

By Nancy Whitaker

Christmas is over for another year, decorations will soon come down, the last cookie will be eaten and a lot of gifts will be returned.

It takes a lot of preparation to get ready for Christmas, but the memories we make each year remain with us forever.

I always look forward to the fun we share at our annual Christmas get-together. This year was no exception. The youngest daughter and her hubby, Susie and Neil Blackmore, hosted the party at their home in Payne.

Neil and Susie had their home all decorated and Neil had baked an awesome ham with cloves and spices. We each brought a covered dish and there was plenty of good food.

We ate, opened our gifts and then it was time for the “big game.”

We have been playing what we call the Dollar Game for at least 15 years. I usually write about this in Pennies each year, because there is always some new dollar gifts appearing, as well as a few old ones.

We have two pairs of underwear, a man’s and a woman’s pair. These underwear are usually disguised in a package wrapped by the person who got stuck with them last year.

We all take a number and going around numerically, choose a gift, one at a time. The dollar gifts have their own special place and are laid out all wrapped for everyone to see. The tension

and excitement runs high as we draw our numbers and wait our turn.

Well, of course, I got number one this year which meant I had to go first. The chances were high that I could get the underwear package, so grabbing a small package I went to my seat and opened it. Voila, not the underwear. I had unwrapped a cute package of candy decorated Band-Aids. Since I went first, I kept them and sure enough someone stole them and I got a little package of Nutella.

Making the debut as dollar gifts this year were three dill pickles. They were huge pickles in their own wrappers and juice. One pickle had the name of "Big Papa," one was called "Hot Mama" and the third one was "Sour Sis."

Needless to say, those pickles were passed around, stolen and one little grandson cried because he got one.

Another new item was a can of sardines and I really don't know who wound up with those.

Popular items were room deodorizer, shower gel, candy bars and a coloring book. My son-in-law Neil happened to get a hard back book about the government. I told him, "Hmmm. That may be an interesting read."

After we were all done and the last dollar gift was stolen, we looked around and lo and behold, no one had the dreaded underwear.

"Oh no," we all said, "Who had them last year and did they get lost.?"

I mean these have been a part of the family Christmas since before some of my grand kids were born. Panic arose as we each accused the other of losing the underwear.

For some reason, someone glanced at the book which Neil had gotten. They noticed a piece of tape sticking out and said, "Maybe you should check that book. There is a piece of scotch tape coming out from it."

Sure enough, hidden between the pages of the government book, taped very neatly were the two pair of underwear. What a unique hiding place. The underwear was safe for another year.

Yes, you may wonder why we buy a dollar gift, wrap it, and steal and trade for some little item we may or may not want. Why is the underwear appearance so important?

It is tradition which we started years ago and which has remained a big part of our Christmas. It is just as exciting to open the dollar gifts and steal and trade as it is to open our bigger gifts. We share our laughter, love and family fellowship playing the dollar game and avoiding the dreaded underwear. I hope those underwear stay safe for another 15 years.

Do you have a funny tradition you do at Christmas? How would you wrap and disguise the dreaded underwear? Would you be happy if you got one of those big dill pickles? Let me know and I'll give you a Penny for Your Thoughts.