By Jim Langham

Earlier this week I was having a conversation with an elderly lady in a nursing home; our discussion about her perception of an, “old fashioned Christmas,” brought back heartwarming memories of long ago Christmas and stories my grandmother used to tell about her Christmas experiences.

The lady I was talking to explained that she and her mother used to spend two weeks before Christmas making cookies and candy to be given away to people who wouldn’t be receiving anything for Christmas. There would be one week of making candy and a second week of making cookies.

Then, her mother would visit the grocery store to salvage small boxes suitable for packing with Christmas goodies. But, it wasn’t only cookies and candy that would be stuffed into the boxes. For months before Christmas, her mother would crochet, making doilies, pot holders and handkerchiefs to add to the Christmas box.

Once everything was packed in the boxes, there would be a “wrapping night,” complete with home made bows and special designs, often created and taped on to the boxes by the children.

On Christmas Eve, family members would gather and travel from door to door to visit homes where there was need, sing Christmas carols on the front step, and then pass out the gifts in the spirit of love, concern and the expression of the Christ child who was the ultimate gift.

At our place, it was greeting cards or shoe boxes that were used to distribute the gifts of Christmas love and concern. We would make home made fudge, peanut butter candies, divinity of all colors, popcorn balls, various kinds of cutout cookies and hand crafted items such as scarves, doilies and kitchen towels.

Often my mother would send the greeting card boxes of candy to school teachers, 4-H leaders, scout leaders and Sunday school teachers. The shoe boxes would be distributed to families with need and sickness.

One of the most touching things that came out when I was talking to my new friend in the nursing home was the spirit of Christmas giving that continued throughout the year.

She noted that many of the families that received the larger Christmas boxes would also be given pies, cakes, garden vegetables and lots of tender love and care according to their circumstances.

My father always reminded me of such Bible verses as, “It’s better to give than to receive,” “Cast your bread upon the waters and after many days it will return to you” and the scripture significance of the wise men bringing gifts to Jesus.

As I was talking with my new friend about Christmas giving in the old days, her eyes moistened with tears and she said, “It’s that giving that makes me homesick for those old days with our family. I can remember what we gave much more than what I received. It’s the giving part of the old fashioned Christmas that I remember the most.”