

CHRISTMAS TIME in our home is one of the most special times of the year for our family and it is made even more memorable by the unique family treasures that have been passed down to now decorate my tree. My grandfather was the youngest of four children and because his mother, my great grandma Jessie, did not have a lot of money for presents let alone money to buy decorations, every Christmas she, my grandfather and his three siblings would collect very special sparkling earrings, odd shaped buttons and antique pins to create their own decorations. In the meantime, my great grandfather Fred would cut out shapes of trees, angels, stars and snowmen from plywood and varnish them. My grandfather and his brother and sisters would then glue red and green velvet to all of those pieces to try to bring the colors of the season to life.

Then the fun would begin for everyone. My great grandma would set up the velvet covered plywood pieces on the kitchen table and lay out all of that jewellery beside them. My grandfather and his siblings all took part adding, subtracting and rearranging that jewellery until they got it just right. It was like putting together a puzzle and everyone in the family had their own opinion on how the pieces would be placed.

Today, my grandma continues to tell us the story of how my grandfather told her that he remembered when his mom went to her own jewellery box and got a pinkish intertwined pin of two hearts which she glued to the center of the angel decoration as a symbol of how precious and loved all of her children were. Those hearts were always my favourite but these days though, when I look at them closely, I keep seeing new favourites and thinking about what a fun and proud accomplishment it must have been for all of them to work together.

Each and every piece that hangs on the branches of our Christmas tree is equally important, for not only do they reflect the unity of our family but also how appreciative and creative each of them were. I love that my whole family made these pieces by hand and we can remember what special and wonderfully caring people they were through this story. They are beautiful and inspiring pieces.

Our family heirlooms have created a connection to the past that can be passed on and enjoyed by future generations. They have helped us to learn more about our ancestors. These decorations mean that our family will be able to keep the bond with our relatives that are no longer here with us.

Michelle McKenzie  
Secondary 1, Beurling Academy  
Second Prize Winner