

## Holiday Memories: The Cheap Skate Award

While cleaning a closet recently, I opened a box I'd forgotten was there. Inside was an old ice skate with a plastic spray of holly leaves and berries twined around it. My heart warmed. I'd found the Cheap Skate!



*The Cheap Skate Award*

I'm one of five children, and we all had spouses at the time the Cheap Skate was instituted. Each year at Christmas we exchanged names within our generation for gifts to be presented at Mom and Dad's house in Maine on Christmas Eve. The Cheap Skate was constructed by my father, and it was the prize we'd agreed to give each year to the person who had given the best gift and spent the least amount of money for it. Dad also added a small gift for the winner.

The giving limit was ten dollars. Of course, the selection of the winner was subjective. Was a fantastic gift bought for \$10 more worthy than a really cool gift bought for a dollar? If the ten in our generation—siblings and spouses—couldn't agree who should get the award that year, we voted. In the event of a tie, Dad was always there to cast the deciding vote.

This system led to the giving and receiving of some very creative gifts. One year my oldest sister won it after drawing my husband's name. We always drew the names for the next year at the Christmas gathering, giving us plenty of time to shop. We also made sure no one repeated the name he'd had the previous season.



This is my dad, Oral Page, playing Santa in 1996 at the family gathering.

The year Pat won, she started her shopping early. At a yard sale, she found an old wooden tool box with some vintage handsaws in it for \$5. That bargain was hard to beat. The “club” mentioned below was an antique golf club that went to my late brother-in-law Ron, a golf lover.

I am pretty sure I won the award the last year it was presented, but I can’t remember now what the gift was or who received it. I only know that we stopped presenting the award after my mom died, the skate ended up with me. Later, after my dad died, we moved to western Kentucky, and the box went with us and wound up on a high closet shelf.

This tradition gave us all a lot of joy with our searching for a gift the recipient would love, our secrets shared, and loving rivalry.



The Cheap Skate

When my husband took the Cheap Skate out of its box to take a picture for me, he found the following poem in the bottom of the box. We believe it was written on the occasion the award for presented for the first time, but none of my siblings admits to composing it:

#### The Cheap-Skate Award

While feeling quite witty,  
We all wrote this ditty  
Concerning the "Cheap Skate" award.  
You certainly won it,  
How could you have done it?  
You bought more than we could afford.  
It now is well known,  
You pared cost to the bone  
When buying the dishes and club.  
The bottles you keep,  
For being so cheap.  
A gift from our father, so dear.  
He'll add an antique,  
Or something unique  
To the skate for the winner next year.

Tho' you now have the corner  
On this dubious honor,  
We all want our turn with the skate.  
So, return by November,  
To be won in December  
And make sure it won't be too late!  
-by Ima Cheapskate II

I hope you enjoyed reading about our family tradition. It was lots of fun, and several people have told me they'd like to start a similar tradition.