

# There's no place like Geneva

by Scott Lebin

Home has always been a touchstone for soldiers, travelers, and wayfaring strangers. It has been a place that has been a destination to return to once a person left home for a far-off land. It is home that reminds us of our beginnings and as time passes it contains many of the warm feelings of family, celebration, and connection to our community and the place where we played and where we were educated; it is the place of our earliest memories.

Even in literature we are reminded of the importance of coming home. In Homer's *The Odyssey*, the hero overcomes incredible obstacles in his quest to return home from war. The message in this classic epic is that "Home is the sweetest place." For generations those who defend our countries have telegraphed, written, and called home. There were songs that they heard while in far away lands that reminded them about the joys of home.

"Keep the Home Fires Burning," "I'll Be Home for Christmas," and "When Jonny Comes Marching Home" were all reminders of the importance of returning home and the need to cling to the hope and joy of returning home. These songs evoke the familiarity of a beloved place encompassed by tradition, joy and love. These songs generated

thoughts of past sights and friends... all representing memories of warmth and wonderful times.

In Stephen Spielberg's film *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* has one goal in mind, to return home. Like any traveler who finds himself in a distant place the journey home is not always easy or without hardship. However, the desire for home is a stronger force than any obstacle along the journey.

The notion of home might be most compelling at this time of the year and the warmth of the people and the celebrations in downtown Geneva are typical of the scenes in *It's A Wonderful Life*. That movie reminds us that no matter what the financial struggles, it is the people who come together that make life and it is people supporting each other that creates the true essence of home and community.

Geneva's lighting of the Christmas tree, the house walk, the arrival of Santa Lucia followed by Santa's arrival through the crowds of families on Third St. are a few of the memories that we are fortunate to relive every year. The arrival of Graham's first candy cane of the year lead by trumpets down Third St. are traditions unique to Geneva. The live window displays and the chestnuts roasting on an open fire along with hot cider

create the sights and smells of our wonderful city and home. These benefits of living in Geneva and calling Geneva our home bring richness to our lives that money couldn't buy.

Families can't always enjoy this holiday season because they have loved ones who are in far away places standing guard to protect our liberties and keep us safe at home. Like the angel Clarence in *It's a Wonderful Life*, may you get your wings by helping someone during this most important time of the year. Helping our warriors or their families who may need some extra assistance will be the greatest gift you can provide. A helping community is the reason why returning home is an important theme in literature, songs, and movies. ●

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