

Joyce's Journal

A monthly dispatch from Joyce A. Miller, Writer



CHRISTMAS CARDS & GHOST STORIES!

At the end of the year, it makes sense to think about the people and animals that are no longer with us. Christmas was originally connected to the Winter Solstice and the pagan festival of Yule. The darkest day of the year was seen by many as a time when the dead would have access to the living. By the time Charles Dickens came around with **A Christmas Carol**, the Industrial Revolution meant fewer days off for everyone. Christmas was just like any other day of the week. **A Christmas Carol** ushered in a new commercialized holiday with the ghosts of past, present and future. **Smee!** by A.M. Burridge is another ghost story that takes place on Christmas Eve. Twelve friends are playing a hide-and-seek game called Smee in an old, dark house and suddenly a thirteenth player joins them.

On the topic of life beyond death, I recently viewed Jane Goodall's interview featured on Netflix's **Famous Last Words**. During the conversation, she shared her concept of a "cloud contingent"—her term for deceased loved ones she believes exist in the afterlife. This beautiful notion resonated deeply with me. Each evening, Jane and her sister would raise a glass of whiskey in honor of these departed souls. For Dr. Goodall, this "cloud contingent" remained present in spirit, sustaining her legacy through the work of others and encompassing both human and animal companions alike. She passed away on October 1, 2025.

A GLIMPSE OF
WHAT'S INCLUDED:

Corinne Melchers'
Christmas cards!

Another tradition that appeared around the same time as **A Christmas Carol** was the sending of Christmas cards. Because I love happy mail, this is one holiday tradition that I enjoy, and I make my own cards. Usually, I paint a painting with my greyhound Coheed in some kind of Christmas scene, my husband photographs it and prints it on the cards. With my broken arm, this year I was unable to make a painting, but I made a collage. My heroine Corinne also made her own Christmas cards. From **Mrs. Gari Melchers**:

Corinne drew and titled her own Christmas cards. "A Bountiful Christmas to You" featured a cornucopia of gifts falling from the sky. \$1,000 bills, a baby in a cradle, flowers, champagne, and a French horn. She based her card titled "Blessed Christmas" on one of their antique wax figurines of the Holy Family's flight into Egypt. Her neighbors and friends anticipated seeing what she would draw on the cards each year. Many of them collected the cards and saved them for their own decorations.

Mrs. Gari Melchers is available now for preorder on Amazon. The release date is January 6, 2026, and I'm hoping to have a book launch party in February. As a bonus for this month's newsletter, I'm going to include photos of the Christmas cards that Corinne made and sent out.

I live in the Church Hill section of Richmond, VA with my husband and my retired racing greyhound. Before I started writing, I worked for 30 years at a nuclear physics research laboratory.

Do what you came here for!



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