

## A Christmas Story



Good morning, y'all. Well Mother Nature wasn't finished "raining on our parade", so's to speak, and it's coming down in sheets now while I write. Folks over in Fannin county have had some severe flooding issues, and so I guess I shouldn't whine too much. Our only issue is an abundance of ground water with the ground already soaked. I'm doing my part by keeping the drains clean so the water doesn't back up and cause a lake. Lake TackyToo has a nice ring to it, though. I'd just like the lake to be an amenity and not a Corp of Engineers project.

Well, as previously detailed, we were blessed to have the whole Lite family come by for Christmas and with a little coaxing we got the kids to stick around for our date night movie. I chose a Christmas Story, a "new" classic. I guess like everything else, each generation picks the movie that they think best represents their memories of growing up, their home life, and maybe even how their family celebrated Christmas. In truth, as much as I enjoyed "White Christmas" and "It's A Wonderful Life", they didn't speak to me as well as they did to my parents.

I think my generation was kind of lost for our own Christmas movie. If someone wants to correct my recollection, please do, Mulva does it all of the time. It's just that I don't remember any "just Christmas" movies released in the '50's and '60's. There was the classic, "Santa Claus Conquers the Martians" in 1964, but everything else seems to have been cartoon movies made for TV. Things started to open up a little bit in the '70's, with a remake of "A Christmas Carol" leading the way, but animation was still the key. It wasn't until the '80's that Hollywood decided they could get the whole family into the theaters by making movies with people and not cartoons. I love Magoo as much as the next guy, but he's no match for a Gremlin.

In fact, a look at the Christmas movies released in the '80's include: ***A Christmas Story, National Lampoon's Christmas, Scrooged, Gremlins, Die Hard, Trading Places, Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence, and Ernest Saves Christmas.*** There's a great remake of a ***Christmas Carol*** starring George C. Scott and a ton of slasher

movies set around a Christmas theme. I have no idea why Hollywood decided to start using people rather than cartoons again, but I'm sure the residuals from playing these movies year after year has paid off. I guess people relate to people better than a cartoon. I know for a fact that I relate totally to the character of Ralphie in a "Christmas Story".

A "Christmas Story" is set in a Midwestern city in the 1940's which had the feel of Blairsville in the 1950's. From the very get go, I was caught up with Ralphie's burning desire to have Santa Claus bring him a BB gun for Christmas. I experienced Ralphie's crushing disappointment every time he was told that the BB gun was not an option because he would "put his eye out". All of the other interactions are classic and timeless. From the tag a long little brother to the neighborhood bully, each of the characters is drawn from a memory that could have been pulled from my own. It's like Jean Shepherd did a Vulcan mind meld with me and pulled all of my childhood memories into his tale. I don't know if everyone else feels that way, but the movie is accepted as the definitive Christmas movie by the Lite family.

As an interesting factoid, I came across Jean Shepherd's work in a un-Christmassy fashion. Jean Shepherd wrote regularly for Playboy back in the 1960's and 1970's. The adventures of Scut Farkus were well know to me before the movie was released. I'm just so happy that Ralphie's adventures have translated so well to the next generation. The movie has been critically acclaimed and financially very successful. In 2012, the movie was selected for recognition by the Library of Congress for being "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant".

The movie stars, Melinda Dillon as the mom, Peter Billingsley as Ralphie, and Darren McGavin as the Dad. The Dad and the chorus girl leg lamp brought a tear to my eye. [Bocephus](#) lives on. Merry Christmas to all!