I feel bathed in Christmas joy when the tree goes up. It's like Heaven draws near and I feel the Holy Spirit blessing me as I decorate the tree. I am seventy five years old and yet I feel like I am fifteen and full of joy for the Lord and all His hands have provided.

The tree is up and the lights are on it. The TV is off and Christmas music is playing softly. It is lovely. It is peaceful. With eager anticipation I open the box of decorations.

Oh, Look! Here's the Battenburg angel that my dear friend, Grace Robinson gave to me. She's spending Christmas with Jesus now, but she's here with me, too. Here's all six of my little Teddy Bears that Gene and Barb gave me. They look so cute with their little red bow ties. Oh, how I miss you, Gene, but I am so glad you are safe with Jesus. Oh look, here's the little ceramic grey mouse nestled in the tiny knitted stocking from their Bert. When he was a little boy, he bought all of the relatives Christmas ornaments with his earnings from his very first job. He's all grown up now, married to his lovely Suzzi and has two grown boys of his own... but he is still a sweet boy who serves the Lord and is studying to become a pastor.

Oh my, here is the little laser cut metal horse with leather reins, that I got for my life long friend Berta, who died before I could give it to her. I'll hang it next to the sweet metal angel that she gave to me. And here is Daddy's ornament. It's a beautiful clear turquoise tear drop with sparkly tinsel inside. He always hung it on the right hand side of the top branch. I think he did it to keep it safe from little fingers and puppy dogs. I hang it there, too. I wonder how old it is? I do know it is older than me.

Here is Rick's tiny buck deer. He looks so cute perched on the end of a branch. These are Dave and Zelma's Merry Christmas balls that they gave to me when they moved to California in the 1950's. Wonderful people! Their son moved back and lived with us until he and Gene joined the Army together.

Look at this tiny little bear in his golden swing, a gift from my friend Betty Stansbury, who is also spending eternity in Heaven. Oh yes, the lovely silver angel is another gift from Betty. Oh look, here's Mom's little Victorian bear. It fit in her hand perfectly and she would hold it for hours when she was in the nursing home. I can't believe that it's over twenty five years old, but it still looks great. I will hang it here next to the crocheted wreath that Aunt Anita made.
Here's Wendy's snowmen ornaments and the beaded candy cane that sweet Melina made a couple of years ago... and the Victorian snowflake that her mom, Shelly made. Look at the adorable reindeer that Diane and Ricki made! They are so cute. They would have sold easily at a bazaar. Awww, here is Mike's construction paper stocking that he made in the first grade.... It has his picture on the top cuff. The toe of the stocking is missing, but I just tuck it behind a branch and it looks complete and there is my little Mike peeping out of the branches. Whenever I look at it, I miss his ugly old elf that we used to hang near it every year. He loved that old elf. Elf disappeared one year. Was he thrown out with the tree or just came to life and moved out on his own? Perhaps he was tired of me calling him an ugly old elf.

There are many more memories on our tree... the bright stars with the joyful faces that I made one year to depict the joy heaven was feeling the night our Lord was born. The red bows to tie it all together. The crocheted crosses; a memory of Harvey, the sweet boy who loved our Wendy to the day he died. He loved our family and he loved our Lord, and I still miss that young man who will be forever young. My first dog, Suzi Q. sitting in a little gold basket. I love that ornament because it looks just like her.

Now the tree is all decorated and I can sit in front of it and bask in the glory of it. With the music playing, peace and joy fill my soul. I feel as if Heaven has drawn near and loved ones have gathered to rejoice over the King of Heaven with me. There is one lone gift under the tree. It's an elegant gold box with a gold trimmed red velvet ribbon. It has a tag on it that says...

Jesus,

You, who have given so much to me,
must have a gift under my tree.

What can I give you? What can I bring
To honor you now, my Lord and my King?

My riches and talents are all gifts from you
So, what can I offer, what can I do?

O, I know what you would like from me,
I'll put them in a box under the tree.

Not just for your birthday, but all the year through,
I'll try daily to give these gifts to you.

All my love,
Your child,

Vonnie

Inside are pieces of paper with things written on them... like... my love... my obedience... praise... thanks... worship... all of me... etc, etc.
I leave our Christmas tree up until the first of January. Others can't wait to take theirs down, I hate parting with mine. While the tree is up, I feel like those gifts of love upon it are allowing me to spend time with those who have given them to me and that blessing goes away when the box is closed upon them once more. I know the beauty will return the next year, unless, of course, I join them before that. Then it will be an even more blessed Christmas. Praise His Holy name!