

## *Celebrating life*

by Scott Lebin



Thanksgiving is a great family holiday. It is a day when families celebrate being together; laughing, talking, eating food created from some special family recipes and having a moment to spend quality time together are part of that annual occasion. There is a festive quality in our community as stores add to their decorations in the anticipation of not only Thanksgiving but the whole holiday season to follow.

The Thanksgiving Parade in Chicago during the middle of the last century set the tone for the holiday season, and the crowded sidewalks of downtown Chicago are memories of another time and another age. At the Goodman Theatre, located at the Art Institute, there was the anticipated viewing of *A Christmas Carol* or a children's show, that created a memory bank filled with some of the best of times of our childhood.

The holiday celebration was really a celebration of "life." As adults, many of us now remember these special childhood moments with our own families. The traditions included in our tapestry of memories are as varied and special as the unique qualities of our families and childhoods spent in the communities in which we lived.

If we grew up in the Chicago area, we probably still remember the seventh floor Walnut Room at Marshall Field's and the Christmas tree for which families waited in line for hours to get a seat and have a meal. Marshall Field's at Christmas, which will never be called Macy's because of our own connections to a wonderful unique past experience, became a special outing. We may still remember the toy floor on the

fourth floor with Andy Frane ushers standing at the wooden escalators wearing white gloves and making sure customers stayed in line and didn't push and shove each other. Of course, we can't forget the huge State and Randolph animated window by the series of animated windows on State St. which were also part of a magical animated display.

Today, Geneva is a wonderful location to receive the full joy of the holiday season. The availability of some of the most varied eating establishments with fine cuisine and good home cooking can be found throughout the town.

In addition to the festive decoration of the streets, shop windows, and musical activities the Chamber House Walk and the lighting of the City of Geneva Christmas tree along with the arrival of Santa Clause initiates the beginning of the shopping season with the closure of Third St. and the late opening of all the stores in downtown Geneva.

The arrival of the 1st Candy Cane from Graham's Fine Chocolates and Ice Creams, and the Gingerbread House display at the All Chocolate Kitchen create an experience that is unique to Geneva and characterizes the type of merriment to ignite the joy of this season of the year. The emotions connected with small town celebrations remind us of a much simpler time when life was less complex and the real wonderful moments of life occurred when people, families and communities joined together in celebration.

As you experience this holiday season in Geneva with your family especially including children and

grandchildren, remember that you are creating for another generation some of the most important memories of their youth. Long after they forget what individual gifts they received, the emotional impact of the family experience will remain indelible fixed in their memories. These will also be the most important emotional connections to their past and in the future they will fondly remember the opportunities that Geneva provided for the whole family to experience the holiday season.

These memories will not be the same as our memories during the middle half of the last century, but they will be just as significant to them as our memories are to us. Take the opportunity to make the season a family experience. When I say Eat, Drink, and Be Merry Locally, I really mean that you should relish the experiences that the Geneva Chamber, the city, and the merchants provide for the community. There is no better place than the warmth of our town to create a place to nurture the spirit of this season. So this holiday our wish for you is to Eat Drink and Be Merry in Downtown Geneva! ●

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