As the dressing and green beans begin to settle in my tummy from Thanksgiving, a whole new mission must begin.

I love, love, love getting in the mood for the Christmas season. I must admit, it leaves a warm feeling inside as I spread the holiday cheer through my house.

My children probably wonder what's wrong with me. But I am transformed into a Betty Crocker-like being after I return from all the Black Friday sales.

Our house evolves into a winter wonderland. Garland is spread from one mantle to another. Train sets are randomly placed throughout the house. A huge Christmas tree is placed in the living room, filled with the sparkle and shine of hundreds of ornaments. Snowmen are scattered along anything that stands still. And wreathes and other outdoor festive lights are rained upon the Patterson yard.

Having children makes the decorations, gadgets and other bells and whistles even more great with their wide eyes and eager nature.

This same eagerness to decorate started in my childhood.

Of course, my family celebrated the real reason behind the season with the birth of Jesus. But there were a few times when the other side of the holidays got a little out of hand.

Maw Maw and Paw Paw were in a competition for the best front porch decorations in the neighborhood. Every year, it got worse as other neighbors pulled out their best tricks.

One neighbor had a giant Santa Claus complete with reindeer on top of their roof. One lady even had a wooden Santa sitting on top of her chimney.

This was before you could buy a giant inflatable Snoopy or huge snow globe with characters inside. Back then, people didn't have it so easy.

As Mr. Mack nailed his fifty-foot Frosty the Snowman along his garage, Paw Paw put his pipe to his mouth and thought out his battle plan.

Maw Maw had the inside decorations under control. One had to put on sunglasses with her giant Christmas village collection in the living room.

Outside decorating was Paw Paw's job. Being restricted to a wheelchair, I was the one by his side, ready to decorate.

Paw Paw knew we couldn't put anything on the roof. Maw Maw would skin him alive if she saw me climbing around on top of the house.

Shuffling around in the storage shed, we uncovered our massive nativity scene.

I truly believe the astronauts in space could pick this set up on their radar. It wasn't just huge...it was gigantic.

It seemed as if Joseph towered above my small frame. Mary was more like the size of a compact automobile. Baby Jesus was the width of a sidewalk.
And Mrs. Lee from next door called the animal control officer when she saw the sheep from her side window.
Situating each piece to resemble what was on the box, Paw Paw was ready to flip the switch.
We had a wreath on the front door with a few lights around it. The small rotating Santa held a pretty little candle.
But when the nativity scene lights came on, it's a wonder half of Monticello didn't lose its power.
As my eyes continued to burn, I grinned at the sight. It reminded me of the true reason of Christmas. It was a sight to see.
Maw Maw complained about the electric bill when Paw Paw left the figures on all night. He even had to nail a quilt over his bedroom window to drown out the light.
But no one could say our house wasn't eye catching.
The Jackson tradition of trying to outdo your neighbors was passed down to my mother.
In an effort to ensure our Christmas tree was the most noticeable from the living room window, Momma put thousands of lights on it with about a ton of that silver sparkling string.
We almost had to rush our cat to the emergency animal clinic after she ate about fifty strings of it.
Maybe that's why I tend to overdo at Christmas time. It's just in my blood.
With that in mind, perhaps I should wait before I decorate at work though.
Last year, while doing an inspection, a few local firemen did tell me my desk was a fire hazard.
Paw Paw would most certainly have been proud.