

A CHRISTMAS DINNER

By Robin Leach

My work calls for me to venture to the farthest reaches of the world, but one of my most memorable encounters occurred while traveling close to home.

A few years ago, a group of my far-flung friends decided to gather in Connecticut to celebrate Christmas.

I was to buy all the soft drinks and a doctor friend would get the turkey and trimmings.

On our way from New York City to Connecticut, my friend and I stopped in for a Christmas Eve party in upstate New York. As we left, I ran into the doctor and casually asked him what size bird he had bought. His eyes widened with surprise—he had bought all the drinks.

So here we were on a snowy Christmas Eve with sufficient drinks to serve a cruise ship but not one piece of food for twelve hungry people! We searched around, but every supermarket was closed. Finally, just before midnight, we found ourselves at a gas station quick-food shop.

The manager was willing to sell us cold sandwiches. Other than potato chips, cheese and crackers, he didn't have much else. I was very agitated and disappointed. It was going

to be a rather miserable Christmas dinner. The only bright spot was that he did have two cans of cranberry jelly!

In the midst of my panic, an elderly lady stepped from behind one of the aisles.

"I couldn't help overhearing your dilemma," she said. "If you follow me home, I would happily give you our dinner. We have plenty of turkey, potatoes, yams, pumpkins and vegetables."

"Oh no, we couldn't do that!" I replied.

"But you see, we no longer need it," she explained. "Earlier today we managed to get a flight to Jamaica—to see our family down there, for the holidays."

We couldn't say no to such kindness. We thanked her and followed her car. The journey seemed endless as we meandered through back roads and dimly lit streets. Eventually, we reached this kind woman's house.

We followed her in and, sure enough, she removed a turkey and all the trimmings from the fridge. Despite our attempt to reimburse her for her generosity, she refused our money.

"This is just meant to be," she said. "I don't need it anymore—and you do."

So we accepted her gift, asked her for her name and address, and went on our way.



The next day we impressed and surprised our friends by presenting them with a complete feast and telling them our amazing story about the old lady's help. Despite the last-minute scramble, Christmas dinner turned out to be a great success.

Before we left Connecticut, we went to a department store, picked out a gift and drove to the lady's home to leave our small token of appreciation.

We searched and searched but we couldn't find her place. We couldn't find the street address on any maps. The name she had given us wasn't listed anywhere. Baffled, we questioned several local store owners, yet no one knew of the elderly lady. Even the gas station manager told us that he had never seen her before.

Every effort we made to locate our Christmas angel failed.

As I returned home, I pondered our bizarre encounter with this beneficent woman. Who was this lady who had appeared just in time to help out two desperate strangers, only to disappear with the night?

Years later, when I look back upon that particular holiday season, I recall the joy of gathering with friends from across the world and an amazing little old lady whose generosity embodied the very meaning of the Christmas spirit.

Courtesy of:
Chicken Soup for the Traveler's Soul
Health Communications, Inc.
Deerfield Beach, FL 33442-8190

