

Stealing a few childhood Christmas memories

By ADAM McCUNE
Daily Express Columnist

I have some great memories of Christmas time when I was a child.

First off, I grew up in Wisconsin. The idea that Christmas trees start at \$35 and go up, way up from there is a foreign one for me.

But then again, my memories of getting a tree around this time are a little fuzzy. That's because I think it might be a repressed memory. I think my father stole a tree every year. I'm almost certain of it.

I have a very distinct image of my father stopping the car on some back country road and telling my brother and me to "wait here" while he went to the trunk, pulled out a chainsaw, and walked into the woods.

Not knowing any better, it was only a cause for celebration.

"Oh, we're getting a Christmas tree today! Yes!" I would say. My brother would shush me as if the tree police had wire-tapped our Volkswagen Rabbit. It would usually be then that I realized we probably weren't supposed to do this. The inside of the car would be silent as we waited for dad to return with the stolen Christmas tree, a sym-

bol of Christmas, the birth of our Savior. A savior who would live by the Ten Commandments. Including 'Thou Shall Not Steal.'

The irony wasn't lost on me when I thought of it a few weeks ago. We were buying a Christmas tree at the Animal Rescue League. The sudden urge to grab a tree, slide it in the car, and drive away came over me. You know, for the tradition of it. We didn't, of course.

I know what my father did was wrong, but at least the crime was faceless to us. I wouldn't be able to live with myself knowing I had taken away \$35 from some poor kitten at the Rescue League.

I could be mad at my father for doing this while I was a child, but I'm not. I knew the circumstances my par-

ents were in. They were fighting for every dollar they earned and any money spent on something completely disposable like a Christmas tree was out of the question. So was the thought of not having a tree. So my father, chainsaw in hand, made the fateful decision to bring a little holiday cheer to our home, even if he had to take it.

Things are different now and the days of taking the tree are no longer a tradition in my parents' household. Still, a little part of me wants to drive up some back mountain road and cut one down. I don't hold any grudge for what my father did. After all, that same savior also preached forgiveness.



Adam McCune