



*American Institute of Inspectors
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Dear Members

With the Holiday Season upon us we are coming to the close of another year. It seems like we just had the millennium celebrations yesterday. It has been quite a year here at the A.I.I. office. As most of you know the A.I.I. office moved from California to Oregon via Washington state. There have been many challenges along the way. Some bigger than others, but for the most part it has been pretty exciting. I continue to be in awe at the wonderful support I receive from so many of you on such a regular basis.

When I took over the position of Executive Director I had a strong back ground in Customer Service and I believe myself to be a good inspector but I had no real experience running a non-profit trade association. I have studied our By-Laws, Standards of Practice, Code of Ethics, inside out trying to put forth the effort I felt was necessary to move our association forward in a positive way. I have met with attorneys, accountants, other Executive Directors. There have been many, many, many late night calls to President, Scott Merritt and Chairman, Brent Foster. And Yes, there have also been tears of frustration and of joy.

This really is a big job. I feel honored that you have allowed me the opportunity to become your Executive Director. I have learned so much this year in the process that without this opportunity, I would not have had the chance to do so.

We are continuing to grow in numbers and are now recognized at some state levels for our professionalism in providing training and continuing education. We presented two very successful Conferences this year in Portland, Oregon. A new position of Technical Advisor has been created to assist in advancing our technology. We have people working on a new Web-Site for our association. The level of enthusiasm from within our membership is contagious. I feel your pride in our association when we speak.

I am feeling a little sad as we stand at the turning point of changing our officers. Brent has been our Chairman for three years through some tough times and with Scott as President this year, they have worked very hard for our association. I really hate to see them leave office, but do fully understand how grateful they are to have fulfilled their obligations. The consolation comes in receiving two very qualified gentlemen to fill these positions; Ron Cloyd will become our Chairman and Bill Schwahn will be our 2001 President.

Plans are underway for our 2001 Spring Conference to be held in April in Portland, Oregon. Many members have expressed their pleasure at having the last two conferences in Portland as a central location for many inspectors. I feel very positive about our future. Together, we are doing things we can not do alone!

Best wishes for a Happy Holiday Season and a most Prosperous New Year to come.

From The Office of The American Institute of Inspectors

Christmas attachment sent in by a grateful A.I.I. member, to share with you;

SANTA CLAUS IS COMING TO TOWN

Who is this Santa Claus and why is he coming to town? Once upon a time, around A.D. 300, there lived a good bishop in the far away city of Myra in present-day Turkey. This man called Saint Nicholas is now the most popular Catholic saint. He is the special guardian of maidens, children, merchants, and sailors. One legend tells us that St. Nicholas restored life to three youths who had been murdered and hidden in a tub by a wicked Innkeeper. Another legend gives us clues to the origin of hanging up stockings for Santa. A nobleman had three daughters, but not enough money to provide each a dowry. The father nearly abandoned them to a sinful course of life when St. Nicholas came to the rescue! Secretly, he visited the man's house at night and threw in a bag of gold through an open window. The gold landed at the father's feet and was used for the eldest daughter's wedding. St. Nicholas threw in gold twice more for the other two girls. From this incident evolved the custom of the older members of a household placing presents in the shoes or stockings of their young relatives.

St. Nicholas' robe allowed him to travel instantly from place to place. In Holland, he supposedly uses a horse for his journey at night over house roofs. The early Dutch settlers brought the St. Nicholas customs to New York from where they spread throughout the U.S.A. and back to the British Empire. The Dutch children traditionally place something near the fireplace, such as a shoe or plate, to receive gifts that Santa will drop down the chimney during the night. Because St. Nicholas Day is on December 6th, the festivals of Christmas were easily blended with St. Nicholas legends. Christmas was probably assigned December 25th to correspond to pagan festivals during the time of the winter solstice (when days begin to get longer). These festivals celebrated the increasing sun light or "rebirth" of the sun, and supposedly made Christianity more meaningful to pagan converts.

Our tradition of Christmas trees stems from the use of evergreens by Celtic and Teutonic tribes. They honored these plants at winter solstice festivals as symbolic of eternal life. The Druids considered the mistletoe to have magical properties. Another tale suggests that Martin Luther began the Christmas tree custom in Germany. Christmas became a legal holiday in 1856. Through the centuries customs of all lands have been added to this background, making Christmas the greatest folk festival in the world today.

Encyclopedia Americana

In the long ago past, Christmas-time festivals were rowdy parties for the pagans; and solemn observances for Christians. In the twentieth century, right here in America, Christmas is generally acknowledged as a celebration of family, friendship and love. We give gifts to people to show that love, appreciation, and mutual friendship. The millions of Christmas cards sent each year are like a firm handshake, a cheery smile, or a warm hug in an envelope. The cards are a way to pull over during the "rat-race" and assure your circle of acquaintances that you are still around. Christmas can also be stressful with all the shopping, writing, organizing, partying, decorating, etc. Whatever you do this holiday season, remember that it is supposed to be a celebration, not a self-destructive torturing procedure!

MERRY CHRISTMAS