



Seniors from Bria Communities retirement residences share their fondest holiday memories, festive advice, favourite Christmas treats and delicious drink recipes.

— Get to know your neighbours™

I still get choked up telling this story. It was 1938 or '39, my parents took my brother and I to the Woodward's Christmas window display in Vancouver. It was beautiful and I was impressed. We ooo-ed and ahh-ed over it.

Then it was time to go see Santa Claus. He sat in a huge chair at a big desk with a large book in front of him and he held a giant pencil to write your name in the big book. You sat on his knee to tell him what you want for Christmas, he gave us all a candy cane and we were on our way.

I sure hoped that Santa wouldn't forget me at Christmas.

Soon after, I was taken sick and was confined to bed. One thing turned into another and I missed school that year from Christmas vacation to the beginning of April.



As Christmas arrived I was feeling sick and so sorry for myself and very low. On Christmas eve, my parents took me from my bed so I could see the beautiful tree and I hung my stocking and had to go right back to bed.

Christmas morning my parents woke me up and to my surprise a lovely beautiful Christmas tree was on my dresser with presents under it and my stocking was filled with goodies. Santa had not forgotten me!

~Doris Stroyan, Sunridge Gardens



“Just carry on. We are forced onto another path and we will probably find our lives in the New Year stronger for having made the effort required. Happy New Year.”

~Jessie Craig, 100 years old, Magnolia Gardens

It was a long time ago when us three kids lived on our farm with my Mom and Dad. Our nearest neighbour was a mile down the unplowed country road. On Christmas day, Mother and neighbour Phyllis would get on the old crank phones and say Merry Christmas to each family.

It was a bad time of year for the flu and head colds to be brought home from our schools that often made all five of us sick. This year was no different but much worse. Mother passed on the bad news to neighbour Phyllis that all of us were barely able to crawl out of bed to do any of the normal farm chores, and that there would be no Christmas dinner and little else to eat.

A couple of hours later, we looked up at our road gate to see Neighbour Tracy struggling through a fresh 18" snowfall carrying a big pack on his back. He wouldn't come in the house but passed in a big pot from his backpack that was full of freshly made chicken soup. This was our Christmas dinner, and there couldn't have been a better choice for a family who were all too sick to make anything to eat for themselves.

~Allan Warner, The Waterford



“Keep a positive attitude. If you can, keep communicating with as many family and friends. I use Facetime, this is the best invention ever made.”

~Jill Carroll, Sunridge Gardens

OUR FAVOURITE CHRISTMAS TREATS



Candy cigarettes on Christmas morning. It was the only time we were allowed to have them. They were in our Christmas stocking along with oranges, nuts and a small toy. We were allowed to open our stockings before breakfast. I would sit with my dad after breakfast and pretend I was smoking with him.

~Diane Mills, Sunridge Gardens

Brown paper bag at church with nuts and mandarin orange

~Johanna Karse, The Wexford

Christmas fruit cake. My parents had a bakery and my father made Christmas cakes to sell in the shop even during the war when stuff was rationed.

~Sheila Baker, The Waterford

Toffee apples. Mom made them with sprinkles.

~Desley Cook, The Wexford

Christmas pudding with lots of fruit in it. My mom would make it for us with a special syrup on top!

~Gordon Phillips, Magnolia Gardens

In 1946 my Father returned from service overseas as a Canadian officer on loan to the British Forces. He had been gone from my young life from age four to nine. First training on Vancouver Island and fighting with the British forces through Sicily, Italy, moving northward in their quest for the Hun. All of this was beyond my understanding at such a young age and when he arrived in Vancouver by train after the war I did not recognise him.

A few months later we had our first full family reunion. It was a memorable event, dressing the tree on Christmas Eve while singing Christmas carols accompanied by piano which both my parents played. Christmas morning we had ordinary socks hung by the fire but laid at the end of our beds, filled with an orange each, nuts that had to be shelled using a nutcracker. Finally, after what seemed like hours we rushed downstairs to have breakfast before we were allowed into the living room to discover what presents were under the tree.

We three children delved into our boxes brought back from Europe by dad. He gave my oldest brother a German Luger hand gun which impressed both brothers mightily. My second brother opened a match box which held within a scorpion



Karel, her brothers, mother and 'Tipper' in a photo sent overseas to her Father.

(dead, thank goodness!) Mom received a cameo from Italy and I, a sweet necklace for a child of only nine.

Later we were joined by our Aunt and my cousins for a big family meal with dad carving the turkey with great panache. Christmas pudding with hard sauce was a real treat. The adults had wine and liqueurs while our generation was treated to ginger ale. With all of us together for the first time in so many years, it was very special indeed.

~Karel Ley, The Wexford

“Count your blessings and look out for one another, knowing that we will come through this together.” ~Pat Trafford, The Wexford



CHERISHED TRADITIONS

I grew up in Australia, 100 miles from Sydney. We would go in the bush—a very long walk—and cut a eucalyptus tree and drag it home. It made the house smell so good. Because of dragging it, the leaves would only be on one side, so would put it against the wall so people couldn't see the bare side. We decorated with popcorn!

~Desley Cook, The Wexford

I loved going to church Christmas Eve. Someone made a little stable and the children enacted the Lord's birth. The music was wonderful.

~Edna Smith, Magnolia Gardens

I'm of Norwegian descent, we had all Scandinavian food. Lute fish— it stinks but when you're raised with it, it doesn't bother you. We'd have rice pudding with a nut in it, and the one who got the nut was next to get married.

~Inger Parent, Sunridge Gardens

Family get togethers in the past with 20-25 people with traditional foods. (No sprouts please)

~Bob Brydon, The Waterford

Going to midnight mass. Afterwards we could go home and have milk and cookies.

~Barbara Terwolbeck, Magnolia Gardens

“Just keep being merry. We have all seen a lot of dark spots in our life and it always helps to keep a good attitude.”

~Gordon Phillips, Magnolia Gardens

We were on our honeymoon in the Cayman Islands and Christmas Day was warm. In the morning we went to the little church near the sea and all through the service we could hear the waves on the beach through the open doors and windows. We were staying with my husband's friends and their daughter invited us for Christmas dinner—roast turkey with all the trimmings. It was a beautiful Christmas

~Sheila Baker, The Waterford

The best Christmas gift besides socks, shirts, ties and the usual, was to be invited by our two sons in Alberta to spend Christmas with them and their families, grandkids, and great grandchildren. The air fare was sent to us by our two sons. It was a time I will never forget. It was so special.

~John Wickham, Sunridge Gardens



WHITE CHRISTMAS MARGARITA



1 14 oz can unsweetened coconut
milk
12 oz Silver tequila
8 oz Triple Sec
1/4 c lime
4 cups ice
Sanding sugar for rimming the glass
Lime slices and cranberries for
garnish.

Combine coconut milk, tequila,
triple sec, lime juice and ice in
blender. Blend until smooth. Rim
glasses with lime wedge and dip
in sanding sugar. Pour mix into
glasses and garnish with lime and
cranberries. Makes 6 servings

~Diane Mills, Sunridge Gardens

Born in 1943, I was the last of a family of 12 children. Given my position in the hierarchy, I naturally received lots of love from my brothers and sisters and especially from my mother.

In October 1947, my mother went to the hospital to have another baby. I was waiting for its arrival, so that I in turn could have my own little sibling to play with. My father brought me to the hospital to see my mom because I was missing her, but I did not see the baby.

“Where is the baby?,” I asked my father, who had a sad look on his face. The nurse who came into the room told me the little baby had gone to Heaven. I started to cry.

During Christmas of that year, under the tree, I saw a nice box, well wrapped, that was for me. I opened it and I saw a beautiful little pink baby wearing a touque, mittens, socks and a diaper. Her legs and her arms moved, and the doll came with a little bottle. When I gave her water, the baby doll wetted her diaper.

Usually for Christmas, my mother repaired all of the old dolls, painted their faces, and made new clothes for them with her sewing machine. I always got the hand-me-down, but this time, I had my very first new doll that was only for me. I was so happy. I love my mother and I think about her to this very day.

~Cecile Wacowich, The Waterford

I was a delivery boy for a drug store when I was 12 years old. I worked on Christmas Eve and everybody gave me tips that night. I got paid the same night and I was making \$.35 per hour. When I got home that night I had \$25 which was a lot of money!

~Don Wood, The Wexford

My Dad always

got a huge Christmas tree. We had a bay window and it reached the ceiling. When the decorations were on (I don't remember who decorated it) we children, six boys and four girls, would sit around and play "I spy with my little eye" and of course that was fun.

~Edna Smith, Magnolia Gardens



My Christmas would start on

Christmas Eve. This was our special night to have all the family over for Ukrainian food. It was a busy night to prepare 12 dishes of our traditional food and every year we had to add extra dishes as the family grew. The young ones made the fruit punch and there was much help from everyone. Nothing but good memories each year to remember.

~Julie Sereda, Sunridge Gardens

OUR FAVOURITE CHRISTMAS CAROLS

White Christmas by Bing Crosby. It definitely has Christmas memories for me.

~Joyce Parker, The Wexford

Cristãos, Alegria Que Nasce Jesus a traditional Portuguese carol. Translation: Christians, Joy That Jesus Was Born.

~Maria Lucia Amaral, Sunridge Gardens

Good King Wenceslas. I like the warm tone and sense of winter landscape.

~Frances McDonald, The Waterford

I'll Have A Blue, Blue Christmas Without You by Buck Owens. Thanks to Covid-19.

~John Wickham, Sunridge Gardens

Little Town of Bethlehem. Our family moved to Surrey BC. I went to primary school and Sunday school where our choir leader taught this song. I loved it

~Clara Penner, The Wexford

Grandma Got Run Over By A Reindeer. I smile every time I hear it or even think of it... 'But as for me and Grandpa, we believe'

~Gwyneth Gilliland, Sunridge Gardens



OUR FAVOURITE CHRISTMAS TREATS

We had a pond on our property and we could only have ice cream in the winter when we could get the ice and make ice cream. We didn't mind churning it because we got the ice cream.

~Margaret Prescott, Sunridge Gardens

Christmas Log Cake from Safeway.

~Anne Joyce, Magnolia Gardens

A mandarin orange in the toe of my stocking I hung up with care.
My dad's work sock.

~Fran Taylor, The Wexford

Turkey and my mom's Christmas dinner.

~Mary Saunders, The Waterford

My Mom was always prepared with "Super Shortbread" and we would toast to a happy future together with shortbread and wine. The children were always a part of this ritual.

~Jessie Craig, Magnolia Gardens

When I was young we lived next door to my grandparents. Gramma made the best home made fudge ever, and she also made a french meat pie, a Canadian Tourtière. So delicious.

~Jill Carroll, Sunridge Gardens

My husband, Albert, was a joker. He liked to give a gift that was funny. One day we were shopping and he saw this great big pair of plaid shorts. He said, "I know who I'm going to give these to." On Christmas, our son Jim opened them up, and Albert saw them and said "I think they're a bit small for you, Jim."



Jim Langla and the big shorts.

1999

The next year, Jim gave the shorts back to Albert. And our daughter-in-law's father Bill looked at them and said, "I think these will fit me." It was so funny that year! The shorts made the round the next Christmas too.

~Barbara Langla,
Sunridge Gardens

"Times will get better."

~Betty Webber,
Magnolia Gardens

"Be grateful to be alive and well and do everything possible to conquer this beast that has ruined so much."

~Shirley Burnell
The Waterford

“Tell your loved ones how much you LOVE them. We isolate now so we can gather again with no one missing.”

~John & Audrey Illott, Magnolia Gardens



THE BEST GIFT I EVER RECEIVED...

My Christmas gift came early in 1948 on Christmas eve—so I opened it. My second baby son! Born in Grace Hospital, Vancouver. No rush, no fuss. Treated like a queen with all the other moms in the maternity ward.

~Mary Wight, The Waterford

When I was five or six I received a flashlight from Santa Claus. I couldn't wait for darkness so I could go outside with it. This was the Depression, my father made \$80 a month and there were nine in the family. There wasn't much money for expensive gifts!

~Les Edgeworth, The Wexford

My parents separated when I was in Grade One and during the three years of separation my father would come the day before Christmas and each of us kids got one present. This year he gave me a beautiful red dress with many black buttons on each sleeve. It was lovely and I was able to wear it for many years to come.

~Hilda Rasmussen, Sunridge Gardens

An engagement ring from my husband David (now deceased). It was 1963, we were emigrating to Canada from London.

~Yvonne Lyle, The Wexford

My husband took me on a cruise in 1999 to the Caribbean for our 17th anniversary.

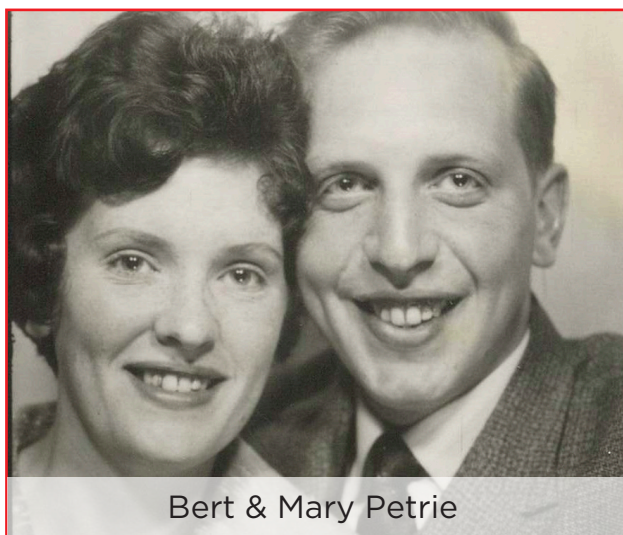
~Flo Wilson, Sunridge Gardens

A sleeping doll that could walk and stand up.

~Barbara Terwolbeck, Magnolia Gardens

My 15 year old girlfriend and her family emigrated to Canada and left me abandoned and lonely in Scotland. Two months later I received my first Christmas gift from my girlfriend and first from Canada. It was a plaid shirt which I wore with pride and was greatly admired by my friends. 56 years later Mary and I exchanged our final Christmas gifts.

~Bert Petrie, Magnolia Gardens



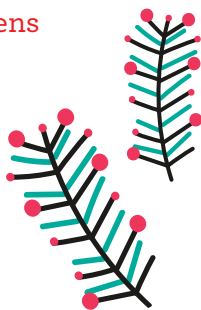
Bert & Mary Petrie

First Christmas with my future wife to be was at my parents house. My gift to my wife was a siamese kitten. “Tammy” shared our apartment and surprised us a few weeks later with a litter of kittens. We kept one and gave the other two to my wife’s parents.

~Jim Scott, Magnolia Gardens

Living in Vancouver in the 1960s, Christmas eve was always special at the Watt house. Family members and friends lived within a ‘hop and a skip’ by car. There was singing around the piano. There was a warm feeling of ‘joie de vivre’ of expectation!

~Ella Watt, The Waterford



My favourite Christmas treat was my good old teddy bear, Fizer Wolcott Wemberly Weyman, he is now 80 years old.

~Grace Munro, Sunridge Gardens

My most memorable Christmas should not be a memory lasting this long for any one.

It occurred less than a month before Christmas 1969, when on November 29, without preamble, my wife asked me to leave her and our three children aged ten, eight, and seven and move from our home. I celebrated Christmas on my own that year by delivering a box of multiple gifts to the family but did not receive any acknowledgement or thanks.

The memory of that time faded with

passing years as other loved ones shared my life. Each year I have managed to keep things in perspective and enjoy the season for the most part. This year a meltdown broke through my reserve upon receiving the request for a “Memorable Christmas Story”

Thank you for giving the opportunity to express these thoughts and perhaps to exorcise the sadness of the experience. Christmas this year, 2020, will be a happier time for having put this narrative into cathartic words on paper.

~Name withheld by request

MULLED CIDER WITH CINNAMON STICKS

2 liters cranberry juice
2 liters apple juice
Bring to a simmer
In a cheesecloth combine:
1 tsp whole cloves
1 tsp allspice

Add the cheesecloth package along
with a couple of cinnamon sticks.
Simmer for an hour. Add sugar to taste.

~Sheila Homfeld, Sunridge Gardens

“We are so lucky to live in
Canada. Smile, do whatever you
can to make this Christmas a
little brighter for someone else.”

~Gwyneth Gilliland, Sunridge Gardens

When I was six, Sister Ann asked
my mother if I would sing Silent Night at
midnight mass on Christmas Eve. And I’m
not a singer, I’m more of a tomboy, but
I sang Silent Night at midnight. It must
have been quite touching. My mother
was crying, and even the Nun had tears
in her eyes. But I’ll never forget what
happened next.

The church was big and had a big choir

THE BEST CHRISTMAS DRINKS



Dad would make ginger beer.
It had to sit for a while through the
night, you would hear the bottles
popping.

~Desley Cook, The Wexford

A Rusty Nail: Scotch and Drambuie

~Bert Petrie, Magnolia Gardens

Harvey Wallbanger was a favorite

-2 oz Vodka

-1 oz Cointreau

I never met one I didn’t like.

~Les Edgeworth, The Wexford

A drink of scotch whiskey with ice
and ginger ale just before dinner

~Harry Hinkleman, Sunridge Gardens

White Pinot Grigio

~Sandy Karse, The Wexford

loft where I sang my solo. When I finished
my solo, I turned to leave the balcony
with my mother. There was a hymnal on
the railing. I bumped it and it dropped
down out of the balcony.

The clergy were on their way into church
and I don’t know whose head I hit, but it
hit someone. Needless to say my mother
was horrified.

~Margaret Prescott, Sunridge Gardens

We moved from East 50th and Gladstone St. near Victoria Drive in Vancouver, BC, by train to McBride, BC in April, 1939.

There were no roads in or out of McBride at this time. A relative picked us up at the train station and took us with horse and wagon out to my grandfather's farm house, six miles from town.

It was a very large farm house with two stories, so there was enough room for my family of five, my grandparents and two uncles. With the help of two neighbours and my two uncles and my father we proceeded to build a log house in the farm across the road from Grandad's farm. The house was completed in 1942.

Christmas Eve 1942, we were sitting by the Christmas tree that we had cut



Harry and his wife, Eleanor outside the log house in McBride, BC.

down in our backyard close to our new log house. We decorated it with homemade trinkets and a few candles that we would only burn for a few minutes because of the fire hazard. We had shortbread and icebox cookies and chocolate fudge that my mother made from scratch along with a cup of hot chocolate.

~Harry Hinkleman, Sunridge Gardens

EGG NOG VARIATIONS

We made it by beating two eggs, adding milk and nutmeg or a little bit of cinnamon. Beat together and have a glass with a Christmas cookie or two.

~Edna Smith, Magnolia Gardens

Add Scotch

~Don Wood, The Wexford

Egg Nog—egg, half and half, warm milk, dash of vanilla and rum

~Frances McDonald, The Waterford



Jean Burnham of The Waterford enjoying homemade egg nog.



OUR FAVOURITE CHRISTMAS TREATS

Treats were scarce during war years. My favorite treats were mainly made by my mother. Cloutie Dum Pling (Cloth Dumping) was very popular.

~Bert Petrie, Magnolia Gardens

Christmas cake. Mom was a really good baker.

~Winona Thorp, The Waterford

Popcorn balls made by my mom. For years I made them for my children.

~Bonnie Rose, The Wexford.

Christmas donuts made by maternal Grandmother.

~Bob Brydon, The Waterford

White cookies with red sprinkles on top. Made by mom and decorated with sprinkles. My sister cut teeny ones by using the bottle top of the vanilla bottle. Mom put them in a pint jar and hid them so the boys wouldn't find them too soon.

~Clara Penner, The Wexford

My favourite was my Mother's Christmas cookies, but I thought Santa made them.

~M. Joan Bahr, Magnolia Gardens

Sweet bread and tangerine

~Tony Amaral, Sunridge Gardens

My favourite tradition was having family all together for Christmas dinner

and we opened our gifts from under the Christmas tree.

~Verna Harris, Magnolia Gardens



“When we look back over the years, we experienced many problems: the Depression, wars, serious illness, economic downturns. When these things were happening, we thought they would never go away. With the coronavirus we can now see some light at the end of the tunnel. Hopefully it will become a thing of the past soon. My wife used to say “Take one day at a time and hope for the best.”

~Les Edgeworth, The Wexford

Every Christmas was special but, in 1967 we had adopted Wendy and she was a year old. I was having all my family and Mel's for dinner, but Christmas Eve I opened one of Wendy's gifts. It was the cutest fancy dress! I even woke her up so I could see it on her! Adorable! I took pictures, then put her back to bed. I know, I'm crazy!

~Elaine Hislop, Sunridge Gardens



OUR FAVOURITE CHRISTMAS CAROLS

Santa Claus is Coming to Town (Bing Crosby). I like the rhythm of it and the excitement it brings.

~Gordon Phillips, Magnolia Gardens

Jingle Bells. As a youngster I liked jingling the bells. I always used to go around the house with bells.

~Margaret Prescott, Sunridge Gardens

Twelve Days of Christmas! So much fun to watch people stand and sing their part!

~Evelyn Fowler, The Wexford

A Holly Jolly Christmas by Burl Ives
It captures the happy atmosphere of the holiday.

~Jim Scott, Magnolia Gardens

It was 1936 on the cold, snowy Saskatchewan prairies in the midst of the Great Depression. On Christmas morning, beside the tree was a brand new store-bought, kid-size, red wagon with rubber wheels for my older brother and me.

~Ed Martin, Magnolia Gardens

My oldest son David was born

November 20th, 1957. His first Christmas we put him under the Christmas tree. He was our best Christmas present ever!

~Joyce Parker, The Wexford

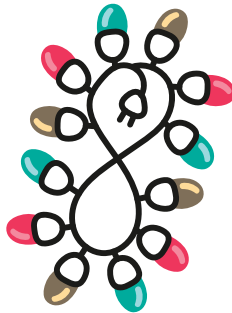
My parents, two sisters and I

always sang carols by the fireplace, especially on Christmas Eve. For many years my Dad was overseas and the Christmas he came home remains one of the most magical memories of my childhood.

~Barbara Geddes, The Waterford

“Sing—even if you are tone deaf, and in the shower if you are shy! Smile—even to yourself.”

~Maria Lucia Amaral,
Sunridge Gardens



“Appreciate what family you do have near you. Plan a project and work together virtually, instead of feeling sorry for yourself.”

~Susan Simmons, Magnolia Gardens

I was four years old when we moved to Camp Morton, Manitoba (ten miles north of Gimly.) It was our first Christmas in Canada. My father asked my sister and I to go for a walk in the woods with him and pick out a Christmas tree. We did and he cut it down and brought it home.

It was at the beginning of the second world war. They were hard times and we didn't have any decorations. Dad had bought some peanuts which we tied on the branches and we made some paper rings. He got some straw and put it on the floor below the tree to make it look like in Europe. We had our Christmas Eve dinner, sang some Ukrainian carols, and opened our Christmas presents and played cards.

My mother left the room to get our beds ready for the night. I decided to look out the window at all the beautiful stars in the sky when I spotted Jesus in the manger with Mary and Joseph in the middle of all the stars! I could not believe my eyes and wanted to call my Mom but I felt glued to the window and couldn't move or speak.

Finally after a couple of minutes I was able to turn around and call Mom but when I looked back at the window, the vision was gone. My family did not believe me and said I was imagining, but I can still see it in my mind today.

~Ollie Hodges, The Wexford



The best gift I ever received was a Flexible Flyer Sleigh. We lived in a hilly part of New Westminster and a mile long hill was blocked off. My sleigh was light and fast and easy to pull back up the hill. A local parent built a 12 foot sleigh and that was fun (as long as a father volunteered to pull it back up the hill.)

~Jim Scott, Magnolia Gardens

“Don’t let Covid-19 get the best of you! Keep happy!”

~Bud & Helen Seabrook, Magnolia Gardens



The year was 1952, my four younger brothers and I were excited on Christmas Eve as we hung up our stockings and tried once again to imagine what might be in the parcels under our sparkling Christmas tree.

All too soon we were sent off to bed and to sleep.

When we got up Christmas morning we got a huge surprise when our dad announced that our Mom was in the hospital and that we had a new baby sister. Oh yes we enjoyed our new toys and games, and the treats in our stockings but for all of us our new little sister was the best gift of all.

~Ruth Shankland, Sunridge Gardens

THE BEST GIFT I EVER RECEIVED...

My bicycle. My parents gave it to me. I had waited for it for two years.

~Mary Saunders, The Waterford

The best gift was a music box. The top jumped up at the words ‘Pop Goes the Weasel!’ My two brothers gave it to me.

~Clara Penner, The Wexford

It was the late 1930s. Money was scarce. On this particular year the teacher put our names in a box and we had to draw a name, then get a gift for that person. The gift I got was Snow White and the Seven Dwarves. About 2.5” high, brightly coloured, clay-type material. The joy that gift brought still resonates after all these years.

~Ella Watt, The Waterford

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