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- author Jackie French

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<http://www.kids-bookreview.com/2017/12/guest-post-mark-carthew-on-making.html>

Guest Post: Mark Carthew on Making Family Memories that Last



For as long as I can remember, our family has gathered every December to unpack our Christmas decorations and carefully dress the tree.

In the 90s, my wife and I had three hopeful and energetic children who would run down the hall screaming, 'Is it time to put up the tree yet?'

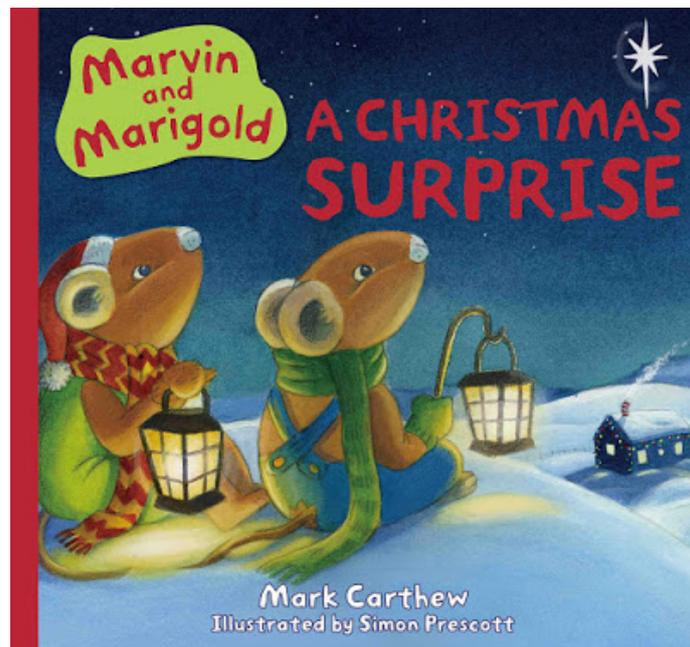
And their excitement about Christmas jogged our own childhood memories of yuletide joy.

Our little family would sit down every year and unpack boxes of all shapes and sizes, each jam-packed with decorations, and we'd share stories about the origins of and meaning attached to each item as we hung them in place. There were patch-worked and embroidered decorations made by aunts and nannas and precious vintage lights and baubles given to us because we were known to treasure family mementoes; cork figures, paper cranes, shiny retro silver birds from Grandma and decorations made by the kids at school hung side-by-side with wooden decorations hand-carved by my father-in-law many years before.

Every year, a spirited 'discussion' would take place about whose turn it was to place the star at the top of the tree, each child lobbying for this coveted privilege. When we were finished, our tree would be covered with beautiful decorations, each with its own tale to tell.

This yearly ritual became a much-loved tradition, a chance for us to reflect on our shared history and to retell the stories that make up the fabric of family life. Importantly, it was also a practical chance for the children to practice the sharing, patience and kindness they would need in order to complete the task together, with a gorgeous 'story tree' to enjoy as their reward.

Many years of teaching have shown me that the primary and pre-primary years are the perfect time to reinforce in children, whose default attitude is automatic acceptance and a lack of prejudice, the kind attitudes and behaviour that will stand them in good stead later in their lives. As I mentioned in a recent story in *The Herald Sun* (Nov 18, 2017), it's not just others who benefit from teaching children kindness; [research shows that kind kids are themselves happier](#).

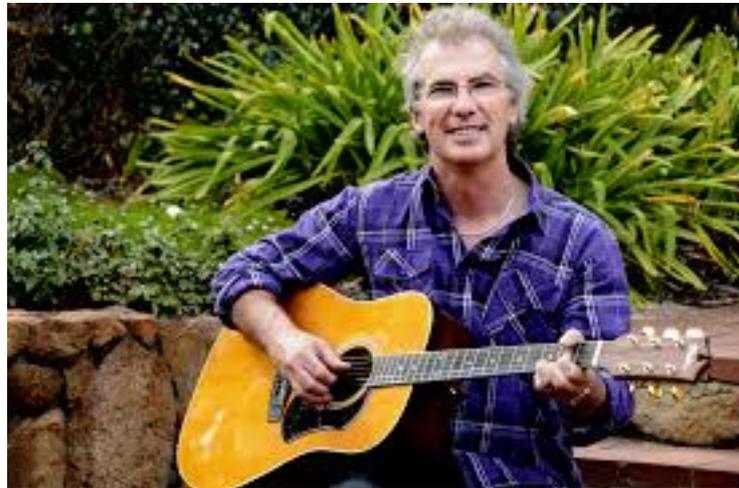


In my new book, *Marvin and Marigold: A Christmas Surprise*, a girl mouse called Marigold notices that her friend, boy mouse Marvin, is alone at Christmas and invites him to help decorate her tree and enjoy a festive feast together. Together they create a beautiful memory – and a powerful sense of connectedness – that they will carry forever.

Kindness, empathy, acceptance and a sense of connection to the wider community are such valuable qualities to pass on to our children. Through our special family Christmas tree-decorating tradition, we hoped to show the children that we are all part of a bigger narrative than just our own all-too-short stories, that they are the continuation of an ongoing tale and, with the addition of new decorations every year, that we are constantly writing our story.

I – and two little mice named Marvin and Marigold – wish you and your family just as much joy at Christmas, and beyond.

[Marvin and Marigold: A Christmas Surprise](#) by Mark Carthew and illustrated by Simon Prescott, New Frontier, \$24.99 is available for Christmas, now.



[Mark Carthew](#) is an award winning editor, author and teacher, well known for his numerous books and series exploring wordplay, music, movement, drama and humour. In 2005 Mark was Highly Commended in the National Dromkeen Librarian's Award which read, 'Mark Carthew - whose success in bringing literary experiences to the school community through Music, Drama and Writing is inspirational'. Mark Carthew's picture book *The Gobbling Tree* won *Speech Pathology Book of the Year*.

Posted by DimbutNice at 17:00 

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