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By Vanmany Ferguson

Toys for Tots Ride – a Personal Reflection

I experienced my first Toys for Tots motorcycle ride this past December 7th, 2008. I've only been riding motorcycles for a little over two years. Honolulu hosted its 34th annual Toys for Tots ride where we all began at Magic Island Park, rode through Waikiki, and ended at Kapiolani Community College.



The ride was short but exhilarating! My husband and I joined over 5,000 riders with our bikes, each respectively, with our children in tow. The magic of the Christmas spirit emanated through each revving of the engines, every smile of each rider, and every toy found strapped to a motorcycle.

Christmas holds especially fond memories for me and this toy ride is more than another charity event. This year, and many years prior, I have been a donator to such causes similar to this one. But, not long ago, I was a recipient and the tot receiving the toys. My family was fortunate enough to have been sponsored as refugees by a church group to come to our great nation. We knew nothing about Christmas nor did we know any customs of Americans.

I was four years old when I experienced my first Christmas. I don't remember much but I do remember a Christmas tree and on Christmas morning there had to have been 50 presents under the tree. As a child I was told that Santa brought the presents. I later discovered (as a young adult) that Santa had help. My parents were in no position to help Santa with this endeavor. Our church wanted to ensure we had a great Christmas that year and subsequent years following – they were Santa's helpers and it is because of their generosity, compassion, and Christmas Spirit that helped shape my memories of this wonderful time of the year.

So if anyone ever wanted to know the effect of a little generosity, such as donating a toy to a child you will probably never meet, you now know. A gift was given to our family and it is only appropriate to pay that gift forward. I am now in the position to be the giver. If you thought that a simple gesture of kindness will go unnoticed or that what you are able to do has little effect, please know that the little things mean a world to one soul. And if you can touch one soul, that one soul will touch another and eventually the compassion and Christmas Spirit becomes infectious and will last throughout the year.