

Time for Wonder and Wishing: It's Christmas

I sat silently across the room, watching my 3-year-old granddaughter as she turned the pages of the J. C. Penney Christmas catalogue. Unaware of my presence, she was softly whispering the names of the hundreds of marvelous items pictured in the big "wish book" that lay across her lap.

"Fuzzy bear, rocky horse, bubble gum machine, roller skates, fire truck ... "

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I was mesmerized. Kristin's bright blue eyes twinkled as she placed her stubby little finger on each picture.

"Cinderella doll, red wagon, Big Bird, tricycle ... "

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I listened carefully. Is it so wrong to wish? I'm not sure I ever really believed in Santa Claus. But it was fun to wonder. And to wish. Each year, early on Christmas Eve, Daddy took us downtown. The main street, only three blocks long, ended at the park.

Pretty soon the city fire truck, siren howling, would arrive as the grand finale to the Christmas parade. Mr. O'Malley, who owned the restaurant, always dressed up like Santa Claus and rode on the back of the truck. He carried a big bagful of hard candy and Cracker Jack boxes. Each child present, no matter how poor, got something.

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