

# WINNIE'S *Christmas journal*

BY KIRK NOONAN

## CHRISTMAS DAY 1964

Beware! This is Winnie's journal. Don't read without my permission ... especially you Clint.

Daddy gave me this journal today. I'm 11 years old and in the sixth grade. I have strawberry-blonde hair and freckles. Everyone says I'm skinny, I don't care. Christmas was great. I got you (my first journal), a purple dress, some books and a board game. Of course Clint — my older brother — got what he asked for too. Grandma and Grandpa came over for dinner. Grandma cooked dinner but looked sad. We had turkey for dinner and all the other stuff. It was a good day. I promise to write soon.

## CHRISTMAS DAY 1965

Daddy wrapped you up and gave you to me again for Christmas. I thought I lost you. All year I looked for you but I could never find you. Somehow you were packed away with all the Christmas stuff last year. I guess Daddy found you when he got the Christmas stuff out of the attic. Any-

way, Christmas was great but I miss Grandma. I wish she were here. I hate cancer. Grandpa was so sad. Oh, I got the bellbottom pants I wanted. I think they're the same ones Jenny has.

## CHRISTMAS DAY 1967

Hi. Since I'm not really a writer and I always forget to write in you, I promise to write in you at least on every Christmas Day from now on until I die. Promise.

I'm 14 now. Clint is 18. Dad's probably 45, but I'm not sure. He'll never tell me how old he is. Today, I got up early to make candy with Dad. Every Christmas he makes a candy called divinity. It's white, fluffy and made of egg whites. It's delicious, but very hard to make. I think Dad likes the challenge of making divinity more than he likes eating it.

We went to Aunt Brenda's house for Christmas to open presents and have dinner. Grandpa was happy again, but I don't like the lady he brought with

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him. She's always looking at me, measuring everything I do. Clint brought his new girlfriend too. Her name is Lori. She's kind'a cool and very pretty. The best thing I got for Christmas was a record and a leather purse.

#### CHRISTMAS DAY 1968

Clint wasn't here to crack jokes. I even miss him making fun of me, though I would never tell him that. He is in Vietnam. The war is all Dad and Grandpa talked about the whole day. Even Dottie, Grandpa's new wife, talked about it. The thing is, they never talked about Clint. Not even once. I miss him.

#### CHRISTMAS DAY 1971

Wow. So much has changed. Clint came home from Vietnam and married Lori. They're doing fine, but he works a lot and all she ever does is complain about how much he works.

When I get married I just hope it's total love. Grandpa and Dottie went to Florida for Christmas. I think they're going to move there, but they insist their visit is only to escape the cold weather. Dad slept in today and we didn't even make candy this morning. It doesn't feel like Christmas to me.

We did go to Aunt Brenda's for dinner, but now we don't even exchange presents with the cousins — so it wasn't fun. B-O-R-I-N-G! I wish Christmas was the way it was when I was a kid. Today, Dad gave me another journal. It's so depressing because he gave me Mom's old journal. So far, I haven't really been in the mood to read it. Don't know why.

#### CHRISTMAS DAY 1972

I'm home from college. So far the holidays have been very good. Dad decorated the house, plays Christmas music all the time and tried to wake

me at 7 to make candy. Too tired, so I pulled the pillow over my head and went back to sleep. I got up four hours later to the sound of baby Billy, my new nephew, wailing for milk or something. In the kitchen Clint, Lori and Dad were hovering over Billy like surgeons over a patient in an emergency room.

They were all trying to get him to stop crying. When Clint saw me, he hugged and kissed me. Totally weird for him to do that, but oh well. Instead of going to Aunt Brenda's, Lori and I cooked a ham and we opened presents here. Clint and Lori gave me a Bible of all things. I think they're becoming religious, but they do seem happier than ever. So that's a good thing. Thank God for Billy — Dad is finally in the Christmas spirit again.

#### CHRISTMAS DAY 1973

I think I'm going to be a teacher, like Mom was. I finally read her journal. She was an amazing woman. Even though I don't remember her that much I know she loved me deeply.

My life is kind of a mess right now. I met a guy. His name is Sam. We partied way too much this year and I feel bad because my grades stink and Dad is spending all his money to keep me in school. I'm going to quit drinking and smoking and get in shape. It's the least I can do for Dad. Anyway, Sam is coming to the house today. I hope Dad and Clint like him.

#### CHRISTMAS DAY 1975

I laugh as I read my last entry. Sam was a loser. Plus, he and Dad didn't get along. And then Clint and Lori almost beat him over the head with their Bibles. That was funny and sad all at once.

I'm almost done with college. Soon I'll be a teacher. For gifts Dad bought

me a boatload of teacher supplies. Oh well, that's how it goes when you get old. Dad is so sweet though. He bought Billy so many toys. Clint and I never had that many toys to open on Christmas morning.

Well, as usual, another Christmas comes and goes.

#### CHRISTMAS DAY 1980

Grant and I are here to spend Christmas morning then we go to his parents' house. I'm excited to spend some time with his parents and sisters, but I worry about Daddy being alone. Clint, Lori, Billy, Steve and baby Louie won't be here either. They're going to the mountains with other families from their church. Kumbaya.

I think Grant is going to propose to me tonight. He keeps saying he has a big surprise. Being married to Grant will be so wonderful. I know Mom would be disappointed if she knew I was pregnant. I don't know what Daddy will say. When I told Clint he looked me in the eyes and said he would be praying for us. What does that mean? I hope at least Daddy is happy.

#### CHRISTMAS DAY 1981

Grant and I got married six months ago and life is grand. He proposed to me Christmas night last year as expected. Jade, our precious baby is so sweet. Daddy has literally spent hours holding her since we've been here. He is such a great dad and grandpa. As usual, the house was decked in holly, the tree was freshly cut and the refrigerator was packed with food for Lori and me to cook. There was also a well-worn Bible next to Daddy's favorite chair. Strange. I asked him about it and he told me Clint had "led him to the Lord." Yikes. *Led him to the Lord?* Since when were we a religious family?

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PE / DECEMBER 18 / 2005

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ANNIE'S  
*Christmas journal*

We're going to church tonight. Daddy insisted. I can't remember the last time I went to church. Have I ever been to church? I would've protested, but Grant, who claims to be agnostic, said we should go and sing a few carols. Double strange. I guess crazier things have happened.

**CHRISTMAS DAY 1981  
(SECOND ENTRY)**

I don't know what happened. One moment Grant and I are in church singing "Silent Night" and the next we're in the front of the church with a bunch of other people. I'm crying, Grant is confessing every bad thing he has ever done and Clint and Daddy are standing beside us praying. It was the strangest, but most amazing experience I've ever had.

I admitted I was a sinner too, then, as the pastor directed, I asked God to forgive me and for Jesus to come into my life. A peace I'd never known blanketed me. I'm getting goose bumps just writing about it.

After it was over I looked at Clint and Daddy and said, "I guess I'm religious too." Daddy smiled, "Your mom once told me it was a relationship, not a religion."

All I know is something great happened and I can't help but cry tears of joy. So, this is what Christmas is all about.

**CHRISTMAS DAY 1995**

Sorry to have neglected you all these years. Finding a few minutes to journal has obviously been very difficult for me. Anyway, this morning Daddy and I convened in the kitchen to make candy. His hands are gnarled like tree roots, there is a small hump between his shoulders and he has trouble reading the recipe cards. For being 77, though, he is in remarkably good health otherwise.

But it's strange; as your parents get older you always wonder if this or that event will be their last. Right now I wonder when we'll make candy together for the last time. Hopefully not this Christmas.

Grant and I are very involved at church. I'm still teaching and Grant is still running his graphic design business. Jade is blossoming into a beautiful young Christian woman. She is living the life I wish I had lived when I was a teenager.

As for Clint and Lori, they spend their time shuttling between all their sons' games and school events. I can't believe Billy is already out of college. God has blessed our family.

**CHRISTMAS DAY 2005**

Once again, it's been longer than it should've been since I wrote in you. As I've gone through and read you this Christmas Day, I've felt like a kid opening a new present with each journal entry. You've made me laugh, cry and smile many times. God is good and I am thankful Daddy gave me you to write in so long ago.

Christmas will be at our house this year. Clint and Lori and all their boys and the boys' wives and all the grand-

sons are coming over for dinner.

Grant, Jade and I trimmed the tree and decorated the house weeks ago.

Daddy won't be here for Christmas. He died in July. His absence makes Christmas bittersweet. I miss him so much.

Even though I didn't feel like it this morning, I woke early and made candy. It wasn't nearly as fun doing so without Daddy. Like a kid lost in a mall I fumbled my way through the cabinets looking for the blender, mixing bowls, sugar and so forth. And just like Daddy used to have to do, I now hold the recipe cards close to my eyes so I can read them. Unfortunately, I too am getting old. But nothing is worse than doing something, especially a Christmas tradition, on your own for the first time.

As I whipped the divinity into shape tears blurred my vision. I wanted to crumple to the floor and sob, but just before I let myself do that, Jade — wrapped in a fluffy robe

— stumbled into the kitchen.

"Coffee?" she mumbled as I tried desperately to compose myself.

Still groggy she rubbed the sleep from her eyes then locked onto mine. When she saw I was crying she moved close, wrapped her warm arms around me and we cried together. She knew I was missing Daddy.

After countless tears, we wiped our eyes dry, looked at each other and began laughing like you can laugh only after a good cry. A few minutes later we embraced again and then Jade quickly grabbed the mixing spoon from me.

"Grandpa and Grandma are in heaven," she whispered almost matter-of-factly as she began beating the divinity. "And one day we will be too. What could be better?"

I smiled and went searching for you. ■

*Kirk Noonan is associate editor of Today's Pentecostal Evangel. E-mail your comments to [pe@ag.org](mailto:pe@ag.org).*

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