

MEMORIES OF A CHRISTMAS FOREST

THE BEST HOLIDAY JOB I EVER HAD

The semitrucks would pull up shortly after nightfall, frosty condensation billowing from their exhaust. But the way I remember it — whether true or not — before you'd even see them turning the corner, you'd be overcome by a welcome, familiar smell of evergreen. On the backs of the trailers, packed tightly between the slatted wood sides, were hundreds of Christmas trees.

Pine, spruce, and fir trees, wreaths, and garlands were all loaded up and shipped from remote farms in Canada, the Upper Peninsula of That State Up North and elsewhere, ending their long journey in the loading bay of Frank's Nursery & Crafts.

I worked at the place as an all-purpose stock boy, janitor, truck driver, and forklift operator for nearly four years in high school and college, trimming shrubs and unloading thousands of pounds of composted cow manure and peat moss alongside my buddy, Eric Dougherty. Considering that the work allowed me to spend most of my day outside, work with my hands, and get into probably the best shape of my life, it had to have been the best job I ever had before law school. But my favorite moments at Frank's by far were those nights when the Christmas-tree stock would show up, bound with twine and ready to unload.

They say that scent triggers some of our strongest memories. Based on those days, I'm inclined to believe it's true. There is nothing like the fragrance that wafts off the boughs of hundreds of fresh pine trees. We'd spend hours shaking off the snow, tossing them off the trucks, and setting them up for display, bundled up against the bitter nighttime temperatures. First, we'd lay out a gravel base over an acre space, and then pound big, 6- to 8-foot steel stakes to lash the trees against, holding them up.

Eventually, after we'd propped enough of them up, it would create this strange little self-contained forest. I'd wind between the trees amid the hush while the moon hung above in the clear night sky. Even as we worked, it was impossible to be unmoved by the crisp quiet and resist the pull of the almost-palpable holiday spirit.

The biggest load would show up right around Thanksgiving, but we'd replenish the stock about four more times before Christmas. Each delivery, the routine was the same. Yet, every time was a unique, refreshing experience, bringing with it this blessed peace — the sort that comes when you're out hiking in the woods.

During the rest of the holiday season, we'd do the normal stuff, carting around the Christmas decorations and whatever else needed doing. And when there was downtime, we'd have "grenade wars" in the huge storage barn, using Christmas ornaments as ammunition — unknown to the bosses, of course. After that last shipment of trees was through, and as satisfying as it was to have a job well done, it was always just a little melancholy. Another year's worth of trees finished, we'd pack into our cars and drive off. But the memories of these nights would follow us for decades to come.

-Jim Monast





UGLY SWEATER PARTIES

It's speculated that the first ugly sweater party took place in Vancouver, Canada, back in 2001. Since then, the trend has become one of the most popular holiday party themes. Come Thanksgiving, you'll start to see racks in all types of clothing stores lined with hideous sweaters. If you're ready to jump on the ugly-sweater-party bandwagon this Christmas season, here are a few things to keep in mind.

Your Very Own Ugly Sweater

Ugly sweaters come in all shapes, sizes, and prices. You can head to H&M or a local thrift store to pick one up. However, if you have a sweater that's been cozier up for

years in the back of your closet or a drawer, now's your chance to give it new life. Arm yourself with a hot glue gun, thread, and needle, and patch Santa, Rudolph, or Frosty on it. And let it be known that an ugly sweater isn't complete without sparkles, beads, and sequins galore.

What Exactly Is an Ugly Sweater Party?

It's rather simple — slip on your favorite Christmas sweater, gather all your friends and family members, make sure there are plenty of refreshments and games, and you're guaranteed to have a top-tier party. A few ugly-sweater-themed games that should be on the agenda include an ugly gift exchange, which is similar to the white elephant exchange, except with the gaudiest gifts you can find; an ugly photo booth, complete with terrible, tacky props; and, of course, an ugly sweater contest.

This is the only time of year when slipping into a lurid red sweater with a stuffed Santa sewn on the front is considered trendy. So adorn yourself in the frumpiest, tackiest sweater you can find, and have some fun this December!

CASE STUDY

JUANITA W.

Juanita W. is one of our favorite folks. We've known her and her husband, Willie, for years. Miss Juanita, as she's known around here, raised her family before working construction for many years at places such as Walsh, Shelly Sands, Kokosing, Kirk Williams, and P.J. Dick. Besides manual work, she drove Bobcats and used sand blasters and power washers.

In May, 2008, at age 62, she was part of the cement contracting crew that was rebuilding the student union building at Ohio State University when she stepped in a hole while shoveling mud out of a trench and twisted her left knee. She followed up with an emergency room visit and went back to work even though she was experiencing increasing discomfort.

Two months later, she fell four feet off a scaffold, dislocating her right patellofemoral joint. Within three months, her doctors were recommending a right knee replacement. She opted instead for

therapy, injections, medication, and a cane that eventually gave way to a walker.



Miss Juanita tried to remain active and always kept a positive attitude, knowing God is in control of her life. An attempt at rehabilitation was derailed by the Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) two years later when they found they couldn't help return her to work. The company's doctor said she'd need permanent restrictions: no kneeling, squatting, crawling; or climbing stairs, ladders, or scaffolding. He also said she could walk for personal needs only (bathroom, breaks, and meals).

The Industrial Commission awarded her permanent total disability in 2011. Since then, while she's relied more on Willie's help to do many things she no longer can, the two of them have remained active in their church and are an encouragement to many who've also experienced hard times. They are a wonderful example of love for each other and of a couple who keep their heads up when life gets tough.

Honesty Is the Best Policy

WHAT TO TELL YOUR PHYSICIAN

Injured workers are often suspicious of the doctor they're required to see for treatment of a job-related incident. Maybe they're unfamiliar with the medical provider or they're worried about doing and/or saying something that will jeopardize their claim.

Whatever the reason, this skepticism can cause the patient to not be entirely honest or adequately detailed when answering the doctor's questions. But what these workers don't realize is that withholding or twisting the truth can hurt their claim eventually. As with many things in life, honesty is the best policy when talking to workers' comp doctors.

No matter who your first visit is with, it's vital that you follow each step to ensure the success of your claim:

1. Fill out the intake form completely and accurately. Even if you've already filled out an incident report for work, still take care to fill out the patient information form completely. Describe every symptom, twinge, or bruise — not just the most painful or problematic.

2. Give a complete history of the work injury. Often, the moment your pain surfaces is not when the injury or exposure first occurs. It's important to describe everything that happened which may have contributed to your injury. If you fell off a ladder one day and woke up the next in extreme pain, the doctor needs to know the whole story, not just that you woke up one day in pain. Also, if you previously experienced pain in

that particular body part, be open about it. If you haven't had ongoing problems with it until now, or if the pain is different, make sure to emphasize this.

3. Don't sign inaccurate or incomplete forms. The medical provider, employer, or managed care organization (MCO) may ask you to sign an initial workers' compensation claim application (Form FROI-1). Don't sign it if the details of your injury are incomplete or inaccurate.

4. Never exaggerate or fake symptoms. A doctor can identify the nature and extent of your injuries through examinations and medical testing. They will know if you're lying, and when they catch you, it may do irreparable harm to your workers' comp claim. Always be honest and thorough.

Even if you have concerns whether the physicians and MCOs have your best interests at heart, honesty is always the best policy. We can point out their bias if we need to, but you shouldn't withhold any information. And, if you're struggling with an employer or MCO you think is dishonest, don't wait. **Call Jim Monast at 614-334-4649 to schedule a strategy session soon!**

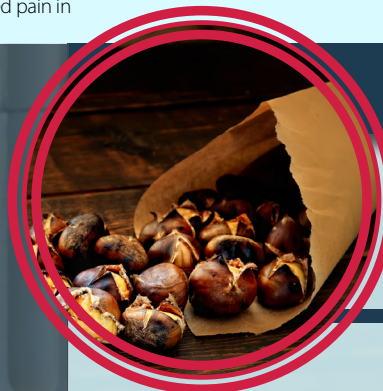


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ANSWER



ABBY'S APPETIZERS

BUTTERY ROASTED CHESTNUTS

Whether or not you have an open fire, you can easily roast some chestnuts using this simple, delicious recipe.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 pounds fresh chestnuts, unpeeled
- 2–3 sprigs rosemary
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter, melted
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt, or more to taste
- Pinch of freshly ground nutmeg
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat oven to 450 F.
2. Place a large sheet of foil on a rimmed baking sheet.
3. On a large, flat workspace, place chestnuts flat side down. Using a sharp knife, carve an X on the rounded side of each chestnut.
4. In a large bowl of hot water, soak chestnuts for 1 minute.
5. Pat dry and transfer to a medium bowl. Add rosemary, butter, salt, pepper, and nutmeg. Toss to coat and transfer to baking sheet. Arrange in a single layer. Gather the edges of the foil together, leaving an opening at the top.
6. Roast until peels curl up, about 30–45 minutes.
7. Transfer to a platter and serve while hot or warm.

Inspired by Bon Appétit

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CHRISTMAS TOURS

GET AWAY AND BE FESTIVE THIS HOLIDAY SEASON



New York City's Rockefeller Center

There's nothing quite like the magical lights of the holiday season, and some destinations in the U.S. have perfected the craft of holiday decoration. If you're looking to get away this December and still engage in seasonal festivities, add one of these places to your must-visit list.

New York City is an iconic location for Christmastime. The scene is like a Hallmark card: ice-skating lovers whiz past miles of twinkling lights underneath an exceptionally tall and amply-decorated tree. The tree is specially selected by Rockefeller Center's landscaping crews, who scout out trees years in advance. It remains lit from November to early January, so you have plenty of time to check it out.

Ranch Christmas in Jackson, Wyoming

Jackson, Wyoming, takes its frontier culture to the next level during the Christmas season. All year, the city proudly displays four elk antler arches, but around the holidays, they are

lit up with white string lights and flanked by snow. The Christmas decorations and lights surrounding the archway make for a Western-themed holiday pulled right out of a John Wayne classic. For holiday admirers looking for a unique spin, Jackson has you covered.

Yearly Yuletide in Santa Claus, Indiana

This one's for the Christmas lover. If you can't make it out to Santa Claus, Indiana, this holiday season, you can still celebrate Christmas in this tiny Midwestern town in January, June, or even October. Embracing its unique name, the town boasts a museum, holiday shopping center, and a Christmas theme park. In a moving tribute, the town's residents also write responses to children's letters to Kris Kringle himself. It's impossible to avoid holiday cheer in this town.

Disney World's Christmas Magic

What better place to celebrate the most magical time of the year than in the most magical place on Earth? Walt Disney World's halls are decked to the max with a parade, gingerbread homes, strings of lights, and festive parties. Plus, costs to visit Disney World can be cheaper during the Christmas season, so keep an eye out for a vacation steal.