

SOUNDSIDE LEARNING THIS WEEK ON CORE SOUND

December 25, 2023

Memories & Manger Scenes

By Stephen Willis

At the age of eighteen, I left for college. I didn't realize at the time that after graduation, life and opportunities would have me live elsewhere. Yet my Island roots run deep. Harkers Island is still my home, and I return as often as I can to the place that is so close to my heart.

A few years ago, I was in a hotel in Rhode Island. I got up early and threw on my NC State hat in order to search for coffee. As I walked into the lobby, a stranger commented, "Go Pack!" It startled me to hear this comment so far above the Mason-Dixon line. I responded, "Go Pack! Are you from North Carolina?" He said, "Yes, I am." I asked, "What town?" He said, "You probably have never heard of it." I said, "Try me." He said, "A little town near the coast called Newport." I laughed out loud and then said, "I'm from Harkers Island!" He said, "No, you aren't." I said, "Yes, I am." He explained, "You don't talk like you are from Harkers Island." I immediately responded, "It's high tide on the sound side, son. Youngins, ain't I been momicked this day!" He laughed and said, "You are from Harkers Island!"

I have heard it said often that you can take the boy off the Island, but you will never take the Island out of the boy. I testify to this truth. Over the years, I have returned home with my wife and boys to bring to life for them the treasured stories that dominate my memory. Many of these memories center around the Advent season.

I remember...

- The great joy that came when we loaded up in Mom's old Pontiac Catalina to go searching for Christmas lights. At the time, the Chadwick's on the back road did better than most.
- My Evil Knievel bike with training wheels that matched the same bike my brother Bill received for Christmas that year.
- When Patrick Yeomans got a Honda three-wheeler. Somehow most of us survived those death traps.
- Going to the first Decoy Festival with Corey Lawrence at the Harkers Island School. David enlisted us as volunteers. I'm not sure David got much work from me, but man, did I have a good time! I regret not loading up on those additional posters that were on the table after everyone else had left. I would have been a rich man.
- Always wanting to be a Wiseman in the Christmas play at Free Grace Church. If I was Joseph or a shepherd, it meant that I had to wear my bathrobe to church—how embarrassing!

Last, but not least, I remember that I only had one job in decorating for Christmas. Every year until I left home, my mom put me in charge of arranging the small manger scene in our den. As a motivational tactic, my Mom always bragged to me about how good I was at it. I realize now that it had much more to do with her desire to center my attention on the real reason for the season than on my particular skill at arranging scenes.

Despite the ways that my college education and living away from Harkers Island have negatively affected the way I talk, it only took two sentences to convince the guy from Newport that I was who I said I was. Maybe today you aren't convinced that you are loved or important; maybe you feel like you're far from a home where you're welcome and wanted. But I declare to you today that the season of Advent testifies against this reality. My many years of arranging manger scenes embedded the Christmas story in my mind: God loved us so much that He sent His only Son into the world so that we would know that love up close and personal. This Advent, we all have an opportunity to hear this story again. Let's press into this truth that we may all truly have a blessed Christmas.



Billy and Melba Willis' youngest son,
Stephen Willis

COMING UP AT CORE SOUND...

- **Currently – Mid January:** Gallery of Trees
- **December 31:** Anchor Drop @ 7:00 PM at Shell Point (weather permitting)

Sound Reading Material For You and Your Child



Goodnight Santa

By Michelle Robinson

Follow Santa Claus's journey from his workshop in the North Pole to his magical sleigh and flying reindeer as he brings gifts of every shape and size! In this Christmas picture book, come celebrate the most wonderful time of year as children settle into bed and say "night night" to those sugar plums in their heads, perfect for fans of Polar Express!

Kids will love saying good night to Santa, his reindeer, and the elves in what is sure to become a bedtime tradition for families to share.

Pages: 28

Grades: PreK – 1st

Let's Remember Together

Throughout December, I'm sharing special holiday memories from some Down East friends. I hope you enjoy them and that they encourage you to reflect on your own treasured traditions.

My favorite Christmas memory was going on Christmas Eve to my grandparents' houses on Marshallberg to open gifts from each other and spend time together. After visiting each grandparent, we would go home, and I would get to open 1-2 presents that night before Santa came the next morning! –*Sue Anne Lewis, Marshallberg*

My favorite Christmas memories are our family manger that Grant made as a little boy and our church that stands beside it which has a sticker on the bottom showing the price was 29 cents! Mama bought it from Roses on Front Street, and it isn't Christmas at our house till the manger and church are in place! –*Val Salter Oden, Harkers Island*

I remember a Christmas when I got a pair of skates and a princess ring! I was so happy! When Wayne and I were dating, he gave me a coat with a raccoon-type collar. Boy oh boy, I was on cloud nine! –*my mom, Lana Hancock Davis, Harkers Island*

One of my favorite Christmas traditions is when my family gets together, and we have Christmas at my grandma's house. Another one is Christmas morning we always have biscuits and gravy for breakfast. –*Shelbie Morris, Atlantic*

Gathering at Granny Louise and Granddaddy Linwood's on Christmas Eve was always special. There were 30-40 of us inside their cozy home, and we loved every minute of it. –*Staci Davis Basden, Harkers Island*



Ice Ice Baby

STEP 1: Drop an ice cube in a glass of ice water. Try to pick the ice cube up without your fingers by simply placing the string on it and pulling up. Impossible, right?

STEP 2: Dip the string in water, lay it across the ice cube and sprinkle a generous amount of salt over the string and ice cube. Wait about a minute and try again to lift the cube using only the string. What happens this time?

The salt helps the ice surrounding the string start to melt, and it takes heat from the surrounding water which then re-freezes around the string.

