



Simple Pleasures

by Kristen Magnacca

When I was growing up, it seemed we had a "Charlie Brown" Christmas tree each and every year. We always chose the tree that looked like it had been on the bottom of the tree pile and was battered and bruised.

My mother's philosophy was to never to cut down another tree, but to purchase an already cut one. In her words, "the industry seems to cut down too many, so each year let's bring one home."

The ritual was that my sister, Karen, my Uncle Frank and I would head off with the mission to find our Charlie Brown Christmas tree, one that needed a good home.



Do you remember the magical slivers of silver tinsel that came wrapped on long, thin cardboard, which were all the rage for tree decorating back then?

Somehow it never seemed to matter that the tree itself looked skinny and scrawny before all the decoration were in their places. It was always beautifully transformed by balls and tinsel, bringing sparkle and delight, a transformation similar to that of the Ugly Duckling.

I think the one memory of our Charlie Brown trees that sticks out the most is the year when the tree toppled over after being fully decorated, tiny silver strings of tinsel tossed about along with the glass ornaments. This resulted in the tree being tied to the curtain rod directly behind it.

Years later, I am the mother and the generational legacy of the tree trimming traditions that created my memories has shifted. I now look at all my mother did during the Holidays with a different set of eyes.

Now, the energy of these memories are filled with awe and gratitude towards my Mom.

She was a full-time working mother, the sole financial supporter for our family. How did she juggle all that she did? Two daughters, household responsibilities, family responsibilities... and on top of all of the everyday concerns, she was creating (to the best of her abilities) a wonderful Christmas for all.

Every year, she hosted Christmas Eve dinner for my father's family, and Christmas dinner for her side of our family. All on a shoestring budget, never thinking she needed or lacked for anything.

Women are the glue that hold things all together: the traditions, the foundations, the love, the family, the joy, the laughter, the tears. In the times of testing we women gather our inner strength and move forward with grace.

On the days when we feel as if we can't hold it together, we have our moments – we all have them, whatever that might mean for you. Perhaps hiding and crying in the shower, running an extra mile, screaming at the top of our lungs where no one can hear us, or driving around the block until full composure flows back in.

As the end of 2010 draws close, be proactive. Take a deep breath and get ready for the hectic inflow of

Holiday preparations. Determine what safety nets you can put in place to allow you the gift of embracing the season instead of dreading it.

A good exercise is conducting a "Year-in-Review" to ready yourself for an amazing 2011. Perhaps send out to the Universe your gratitude for both the challenges and gifts that 2010 brought. Remind yourself that perhaps those moments of testing were really gifts as well.

Think about my childhood of "Charlie Brown" Christmas trees. When all was said and done, those trees brought real beauty to the Holidays.



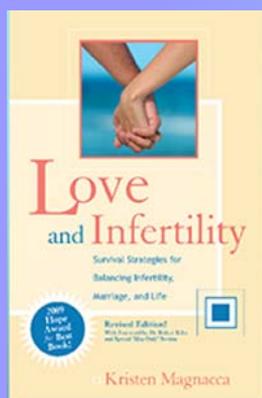
Kristen Magnacca is a mother, author, entrepreneur, speaker, life coach, and expert on the emotional aspects of infertility. Kristen and Mark live on Cape Cod with their children, Grace and Cole.

She published her first book, *Girlfriend to Girlfriend: A Fertility Companion* in 2000.

Love and Infertility, Survival Strategies for Balancing Infertility, Marriage and Life, published in 2004, is the recipient of The Hope Award 2009 for Best Book from RESOLVE, and will be released soon on CD.

Kristen has been featured on the Today Show and in publications including *Woman's World*, the *Boston Globe*, *WebMD.com*, *About.com*, and *Pregnancy.org*.

Kristen invites readers to contact her through her website at www.kristenmagnacca.com



AVAILABLE AT BOOKSTORES & ONLINE

www.amazon.com
www.borders.com
www.barnesandnoble.com