

## **Christmas Traditions in a Dog and Cat Household**

### **By Sandra Kruczek**

Get out the baby gates. Here comes the Christmas tree. I'll bet every dog and cat owning family has their special Christmas traditions. Our family did, and much of it revolved around sparing the beautiful heirloom ornaments on the tree, not to mention the tree itself.

Before artificial trees became popular, watering the tree was usually a child's chore in our house since we could scramble under the lowest branches with a measuring cup full of water. One year we seemed to be having a hard time keeping the container that supported the tree, full of water. It turned out that our Miniature Schnauzer had decided to change up his kitchen water bowl for the tree holder.

We have always had to have some sort of eye bolt screwed into the ceiling in the living room that was used to hang a stout line to the top of the tree. Our cat was fond of climbing the tree. One family that I know actually hung their tree from a high ceiling. They used a pulley system so the tree could be lowered to the floor when the family was present. Their cats could only look longingly up at the tree when they were gone.

Pet gifts were a must, usually consisting of commercially made dog or cat stockings, filled with everything we thought the pets should have plus a few extras, and of course packaged to appeal to us. As children, we delighted in the discovery of one of these tissue paper-wrapped gifts that was torn to shreds by kitty claws. It's what we secretly would have loved to do, in order to get an advance peak at our own special gift. We would dramatically re-wrap the gift and pretend to chastise the kitty.

We only had one dog that would try to water the tree. I can only imagine how it must seem to a dog to suddenly have a fresh pine tree in the house. What could be more natural? This is where the baby gates finally came into play. We didn't mind. Christmas was about accommodating everyone in the family.

Taking our sled team of Siberian Huskies to the mountains on Christmas Day was our tradition. There was no one there except us and the beavers. Our lead dog spotted one crossing the trail and followed it to its lodge, taking the ten other huskies with her. After floundering in waist deep snow, my husband Ron, managed to get the team back on the trail and we headed ten miles back to the truck. We spent the rest of Christmas day at our Veterinary clinic suturing up our lead dog who suffered the worst of the encounter. Beaver – 1, Lead Dog – 0.

Every family has their traditions. These are a few of mine. Our pets just make them a bit sweeter.

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