I've Kept It All These Years

METAL COOKIE CUTTERS are the ones I have kept since 1958, when I got married and made my first batch of holiday cookies. I'm still baking cookies with them. Last year, I used the gingerbread man and the Christmas tree for frosted and decorated cookies that didn't last long in this household.

—Arline N., Goffstown, New Hampshire

SANTA, SLEIGH AND REINDEER have been in my family since the 1930s. It became a tradition for my mother to fill the sleigh with little gifts for everyone who was at the dinner table on Christmas Day. She passed the set on to me, and I played Santa for many years. Even though the reindeer have lost some antlers and Santa is looking worn, I treasure them and will pass them on.

—Shirley W., Sarasota, Florida

PLASTER OF PARIS DOG is the only Christmas present I received in 1929. Every year at Christmas, I place it under the Christmas tree to remind me of how much better off I am now than back in those days. I think that this is a gift from Watkins for our family's buying so much from that company.

—Wayne J., Greenfield, Indiana

CRECHE has been in our home since 1949, the first year that my husband, Luigi, and I were married. He made the stable out of twigs he picked up in the woods near our home. My grandmother gave me the money for the figurines, and I went to the Giant Store to buy them. The prices are still marked on the bottoms of the figurines; the camels were 25¢, while other pieces sold for 5¢ and 10¢. Some are chipped, but every year they have a place of honor in my home.

—Aline A., Whittier, California

SALT AND PEPPER SHAKERS were a gift to my mother in '21.

That fall, when I was 6, my older sister and I used to visit Mrs. Bee, an elderly woman who had a gift shop in her home in our hometown of Cowen, West Virginia. We would visit regularly and look at a beautiful set of salt and pepper shakers that we wanted to buy for our mother for Christmas. We saved our pennies until we had the 25¢ to make the big purchase. Our mother cherished them, and now they're one of my most prized possessions.

—Virginia W., Charleston, West Virginia

TREE VILLAGE was made by my father in 1932, when my parents were expecting their first child, my older brother, in December. Dad got busy making streetlights for under the tree from jar lids and other things and a fence to go around the tree from branches he cut from a tree. I still use these under my tree today because I always feel like a part of my dad is still with me when I get the Christmas decorations out.

—Patty G., Weirton, West Virginia

AN ORANGE is the one I was told I got for my first Christmas, in 1929. I played with it so much that it started getting hard and my mother didn't prepare it for me to eat, since I was having fun playing with it. In December, it will be 77 years old.

—Harold C., St. Joe, Indiana

When I was 8, back in 1950, my parents worked extremely hard just to keep food on the table and a roof over our heads. We lived in a Quonset hut left over from the war, and Dad worked full-time in a factory as well as two part-time jobs, all of which involved hard manual labor. Mom worked at the shirt factory and took in special laundry. She also starched curtains and put them on curtain stretchers. This was hard work, and she always had bloodstains on her hands. One day, my two brothers, Arnold and George, and I were visiting two sons of more-well-to-do neighbors. We were talking about Santa, and one of them said there was no Santa. I didn't want to believe this, and he said, "Let me show you. Your dad is painting three old bikes in the basement for you for Christmas." We looked in

the basement window, and it was true. Heartbroken, I told my mother, and she said, “If you believe, it is true.” She asked me what one thing I really wanted from Santa, and I told her I had been looking at the most beautiful doll in the window of our local hardware store. You can imagine my joy and belief in Santa when that doll was sitting under our Christmas tree. It’s only now that I realize how much my parents had to sacrifice to keep my dream alive.

—Johanne P., Branford, Connecticut