

“Christmas Shopping”

By Lex Shuler

“Marion County Observer” – Salem, IL

When I think back to Christmas shopping season, I always think of the master of power shopping, my Dad. I was about 7 or 8 when this amazing feat unfolded and I think of it every Christmas.

Dad worked in the oilfield and always had odd hours. We never knew when he would be coming home. As always, he waited until the last moment to do anything. This particular Christmas was no exception. I must tell you too that he only had Mom to buy for because she had taken care of all the rest of the shopping.

Dad got home about 6:30, well after dark, on this Christmas eve. We lived out in the country north of the town and the drive into town was a good 20 minutes. The stores were open until 9:00. He came home from work and after washing up and grabbing a bite to eat it was going on 7:30. He then announced that he had his Christmas shopping to do and was going into town. He asked if I wanted to go, and we jumped into the old Model A Ford and headed to town. The town had diagonal parking like so many towns back then and only one stop light at the center of town. We took a left turn at the stop light and the proprietors were already beginning to prepare for closing their stores. It was almost 9:00. We parked directly in front of the Illinois Brokerage Store just a block down from the stoplight. A clerk was walking toward the door when we entered and they had turned off some of the lights in the back part of the store.

There was a large display of bedspreads hung from the ceiling and being the largest and most colorful thing in the front part of the store, they caught Dad’s eye first thing. The lady asked if she could help and Dad said, “I’ll take that one!” It was a chenille bedspread, white, with a large peacock in the center. The border was intertwined flowers and vines and I swear it was the gaudiest thing in the store. The lady took it down and wrapped it in brown paper. Dad’s Christmas shopping was over, done for the year, and it took all of five minutes.

When we got back home Dad put the big, brown package under the tree. Next morning we all got up early to open our presents and see what Santa had brought. Mom got a new bedspread.