**Christmas Trees**

**Neighbor girl: “I’m not crazy about the Withers new artificial Christmas tree.” Neighbor boy: “It’s too unnatural-looking.” Neighbor girl: “Plus, it lacks that nice pine scent.” Neighbor boy: “As a rule, I don’t like anything fake.” Neighbor girl: “Me neither.” Little Withers: “So what do you guys think of our new tree?” Both respond: “We love it!” *(Steve Breen, in Grand Avenue comic strip)***

**The Christmas tree as modern Americans know it actually originated with the Druids a couple of thousand years ago. Druids worshipped trees, as people did for at least 4,000 years before Christ. During the winter solstice, Druids tied apples to the branches of oaks and firs to thank the god Odin for blessing them with fruitfulness. They also made offerings of cakes shaped like fish, birds and other animals. Lighted candles honoring the sun god Balder were placed on the boughs. It was this evergreen laden with apples that eventually evolved into our modern Christmas tree. *(Sheryld Ann Karas, in The Solstice Evergreen)***

**As they start to drive home after picking out the Christmas tree, Mother says: “Ray, do you ever think about getting a bigger car?” Ray: “No, Mother, Why?” Mother: “We look like a runaway air freshener.” *(Steve Dickenson & Todd Clark, in Lola comic strip)***

**A boy and his Dad ventured into the woods to bring home a Christmas tree. They walked for hours in the snow, examining every tree they found. As the afternoon turned into evening, the temperature dropped 10 degrees, and the wind began to blow. Still no tree. Finally, the boy spoke up: “Dad, I really think we’d better take the next tree we see, whether it has lights on it or not!” *(The American Legion magazine)***

**First woman: “Your tree looks great!” Second woman: “Thanks.” First woman: “It’s a shame they’re never as much fun to take down!” Second woman: “True. But I put all candy ornaments on it this year! By New Year’s Day only the lights will be left!” *(Ted Dawson, in Spooner comic strip)***

**Man: “I can’t believe what you charge for a Christmas tree!” Salesman: “Well, we do also sell the kit.” Man: “Kit? This is a pine cone!” Salesman: “Some assembly required.” *(Jim Davis, in Garfield comic strip)***

**Botanists in Denmark say they are using cloning technology to create what they hope will be the perfect Christmas tree, which they plan to mass produce. Microscopic Nordmann fir tree shoots are being split in two, with one half frozen while the other is nurtured in a sterile incubator for a year before being planted outside. When the perfect specimen has been determined, a "mother plant" will be created, using the shoot fragment kept frozen in the lab. *(Steve Newman, Universal Press Syndicate, 2004)***

**Woman: “Rhonda’s coming over to help us decorate the tree.” Man: “Oh, good!” Woman: “You’re glad she’s coming?” Man: “Sure. Christmas just wouldn’t be complete without the Wizinski sisters sitting around the tree complaining about their mother.” Woman: “Well, it’s important to keep tradition alive.” *(Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott, in Baby Blues comic strip)***

**Fester: “Well, it’s time to get the ol’ Christmas tree out again. There’s something about this tree that just makes it more beautiful each year.” Man: “Maybe it’s the cost of a new tree.” Fester: “That helps.” *(Jerry Bittle, in Geech comic strip)***

**The custom of having Christmas trees in a home is a relatively new tradition. Virtually nobody in America had Christmas trees in their homes until the middle of the nineteenth century. The custom started in Germany, and when Prince Albert of Germany married Queen Victoria of England in 1840, he brought the custom to England and the English-speaking world. Christmas trees in homes first came to America in about 1850. *(Charles Reichblum, in Knowledge in a Nutshell, p. 232)***

**Decorating the Christmas tree is a ritual our family looks forward to every year. Our four-year-old son, Dean, helps his father carry the artificial tree from the attic to its place in the family room. Then, after the last ornament and strand of tinsel are hung, we take a drive to see the many Christmas lights around town. On one such tour, Dean spotted a freshly cut Christmas tree tied to the roof of a passing car. Perplexed, he looked to his father for an explanation. “Dad,” he asked, “how come those people are taking their tree for a ride?” *(Mary Corpas, in Redbook)***

**Christmas trees grown on plantations have better shapes than trees in the wild. But why? They’re spaced when planted, then pruned as they grow. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**A shortage of Christmas trees in Hawaii has raised prices to more than $200 each, drawing complaints from shoppers who are eager to buy trees before the holiday. In previous weeks, trees sold for $30 to $70. Most Christmas trees sold in Hawaii have been delivered by cargo ships from farms in the Pacific Northwest. Last season, sellers suffered losses when hundreds went unsold. *(Rocky Mountain News, December 20, 2004)***

**Christmas-tree hazards: Children younger than 3 are attracted to bright, shiny ornaments and might be tempted to put them in their mouths. Tiny light bulbs, icicles and small toys could block a child's airway. If something is small enough to fit into a child's mouth, it's too small to play with. *(University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center)***

**Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich turned on the humor after the lights on Chicago's giant Christmas tree failed to turn on. Blagojevich made light of the situation Wednesday, explaining to scores of people gathered why nothing happened after a 10-second countdown, and the flip of a switch by Blagojevich and his wife and daughter. “These are difficult budget times. We're cutting everywhere, including Christmas lights,” Blagojevich joked. The lights came on after a couple of minutes. The culprit was a circuit breaker. *(Associated Press, as it appeared in the Rocky Mountain News, December 3, 2004)***

**Legend says Martin Luther created the first Christmas tree back in the 1500s, when he was so struck by the beauty of stars shining through branches that he hurried home and put candles on his own tree*. (Rebecca Jones, in Rocky Mountain News)***

**Good week for Minimalism, after artist Giorgio Sadotti, commissioned to decorate the Christmas tree at Tate Britain gallery in London, left the tree bare. “When you see a tree in the forest you don’t think, ‘That tree’s naked, it needs a bit of tinsel,’” Sadotti said. *(The Week magazine, December 17, 2010)***

**At least seven West Coast companies or environmental groups are renting live Christmas trees to green-minded consumers. For $100, one company, the Living Christmas Co., will deliver a potted live tree, pick it up after the holidays, and replant it until Christmas rolls around again. *(USA Today, as it appeared in The Week magazine, December 24, 2010 – January 7, 2011)***

**Franklin D. Roosevelt grew Christmas trees. On at least one of his income tax forms he listed himself as a tree farmer*. (L. M. Boyd)***

**President Theodore Roosevelt devoutly believed the evergreens belonged where they grew. He wouldn't let his children have Christmas trees. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**“There’s no need to worry about the size of your Christmas tree,” intoned the Rev. George Hall last Sunday. “Whatever its height, in the eyes of your children, that tree will be 10 feet tall.” *(Burton Hillis, in Better Homes and Gardens)***

**Dolly: “That tree goes up so high they might have a REAL angel at the top.” *(Bil Keane, in The Family Circus comic strip)***

**Christmas Trees: According to last year’s figures the National Christmas Tree Association estimated that 33 million natural Christmas trees were sold. That means that nearly one-third of all American households had a live or cut Christmas tree inside their home. Sadly, each year we hear of Christmas tree tragedies over the holiday season. The USFA has found that on average from December 1 to 14, there are 1.2 Christmas Tree Fires a day in our country. Then, from December 15 to January 1, the numbers jumps to 7.7 a day. *(Kids’ Pages, January, 2003)***

**In modern times, the world’s tallest cut Christmas tree, a 221-foot-tall Douglas fir, was displayed in 1950 at the Northgate Shopping Center in Seattle. The General Grant Tree, in General Grant National Park, California, is dubbed “The Nation’s Christmas Tree.” It’s more than 3,500 years old and more than 40 feet wide at its base. *(Rebecca Jones, in Rocky Mountain News)***

**Mom reads: “Shepherds watched over their flocks.” Dolly: “That means they were lookin’ at the fake snowy stuff on their Christmas trees.” *(Bil Keane, in The Family Circus comic strip)***

**Happy to have jobs in 1931, New York City workmen put up a 12-foot Christmas tree amid the rubble of demolished brownstones on the future site of Rockefeller Center. For decorations they used tin cans, paper, and tinsel. Two years later the first official tree was festooned with 700 blue and white lights. The tradition, now grown to a nationally televised spectacular, has been observed ever since. (Reader's Digest: Strange Stories, Amazing Facts of America's Past)**

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