



# A VERY FLAMMABLE CHRISTMAS STORY

## ARE BOTTLE ROCKETS ON YOUR WISH LIST?

This time of year, with the holidays and all, my mind goes in a lot of directions. It's a little hard to focus. So, when I sat down to write this article, well, I was stumped. I started thinking about the holidays and Christmas stories, but the typical end-of-year story themes can get kind of repetitive and boring.

What popped in my mind was a frequent scene from when my kids were small. They'd often say, "Dad, tell us one of your stories from when you were a kid." To translate for you, what they meant was, "Dad, tell us a story from when you were a kid when you did something BAD!" You see, when I was a kid, I had a tendency to get in trouble around the neighborhood and at school. I was a prankster and an experimenter. I didn't hurt anyone, and I didn't do anything too serious, at least not by 1980's standards. By today's standards, well, I might have at least ended up on the local news or a list maintained by the Department of Homeland Security. Maybe worse.

So, here is my Christmas story. To my kids, this is one I have never told you. To Mom, this is news to you as well, but it will not surprise you.

One of the longest-running holiday traditions in the neighborhood where I grew up was Santa Claus' annual arrival on a fire truck. The local volunteer fire company would line up all the fire trucks and parade them through the neighborhood, with

sirens, lights, and all. Christmas music would be playing from the intercoms, and Santa himself would sit and wave from atop the hook and ladder. In my toddler years, this event was huge. Absolutely huge.

Around 1980, my family started vacationing in South Carolina, where fireworks were legal. My prankster side quickly saw many uses for the bags of bottle rockets, Roman candles, M-80s, black cats, lady fingers, and smoke bombs we accumulated.

Around the same time, my dad, who loved to build things for people, was building wind chimes out of steel tubes and giving them away as gifts. Our shed had tubes of various sizes all over the place. My friends and I quickly found a better use for them. Dropping a lit bottle rocket into one turned it into a rocket launcher that you could mount on your shoulder and aim at something (or someone) with remarkable accuracy!

We eventually got bored shooting rockets at each other, the neighbor's cat, or the girls in the neighborhood. We needed something new and interesting. And that's when someone pointed out that Santa Claus was coming to town on the fire truck.

We crouched in a hedge row, steel tubes in hand. As we heard the music and saw the lights coming, we got ready. And there he was, illuminated on top of the hook and ladder, one hand gently waving to the crowds along the street.



When the first rockets were fired and harmlessly exploded around the truck, Santa didn't register what was going on. But when the second round came, he became very animated. His arms started to flail as he scanned the entire area, looking in every direction, kind of like when bees start chasing after you. As Saint Nick started to holler, the firemen began to search the area with their lights. It was time to run!

I wish I could say that was the only time we caused trouble with the fireworks, but it was just another day in the life of my childhood self.

It was a fun time, but looking back, I did some pretty stupid things as a kid, and it's amazing to me that I survived some of them. I guess there are a couple of takeaways from this story. First, to Santa, I am profoundly sorry and embarrassed. Please accept my apology! Second, to my kids and yours, use this story as a lesson on what NOT to do during this season of giving. And finally, use this season to tell you kids something about your Ghosts of Christmas Past. I hope you and your family have a wonderful holiday season.

*-Kevin W. Mottley*

# FIRM SPONSORS CRESTVIEW ELEMENTARY TURKEY TROT

On the Saturday before Thanksgiving, Crestview Elementary School in Henrico held its second annual Turkey Trot. Once again, The Mottley Law Firm sponsored the race's water station, providing bottles of water to about 130 thirsty students, parents, faculty, and staff members who lined up to run the 1-mile race, as well as the police officers, teachers, volunteers, and spectators who came out to cheer them on and keep them safe as they navigated the Charles Glen neighborhood. Not only is Crestview right around the corner from the firm's office, its faculty also includes my wife, Anne Stewart, a wonderful and dedicated fifth grade teacher who was recognized last spring as Crestview's "Teacher of the Year." We look forward to helping with this great event next year!

- Ben Kyber



## GET IN THE SPIRIT OF GIVING RIGHT HERE IN RICHMOND

The holidays are a time for thankfulness and generosity, so here are some fantastic ways you can spread the spirit of the season by volunteering right here in Richmond.

### FAMILY LIFELINE

For more than 100 years, this charity has provided support and companionship to families with young children, those with disabilities, and elderly family members. Volunteers spend their time making home visits, throwing special events, providing continuing education, and making charitable donations. There's an array of ways you can help this organization during the holidays,

including volunteering at events, helping with general office duties, becoming a phone buddy or visitor volunteer, making greeting cards, and putting together donation baskets. Visit [FamilyLife.org](http://FamilyLife.org) to learn more.



### FEEDMORE

As the primary organization for hunger relief in Central Virginia, FeedMore includes programs like the Food Bank, Meals on Wheels, and the Mobile Pantry.

They work together with local organizations and businesses to find dedicated volunteers to help bring food to children, struggling families, and senior or homebound people who need better nutrition in their lives. They provide over 50,000 meals each day across the state. You can volunteer your time to any of their associated organizations or donate nonperishable food. Find out more at [FeedMore.org](http://FeedMore.org).

### ENRICHMOND

Since 1990, Enrichmond's mission has been to serve the people, parks, and public spaces of Richmond. They support the local Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities by giving volunteers the opportunity to take part in education, fundraising, cleaning, and more. Citizens who love being outdoors and want to see the outdoor spaces of Richmond reach their full potential will love participating in Enrichmond's events. They also accept donations to fund these excursions. Visit [Enrichmond.org](http://Enrichmond.org) to sign up.

Get in the spirit of giving this season by volunteering with one of these inspiring organizations or explore the dozens of other admirable opportunities Richmond has to offer.

# LIGHTS OUT

## FLORIDA CITY BATTLES TO END 'EXTREME' LIGHTS DISPLAY

There's nothing quite like the magic of twinkling Christmas lights. But for city officials in Plantation, Florida, Christmas lights are a stark reminder of a prolonged fight, nearly \$500,000 in court fees, and continued drama.

In 2014, Plantation sued residents Mark and Kathy Hyatt for their "Hyatt Extreme Christmas" lights display, claiming it was a "public nuisance." Each year, the Hyatts decorated their yard with more than 200,000 lights, snow, a Christmas tree, a Nativity scene, a functioning Ferris wheel, and more. Their creation was featured on two nationally televised programs and attracted flocks of visitors.

But, for the Hyatt's neighbors, extreme didn't even begin to explain the chaos. Neighbors complained to the city about increased

traffic, litter in their yards, and potential injury or death to pedestrians due to the traffic. Police officers in Plantation were dispatched to the light display multiple times each season for complaints by neighbors, accidents, and traffic control.

After a two-year battle in court, a judge ruled in favor of the Hyatts, claiming the city could not prove the display was dangerous or a nuisance. The city had spent nearly half a million dollars fighting their case.

For the Hyatts, Christmas 2016 was a celebration, though their display was restrained due to the timing of the court's decision. By 2017, "Hyatt Extreme Christmas" was in full swing again, much to their neighbors' chagrin. Mark Hyatt rode the wave of support for his display all the way to a vacant seat on the Plantation City

Council in 2016, but the highs would soon stop there. Plantation news outlets reported in 2018 that Mark Hyatt filed for divorce, effectively ending any hope of another "Hyatt Extreme Christmas."

As the snow has settled, an extravagant lights display has instead become a story of nasty court battles with a sad ending for the Hyatts and their "extreme" Christmas devotees.



## SUDOKU

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### SOLUTION

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9	7	4	5	1	9	2	7	6
6	2	9	7	3	8	4	5	1
5	1	8	4	2	6	7	9	3
2	1	3	9	6	7	5	4	8
6	8	2	5	4	1	7	3	9
1	5	4	7	8	3	9	2	6



## VIRGINIA BLUE CRAB SOUP

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 stick butter
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 4 cups milk
- 2 tbsp onion, chopped
- 2 tsp chicken bouillon granules
- 2 tsp parsley, finely chopped
- 1 tsp salt
- ½ tsp ground black pepper
- ½ tsp ground nutmeg
- 1 lb fresh crabmeat
- ½ lb fresh asparagus, trimmed and cut into 1-inch pieces (optional)
- Fresh chives for garnish, chopped

### DIRECTIONS

1. In a large, heavy saucepan, melt butter over medium-low heat.
2. Whisk in flour and cook 3 minutes. Gradually whisk in milk.
3. Add onion, chicken bouillon, parsley, salt, black pepper, and nutmeg.
4. Increase heat and bring to a boil.
5. Reduce heat and simmer 10 minutes or until soup thickens, stirring occasionally.
6. Add crabmeat and cook 10–15 minutes until soup is creamy.
7. Add asparagus, if desired, and cook 5–7 minutes or until crisp-tender. Serve garnished with fresh chives. Serves 6–8.



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## LIGHT UP THE NIGHT

### WHY DO WE HANG CHRISTMAS LIGHTS?

The first string of twinkling lights illuminating your neighbor's house is always a telltale sign of the upcoming seasonal festivities. Christmas lights are a holiday staple, but have you ever wondered where this beloved tradition started?

The tradition of hanging lights on the tree originally started with candles. Because this posed an immense fire hazard, Edward Hibberd Johnson, a close friend of Thomas Edison and vice president of the Edison Electric Light Company, vowed to find a better way to decorate Christmas trees with light. In December 1882, three years after Edison's invention of the lightbulb in November 1879, Johnson hand-wired 80 red, white, and blue lightbulbs together

and wound them around a Christmas tree in his parlor window. A passing reporter saw the spectacle and declared in the *Detroit Post and Tribune*, "One can hardly imagine anything prettier."

Johnson continued this tradition, increasing the number of lights each year and eventually putting them up outside. But because electricity was still a new concept, many years passed before the fad took off for regular Americans. In 1923, President Calvin Coolidge began the tradition of lighting the National Christmas Tree, which spurred the idea of selling stringed lights commercially. By the 1930s, families everywhere were buying boxes of bulbs by the dozen. Today, an estimated 150 million Christmas lights are sold in



America each year, decorating 80 million homes and consuming 6% of the nation's electricity every December.

Whether you'll be putting up your own lights or appreciating the most impressive light displays in your neighborhood or town, let the glow fill you with joy this season. Just don't leave them up until February!