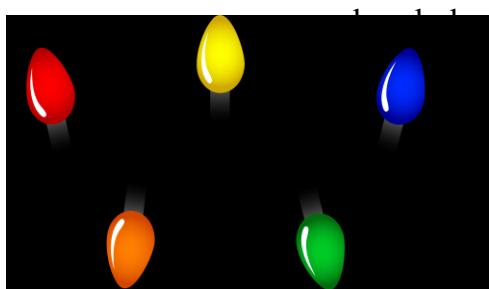


Christmas Preparations in 1950

by M.D. Smith

It's the Saturday after Thanksgiving and time to get out the Christmas Decorations in 1950. It was a delight to help my father find the card boxes of Christmas Tree lights for inside and outside the house and all the other decorations, including the boxes of fragile



ornaments packed carefully from last year. The tree Christmas Tree was already inside the house from a Friday afternoon purchase on his way home from work.

First thing is to test the lights from last year for the inside tree. All the multi-colored lights were of the 7 watt size we use for night lights in recent times. Unwinding the strings that always seemed to get tangled, took a while and after that was done and there were a number of very long strings of lights resting on the carpeting from one end of the living room all the way into the entrance hall to near the door.

My mother was busy in the kitchen and my father went downstairs to the basement for some more decorations. To be helpful, I plugged in several strings of lights to start identifying which ones were burned out from last year and replace them with a small box full my mother kept in a drawer in a chest of the entrance hall. So, as they were burning, I carefully would test to screw them in tight and some would come on, they were only loose. If that didn't work, I'd unscrew the bulb and put one of the new ones in, and almost always it would light.

After a while my father returned and I proudly showed him how I had already been replacing some of the bulbs. His expression changed and he asked me how long I had the lights on and I said since he left to go downstairs. He was already moving to the other side of the room to the wall plug as I was telling him and quickly unplugged the strings of lights. Then I found out why he was alarmed. Some of the lights had already made brown spots on the carpeting. I guess I knew when they were on the tree, not to try to unscrew one when it was on because it was hot, but never thought about it burning the rug. My father said he only plugged them in briefly to identify the burned out ones, and then unplugged the string to replace the ones that didn't light. And only one string at a time. We worked with some cleaner on the rug and some of it came out, but I think for the rest of the years that I lived in our old house, if you knew where to look, you'd see those little brown spots that tell you not to lay Christmas tree lights on the rug to test them, at least not very long.

The lights for the outdoor cedar trees growing with the shrubbery were even bigger, I think about 15 watts, and they were tested on the grass outside, which I don't guess it mattered if a few blades got singed in the winter time. The decorating continued all day, as I was used to doing. Lights all strung on the inside and outside trees and some fresh pine boughs brought in for a mantel decoration, that in addition to the tree, gave a holiday smell to the air that we kids loved. It really smelled like Christmas was here and all the bright multi-colored lights proved it. At night it was a joy. My father even built a giant candle out of several sections of stove pipe painted red.



mounted in a 5 gallon bucket of sand for a base to hold it upright with a round kerosene burning lantern on top. They were used as night roadside warnings of open ditches in those days. He even dripped some white paraffin wax down the side, and it really looked like a giant red candle with a real flame in the front yard, complete with pine boughs in front, hiding a metal cased reflecting spotlight at the base pointing up to illuminate the giant candle at night.

Ah, Christmas would be coming soon and all I wanted was a Daisy Pump BB Air rifle. I got my Red Ryder Lever BB gun last year, and I heard tell these pumps were much more powerful and would kill a squirrel. I did get that Daisy Pump, "King of the Air Rifles" at \$9.95 for Christmas after writing my letter to Santa, and the stories after that are for another time.



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