

JC and the Christmas Gift

By meredith

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A boys bicycle and its embarrassing problem

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Before any of you think that the story is about that little boy and swaddling clothing, it's not. JC was a shiny new bicycle I received one Christmas. It was bright red and white with chrome trim and a tank with a horn. It came from Sears Roebuck, whose in-house label for sporting goods was JC Higgins. So that's what I called my new bicycle, JC. JC was my mighty steed that would take me to faraway places. I would ride him all around town to places I had not been on foot. He gave me a sense of adventure and turned loose my free spirit. At the time most bikes came with only one speed. There were a few multi-speed bicycles out there at the time. Schwinn had a two speed and if you're really lucky if you get a Raleigh which had five. JC had but one. The bike was equipped with large balloon tires at that time. They made for a better ride but the pedaling was a little harder. The handlebars that were most popular during my youth, really wide chrome plated bars that that like horns on a longhorn steer. This made the steering little slow, but it was easier to handle. After a while, I put a pair of saddlebag wire baskets in the back of the bike. This made it convenient to carry items and books from school. Periodically, I'd also run errands for my mother to the store to pick up just what was needed for that day's dinner. Some kids opted to put baskets on the front of the bike above the front wheel attached the handlebars. This made the bikes a little top heavier and harder to control when loaded. Sometimes when coming out of school you'd look for your bike the playground only to find it was boxed in by bikes on either side. You would have to stand and wait until the owners of the other bikes came so you could extricate your bike from this long line. Once or twice I came out the claim my ride back home, only to find out someone had needed it more than I did. I'd walk on, dejected, but sure enough the bike would show up the next day and I'd reclaim my property. I even went as far as riding it out to my grandparents farm which is about 5 miles in the country. It was then I was glad to have those large balloon tires. For the last 5 miles with the gravel road and the larger tires took the abuse of the gravel much better. JC also taught me many things, in particularly how to care for him. I

would spend a lot of time in the summer washing and waxing the frame and cleaning up the rust off the chrome. Then, every so often, I would tear him completely down and oil all the bearings. Then reassemble him again, being certain that every nut was tight. We did not have a garage. Just what had been one before and was now just being used as a storage shed. Having one of those old barn side door rollers that had to be moved aside to put the car inside. However, one of the rollers had long since broken and the only thing holding the door up was the hook latch on the inside. Inside this garage, turned shed, were all the treasures that the previous family didn't want and some that we had added. In fact it was so crowded I could barely get the lawnmower in through the side door. There was just enough room to put it in and close the door. That being said, JC sat out in the hot sun, and in the rain, and the snow all year long. After about three years JC was beginning to show signs of wear, especially the saddle. The genuine imitation vinyl seat had split, the stitching in the bindings along the edge had given away, but the bindings were still there. This meant that whenever rained the water would soak into the padding in the seat and trough in the bindings. The saddle was still good, but the covering was shot. Even three days after a rain if I used JC to go someplace I was assured that if I sat down I would end up with a wet bottom. I came up with a solution I thought was quite clever. The local Western Auto Store had seat covers for bicycles. A new cover was only a dollar and a half. I had fifty cents and I thought if I could ask my mother and tell her my case she would lend me the other dollar. I came into the front door one day and calling to her, "Mom." I explained to her the situation and, I pleaded my case to her and my dilemma. A boy my age shouldn't be going around looking like he wet himself when going to get a loaf of bread. She was looking back at me but not directly. She was looking in some far-off place that I was unaware. Then in a flash all five foot two of her bolted back into the kitchen, of which an inch and a half was probably being gracious. She dove into the lower kitchen corner cabinet right by the stove. Digging far back into the recesses of the cabinet and pulling out pots and pans, she suddenly extracted a small brown sack. Getting up off the floor she turned to me and said, "Merry Christmas, son." I took the bag from her and slowly opened it and there within was a brand-new saddle cover. Apparently she had put down there with the intent of giving it to me last Christmas. We both kind of smiled at one another. I took this cover out of the bag and ran outside the place it on JC. So what's the take away from my little tale of JC? It's these following items:

- 1) I got to keep my fifty cents.
- 2) My mother saved the dollar.
- 3) Christmas in July is sometimes best.
- 4) I got this wonderful story to tell you.