

Dear family and friends,

There wasn't a snowfall that was not accompanied by the perfect cold weather food. The simmering scent of homemade stew permeated the house, and warmed the innards on a cold snowy day.

Momma would always send me out to get the cleanest white snow. She would add milk, sugar, vanilla and a raw egg. No one worried about salmonella in those days. Man, in his infinite wisdom, had not yet tried to improve on God's perfection. Until the overuse of antibiotics in chicken feed, the egg shell remained impermeable. This frozen concoction was better and colder than any ice cream in the store.

It was a record snowfall in January 1957, upwards of 22-plus inches. Momma, my cousin, Roy J.C. Linker and I had been to my brother, Kenneth and Evelyn's wedding shower in Denver City. Giant puffs of sand chased us all the way to Muleshoe where the pelting grit changed over to the soft white hush of snow. The onslaught blizzard-like conditions blew swirling fluffy pillows of snow until visibility was but a few feet. Just beyond the headlights was nothing but cold, black darkness, not even a single farmhouse light twinkled in the blackness. It had been a balmy 70 plus degrees when we left Lubbock. Who would have thought—neither Momma or me had a coat. Roy J.C. was better prepared with a thick warm overcoat and black leather gloves. Soon the snow amassed, and the roadway was obliterated. Momma wrapped her head in my dress, and watched to keep us on the road. At some point Roy J.C. got out of the car to see if he could figure out where we were in this alien landscape. The howling wind tore at him. His coat flared like a sail, and he began slide across the ice, inching closer and closer to the whirling abyss. For one frozen moment in time, just before being swallowed up by the chasm of Cimmerian shade, a gloved hand wrapped around the radio antenna. For a seeming eternity, we traversed this sea of white, fringed by the awful nothingness. Olton was a sight for sore eyes, appearing out of obscurity and the gigantic tempest raging all around us. That very night, my philosophy was born. Never go anywhere without taking a coat and a bathing suit. You never know what you might encounter.

Of something (the prairie) that only yesterday so vast, how can so little remain?

Prophecy Song

We are now reminded to be aware of our place upon this Earth, and to fulfill our obligations to ourselves, our families, nations, the natural world, to the Creator.

The word says we are to awaken, stand up, be counted for you are being recognized in the spirit world.

Joanne Shenandoah, The Iroquois Nation

I don't know if the rain this year officially ended the drought, but it made a huge difference here. Remember last summer—I hoed every day. There were virtually no weeds by freeze. But, I swear, one little sticker shower this spring produced a gazillion invaders of every shape and size. You would have thought this little piece of the prairie had never been touched by human hands. There is something to be said for the invasive Bermuda grass. Soon the seeds, runners and rhizomes began to replace the aliens with a lush green lawn interspersed with native Texas grasses.

Krystal and Lucas

We grew a garden which produced beans, beets, cucumbers, peas, tomatoes, and squash. We are yet to harvest the potatoes. I canned many beans, peas, pickles, and relishes. And if you have forgotten, the most amazing tastes, nothing like that cardboard stuff you get in the supermarkets.



Tammy still resides in the frozen north, just a few miles from the Arctic Circle (Nebraska). She now has five grandchildren, adding Lucas Alaa-Dean, born on March 6, 2014, bringing the total for this old great-grandma to nine. Kevin has three, Kya, Jackson and Brianna and Krystal has two, Bianka and Lucas. Boy, do they even make me feel old, 68 this December. I suppose Jonathon is behaving himself. I haven't heard much about him lately. Phillip is still working at a local restaurant.



Photo left to right: Jackson, Brianna, Wyatt Massing, Jaxon Warta, Bianka and Kya.

Tomaline has been staying with a friend in Indiana and hasn't been home for awhile. She and Elizabeth are supposed to be here for Christmas. It will be nice to hug her neck.

Jarrette managed to stay clean for six months before she fell off the wagon, but to her credit, she got back on the horse, and has logged in two months sober. Keep her in your prayers. All things are possible through God who strengthens me.

Emaryl has grown into such a beautiful young lady, and getting tall, too. It is hard to believe that she just turned eleven this December. She has been playing basketball, and is a great defenseman. At this level, they play both offensively and defensively, and she has scored several points in each game.

JaKoby will be seven in January. He's such a tiny boy for his age, but oh my, he is so fast. He runs like the wind. In flag football, if he ever got the ball, you knew he was going to score. He was named MVP. This grandma is absolutely sure, he will be an All-American.

Kierra LaShawn

Is this the little girl I carried? Is this the little boy at play? I don't remember growing older. When did they? Kierra started Pre-K this year and excels academically. She says, "Sports is not my thing." She is going to gymnastics. Her coach says she has the strength and the ability to be a champion.

Michael, of course, remains a gamer, but recently got a job as a dishwasher at Mia's Restaurant. He sure likes that extra money in his pocket, and it is gone in a flash. He really doesn't like to work, but then who of us does.



Michael's son, Kristian, has really grown. His other grandmother brought him by to see us this summer. You can tell he is related to Mike, not only does he favor Mike; he's a gamer, too.



Shane

Rickey is still in Shreveport. He has been doing odd jobs which leaves him free to devote to Bible study. He might wander off this way for Christmas. I am anxious to see him; it's been a long time.

I spoke with Shane and his mother, Tammy. I would have never recognized Shane's voice. It has gotten so deep. He is 6'1" tall and in the eighth grade. He loves everything outdoors, especially tournament bass fishing. Tammy says he does quite well. It is hard to believe that Shane, my Main Man will soon really be a man. Shane is such a polite boy. I credit his mother.

She has done a great job with him.

Larry came November 22. His friend drove him from Oshawa to Detroit, then he flew to Dallas and on to Lubbock. They encountered that snowstorm that dumped as much as five feet of snow on Buffalo. Amazingly, Larry arrived in Lubbock on time, but his luggage was hopelessly lost with all his medicine in it. To Southwest Airline's credit, they delivered his bag to my front door the next day.

We went to Cactus Theater to see a tribute band, doing songs of the Eagles and Bon Jovi. Kierra was so cute, dancing to all the songs. She loves the Eagles, and was awed at the mini laser lights that accompanied Bon Jovi. I was just thinking how amazed she would be by the TransSiberian Orchestra.

December 4th, the Annual Christmas Parade wound its way down Broadway. Breakfast with Santa and the Literacy Council are on tap this month. And of course, there's our visit to Santa Land and at trip to the North Pole on the Polar Express.

Sunrise, sunset. Swiftly fly the years. One season following another laden with happiness and tears. Who would have thought—that an awry email would have resulted in a romance lasting ten years, but that is exactly what happened. Larry and I thought no farther than a trip to Canada to meet each other. Geez, we've been a part of each others' lives longer than some marriages last. It has changed over the years, becoming as comfortable as old worn out pair house shoes. We can sit in the same room, doing different things or doing the same thing. It doesn't matter. I don't have to impress him and he doesn't have to impress me, although Larry does love to brag. Would that every relationship could be so easy.

Merry Christmas everyone.

Oonah Emily

The year 2014 turned out to be a very good year for me. My daughter, Sarah Marie gave birth to the most beautiful baby girl, Oonah Emily, that I've ever laid my eyes on, May 21. My very first grandchild. I fell in love with her from the moment I first saw her. Old Grampa Power has to stick around for a few more years so he can take her to Ripley's Shark Aquarium in Toronto, to concerts, plays, ice skating, lacrosse games, baseball games, just spoiling her. Thank you, Sarah, after 52 hours of labour for bringing such a wonderful little treasure into the world.



Of all the Christmas presents I received in my 66 years, that stand out in my mind as being my very favourite. I could narrow it down to four presents. The first was the Dave Crockett Alamo set I got at age five. I spent entire Saturday mornings in my bedroom by myself and my imagination reliving wars between Santa Ana and his Mexican army, Davy Crockett and the Frontiersman and the Indians. What a coincidence some 60 years later Twyla would take me to San Antonio to the very spot where this amazing piece of Texas history took place.



The second gift I received when I was 12-years-old. My mother bought me a pair of white goalie pads which allowed me to get into any road hockey game for miles around. I was one of the first to get called whenever there was a game. I loved it when the opposition was a stacked team with Big Bill Hamley and his blazing slap shot. I'd have to do the splits to try to keep my team in the game. Bill owned one of the only hockey nets

in the neighbourhood. In my mind's eye, I'd be the famous Johnny Bower making spectacular save after spectacular save while the crowd roared with approval.



The third gift was provided by my daughter, Sarah Marie. It was a hockey collage that I saw down the street in a store window and I thought I just had to have it. I ran to the closest bank machine and back to the store. The store clerk told me that the collage had just been sold and that it was the very last one. I never dreamed that Sarah had somehow bought it, lugged it home and got it all

wrapped without me having any idea that she had bought it. I had only given her \$500 for flying down from Yellowknife. She used \$300 of the little money that she had to buy her dad this Christmas present. It made me think of the story of the little girl who wanted a yellow ribbon for her hair and how somehow, miraculously, the yellow ribbon appeared under the Christmas tree.

I think this year, my daughter, Sarah, outdid herself. She spent over \$3,000 to get the Smith/Baker side of the family tree researched. It is all wrapped up under Twyla's Christmas tree all ready for me to open up Christmas morning. Thanks again, Sarah, for another special memory. If there is such a thing as a perfect daughter, you're about as close as they come.

The Ontario Lacrosse Association gave me a lifetime pass for two to all their games so I was able to take my nephew, Jessie Power to all the Brooklin Redmen games and long-time friend, John Goulding to all the Whitby Warriors Junior A games which save me a bundle of cash.

I want to offer special thanks to my good friend, Jeff Davis, for taking control of my finances, allowing me to pay off my credit card debt of \$6,500 within a year as well as saving \$2,000, a good start for Twyla and me to hopefully take a boat cruise to Alaska in 2016 for the trip of a lifetime. Besides being my computer guru, Jeff is now my financial adviser and it's sure a lot easier to get by on a steady weekly allowance. I never would have gotten out of debt without him taking control.

The year 2013 I spent from May to August in Plainview, Texas, where the temperature reached 107 degrees F one day and I almost get third degree burns from simply opening the car door or buckling my seat belt. Give me Ontario summers and after shoveling snow last winter for at least 25 times I'll take the balmy Texas winters and leave the snow shoveling to Wally while I read a book in my T-shirt from Twyla's porch swing. Christmases

here remind me of when I was a kid at Grama Power's house with the wonderful smell of cooking and baked goods and this winter we have a lot of plans for a wonderful Christmas.

Christmas reminds me of being a kid, shaking Grama Power's famous junk boxes with magic tricks, beehive corn syrup rings to send away for glossy Toronto Maple Leafs pictures, chocolate bars, candy, sometimes a little cash. It was always the first present us kids would open Christmas morning. My Aunt Joyce would take all us kids in her car to see all the Christmas lights and us older kids would tell my young brother, Louie, we could hear Santa's sleigh bells chiming so that Santa wouldn't quit coming to our house on Christmas Eve. Grandpa Power liked to get myself, my siblings and cousins to singing Christmas carols Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. My Uncle Frank would give us \$10 gift certificates to Eaton's which we'd just have to go and spend on Boxing Day (the day after Christmas). The smells of butter tarts baking and turkey cooking would fill the house when we'd gather at Grandpa and Grama's place. The house would be filled with laughter and the excitement of all us kids. Those are memories that will stay with me for the rest of my life.

As a child, I still remember spending 29 cents to buy a package of three powder puffs at the Metropolitan Five and Dime store that used to exist just south from where I currently live, taking them home and wrapping them, one for each of my three aunts, Aunt Winn, Aunt Joyce and Aunt Jean as Christmas presents as the whole family would exchange gifts.

Both my sisters, Dianne and Karen are in romantic relationships and I'm so happy for them that they found compatible mates as I did 10 years ago. Twyla and I celebrated our anniversary on December 4th of finding each other as if by a miracle.

My nephew, Jessie, has bought the house from Louie's widow. My other niece, Cheri Lou and her boy friend, Keston and daughter, Shayla have moved in and are paying rent. Everyone seems happy with the arrangement.

My other nephew, Jeremy, and his girl friend, Amilie are expecting their second child in 2015 and my great nephew Christian had his second child, Owen in 2014.

Wishing y'all a very Merry Christmas and the most healthy and prosperous New Year in 2015.



Twyla Larry Michael
Kier P

