Remembering back when...
It always began with the arrival of the big toy catalog. It was my three children's favorite day of the year when they discovered it bulging out of our mailbox. But for me it was always the day when I would start to sweat and worry.

They would each get a different color marker. Each gift was color coded because they wanted to make sure Santa would know the girls didn't want a Ninja Turtle and my son didn't get a ballerina Barbie. Then I would have them make an "absolute favorite" list to mail off to Santa. I seem to recollect I had to pay extra postage on some of those letters because they were awfully thick.
Before we sent the letters off, I would sneak a peek. The list usually included countless Barbie or He-Man characters and all their various accessories. Legos were big in my house for a while and we had enough to construct the whole city of New York in our living room.
But there always seemed to be at least one really hard to find toy in the group that I would go from store to store to find. I've spent what amounts to years searching, standing in line and fighting unruly mothers for a favorite Christmas gift one of my children said they could not live without. Then when I found it. I would brag to all my friends and we would share toy war stories.
Every time I would start on these "great toy expeditions" I think back about my own childhood Christmas. I don't really remember making "a big list." I guess Barbie was always at the top. And one year I got "a" Barbie, which I still have hidden away. This Barbie had one good outfit and one sporty outfit. I had no "Holiday Barbie," no "Wedding Barbie," no Barbie condo, no Barbie vacation spa and no Barbie space shuttle. And I was happy.
I will however, be forever scarred by one gift I never got. I asked for it year after year and woke up every Christmas morning, bright with new hope only to find once again Santa denied me my much sought after gift. That gift was a cotton candy machine.
I would be happy all the days of my life if I could eat cotton candy with every meal. Some of my favorite memories were of my family at the local fair, my dad slipping me a quarter and off I would run to the vender with the closest supply of cotton candy. Blue and pink were always my favorite flavors. Heaven on a stick.
So every Christmas I began asking for my dream making machine. What did I receive?
One year my sister and I received matching slippers and robes. We didn't mind back then but I don't think I would try that with my own daughters now. I think that was also the year we received "Mystery Date." Somehow I always got stuck with the "nerd" and my older sister always landed the "California Surfer."
Then there was the silly putty. I spent hours placing the putty on the colored Sunday comics and peeling them off to reveal the mirror image imbedded in the putty. (I know — it doesn't take much to entertain me now either.)
The next year, no cotton candy machine but I did receive this metal chicken that you set up and shot with a suction tipped arrow and if you hit the target it would lay a golden egg. Pretty nifty stuff.
Then came the "Etch-a-Sketch." I was never very good at that. I would try and try to write my name, but it always looked like some foreign language when I was done. I pretty much stuck to drawing square looking houses.
The list of gifts goes on but never did include that elusive cotton candy machine. I think my mom and dad thought like little Ralphie's parents in the "Christmas Story". He was denied his Red

Ryder BB gun because he would “shoot his eye out.” I think I was left cotton candy-less because my mom and dad thought it would “rot my teeth out.”
I’m sure each of us can think of that one gift we never got. Maybe it was those saddle shoes or one of those plastic tracks that ran up the walls or maybe it was a “wild” Beatle’s Album. It’s funny how we sometimes forget all the great things we got and can only remember what we wanted but never received.
Now as the kids make out their Christmas lists this year I see the CD’s, DVD’s and Wii games listed. I wonder if Santa would notice if I slipped an extra little request in at the end. Do you think just maybe this year I have been good enough? Well, here goes.
Dear Santa, all I want for Christmas is ...