

Unexpected Gifts

by Logan McFatridge

‘Twas the night before Christmas, and all through the house, nothing was stirring, not even a ... calf? That’s right, there was a calf in our house right before Christmas. More specifically, there was a calf in our bathtub.

You see, during the winter months in Indiana, it gets cold, and this particular year was no exception. The poor calf was cold and shivering, and we had to get him warm. He had lost his mom and didn’t have a cow to care for him. We put the calf into the bathtub, where we rinsed him with warm water and cleaned him off. What we thought was a tragedy turned out to be one of the best Christmas

presents we could’ve received.

Throughout the following weeks, the calf started taking a bottle and began to enjoy our company. He liked to jump around and play every time we walked into the barn, and he loved seeing the people that cared for him that first winter night.

Sometimes, gifts don’t arrive wrapped in a shiny bow and aren’t found under the Christmas tree. They can come in ways you never expect, like walking outside to see a newborn calf in the middle of December.

Getting a gift isn’t about costs or status. It is about the memories you make and the people you make them with that are special. I wouldn’t have expected that a bottle calf could mean so much to our family, but it brought us together. We made many memories caring for that calf.

I remember going outside to feed the calf with my family and the joy it brought my sister, the way my mom smiled when it played and even my dad getting chased around its pen when it was older. (The latter wasn’t

too happy, but I was on the ground from laughing so hard.) These are the types of memories that you gain if you appreciate the little things during the holiday season — and year-round. There is no need to get caught up in all the new, fancy gifts. The best gift is spending time with others.

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That calf grew into a healthy steer through our care. Although steers can’t stay on our farm forever, as they have an ultimate purpose in our industry, the time we spent caring for him as a family was precious. I will never forget

how many family memories were started by just a cold bottle calf in our bathtub on one December night.

The best gifts don’t come wrapped. And the cattle industry and organizations like the National Junior Hereford

Association (NJHA) help Hereford families come a little closer as they work together to care for the cattle we love. So, next time you’re in the barn doing chores with family, meeting new people at NJHA shows or learning from industry mentors, remember, these are the best gifts of all. **HW**



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