



JUST LOVE

A girl wrapped up in gift giving got a warm lesson from Grandpa.

AT CHRISTMASTIME 1957, Dad gave each of us \$10 to buy gifts.

I needed to buy for two sisters, two brothers, Mom, Dad, Grandpa and Grandma. I could make that happen if I went up to the Kresge Five and Dime on Warren, or maybe Cunningham Drugs on the corner of Warren and Outer Drive. Both were on the east side of Detroit where we lived.

I knew the key to getting the best gifts was having my shopping done way before my sister Judy, 15, and my brother Ken, 12.

I started with Grandpa's gift. I adored my grandfather and I wanted so much to give him something he would love. I remembered that he liked chocolate-covered cherries, R.G. Dun Miniature Cigars and handkerchiefs (either white with an "F" for Fred or the red bandanna kind that he always had in his pocket while gardening).

I decided on the cigars. Maybe Grandpa would teach me how to blow smoke rings, just as he had taught Ken (things were different back then, although Grandma might have given Grandpa a good talking-to if she learned of it). I thought if I could get Grandpa to actually *say* he



GRANDPA FRED THEISEN, above with author's mom, Ruth Monette, and Grandma Elizabeth Theisen at Christmas '57, provided a nice sentiment for the author (inset).

wanted those cigars, it would make my gift that much more spectacular!

"Grandpa, what would you like for Christmas?" I asked.

"Just love, little Mary," said Grandpa.

"I already love you, Grandpa, so what do you want for Christmas?" I continued.

Again he came back with the same, "Just love."

...but I would not be swayed from my choice.

"Yes, I know that, Grandpa, but if you had to choose one thing that you really, really wanted for Christmas, what would that be?" I

persisted.

"Just love. Love is all I need," he said.

Then Grandpa gave me a big hug and left for home in his two-toned turquoise Buick.

Well, no time to waste. I made my way up to Cunningham's and quickly found the Holiday Two-Pack of R.G. Dun Miniature Cigars. There were five to a package, and they cost just under a dollar. The alluring, red-lipped Edie Adams stood there as a life-sized cutout for Muriel Cigars, but I would not be swayed from my choice!

I plunked my money down, and

the lady behind the counter quickly put the cigars in a bag. "These are for my grandpa for Christmas!" I told her.

I guess I felt as though I needed to explain that I would *never* smoke cigars—well, at least not without Grandpa. She didn't seem to care, though, and out the door I went. I ran home, eager to tell Judy and Ken that they had been "snuffed out" by a 10-year-old. Victory was mine!

Christmas morning came and it was wonderful! I heard jingle bells ringing downstairs

and then, "Ho, ho, ho! Merry Christmas!" followed by the slamming of the front door. I remember running down the stairs, only to hear Dad say (as he would each Christmas), "Too bad, you just missed Santa!"

I always wanted to ask why Santa left by the front door rather than the chimney, but the presents under the tree would take priority.

When Grandma and Grandpa arrived, I was eager to have Grandpa open my gift. "Thank you, little Mary, for the cigars!" said Grandpa.

"You're welcome, Grandpa. Remember, you said that you wanted 'just love,' but you can't wrap that!" I said.

"Oh, but you can," said Grandpa. Then he put his arms around me and said, "This is how you wrap love."

To this day, whenever I hear anyone ask, "What would you like for Christmas?" I can hear my grandpa saying, "Just love."

Wrap it up by hugging someone close to you. It's the best gift of all. It always fits, and the best part is you can always "re-gift" it and feel really good in doing so!



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