge Street strip.

Our last stop was at one of the big music stores that use to have a prominent place in the retail line-up with the huge neon signs that would light up the sidewalk below.

A while later, we walked back out to the street. I had two new record albums tucked under one arm and my girlfriend's arm linked through the other.

It had started to snow. The air was calm and still and the snowflakes were huge. They floated silently to earth transforming the streetscape into a giant snow globe.

We stopped at a street corner, and for just a moment we all stood there quietly while these giant snowflakes landed on our shoulders and in our hair, and other people passed around us oblivious to the four strangers.

This was where we all went our separate ways.

We were each off to our own home towns for the holidays. We all had a subway or a train to catch ? all in different directions ? although my trip was just to pick up my car. Even then I managed to keep my independence with a set of wheels.

We said our goodbyes and dispersed with the usual best wishes for the holidays.

A couple of weeks later, my roommate, finally giving in to the home sickness and inability to live on his own that made his life as a student miserable, quit school and went back to his family home. My girlfriend's friend went back to her hometown in the Niagara Peninsula and never returned.

A few months later, my girlfriend and I called it quits and she started a new job in another town.

I never saw any of them ever again.

It is a memory of a time that just happened to be during the holiday season but it represents a point in life you will never get back.

We were students and living life by flying at the seat of our pants.

No money, no mortgage, no kids, no spouse, no real job responsibilities. In fact other than keeping your grades up there were no responsibilities at all.

It was a time when friends came easy, parties happened at the drop of a hat, and all the girls I knew were single.

You never realized at the time, just how good you had it.

As much as these really were the ?good old days' and some of the best years of my life, I like to think of the Carly Simon song that says ?these' ARE the good old days with thoughts of what is still to come.

Merry Christmas to all!