

Lions hand out goodies

This is 50th year club has filled Christmas boxes

The Norton County Lions Club delivered Christmas baskets filled with food and toys to 107 needy families throughout the county for the 50th straight year Saturday morning.

Several dozen Lions worked at the National Guard Armory sorting food and toys, and filling and delivering baskets, said Project Chairman Tom Baumann. This year \$1,500 was spent in local grocery stores to buy food for the project.

"The response from the community was fantastic again this year," he said. "Donations of food items were about the same and donations of cash increased this year."

"I thank all of the Lions who assisted with the project as well as the many individual, businesses, clubs and organizations for their donations of toys, food, clubs and use of their time and facilities."

"It's always great to see the way the community works together to



The Norton Lions Club spent Saturday morning at the National Guard Armory making Christmas baskets filled with food and toys, which they delivered to 107 needy

serve those in need during this time of year." The Christmas Basket Project

began in 1954 under the direction of Lions Club President Dale Brunson with assistance from

families in Norton County. This year was the 50th anniversary of the Christmas Basket Project.

— Telegram photo by Veronica Monier

many other community organizations and individuals, he said. Turn to the Lions' advertise-

ment on Page 5 of today's edition of *The Norton Telegram* for special thanks from the Lions.

Man had stolen weapon

Oberlin Police officers had been looking into a case about a weapon in the possession of an Oberlin man, but the case will go no further since the man was shot and killed in St. Francis on Sunday, Dec. 13.

Police Chief Wade Lockhart said the department acquired a gun from William Joseph Schwab, 43, that the officers found had been stolen back in 1985. Chief Lockhart said there is no telling how Mr. Schwab got the gun.

Anyone could buy a stolen gun from a private individual, he pointed out, and the buyer might never know it was stolen.

Chief Lockhart said the department got the gun a couple weeks ago, but he didn't want to say how. He said he couldn't say much more about the case.

Mr. Schwab died in the Cheyenne County Hospital about 11:30 p.m. after being shot accidentally by a St. Francis Police officer.

A statement from the Cheyenne County attorney said that he was shot during an undercover felony investigation by the St. Francis Police and the Kansas Bureau of Investigation.

On Monday, Cheyenne County Attorney Kevin Berens said there (Continued On Page 5)

No one ever leaves and who are these little strangers?

By DOYLENE QUENZER FOREMAN

Somewhere between the ages of 40 to 50, Christmas, which had always been my favorite holiday, began to feel somewhat empty. Please don't misunderstand, I cherished every moment that I got to share with my loved ones, but some strange phenomenon had begun to occur.

Each Christmas the family would gather their chairs into a circle and wait patiently, but with great anticipation to open their packages. Each time I looked around the circle I began to wonder who these strangers were sitting amongst us. I would scan the faces of the growing number of family members and wonder quietly to myself, "who are these people?"

It stung at my heart, that those with whom I had shared my most impressionable early years were missing and these new little faces had emerged in their place.

Where were my grandparents and uncle, who always created so much excitement on their arrival? Where was the stomping of loud feet that my father made when he came through the front door, knocking snow off his boots? Where was my mother who filled the room with the smell of hot stew and baked ham, fresh bread and pies?

Where was my stepmother who brought chocolate cake, smothered in chocolate icing? When I would look up at the Christmas stockings, I would count then recount. Everyone in our family hung a Christmas stocking, no matter their age. One by one I had watched as the stockings of those I was most familiar with, disappear. But, the number of stockings was growing.

Who were these people? Had I come to the wrong address? No, I recognized at least three of the familiar faces, however there were even changes in their appearance. All of this may sound quite strange and foolish to you, but there is no way to explain it; except to say that there was a growing number of little strangers amongst us. They only appeared as strangers, because they were new and some I had only gotten to see once or twice a year. In reality, I knew everyone's name and many were blood kin.

That was when Christmas began to lose its familiarity and I had even gone so far as to feel that my favorite holiday had lost some of its flavor.

My memories of Christmas had begun with four of us, a brother and three sisters. Eventually the changes began to occur as we each married and our spouses joined the circle and receive their own stock-

ing. This was followed by the birth of eight children.

Before I barely had turned around, the children were bringing in more strangers and these too were called spouses. To confuse even more, some of the spouses disappeared and were replaced by others.

Thank goodness for the spouses of hardy stock, who had the endurance to remain long enough to become a familiar part of the holiday. Then the room began to fill with the children of our children. These new little strangers were called grandchildren. I questioned this act of God, for I thought grandparents were, you know — older.

There was no one in this room who looked qualified for the position; we were all too young. It was as if one Christmas morning, I awoke to find that when we all gathered in the circle to open our gifts, the circle had grown to fill the entire room, and chairs began to squish closer together.

I could remember a time when we watched each person open their gifts, and everyone "ooo'd and awed." The gift would be held up or demonstrated and then announced at a moderate voice level, who it was from. But now that was only a memory, for you were lucky just to see that someone was opening a gift from across the room and it took a shout to announce who the gift was from. This problem greatly developed when the floor in the middle of the circle of chairs was covered with all these little heads, bobbing up and down, and tiny little hands and feet that rustled the wrapping papers, running their toy trucks up and down your legs and begging for help to set up their Barbie Beauty Shop or crying because daddy wouldn't let them open the box of their 10,000 piece Lego set.

Possibly some of this problem could have derived from what we referred to as the Snack Table. The Snack table had begun when the four of us were small children. There had been little bowls of chewy candies, china plates of confection with nuts, Chex-Mix fresh from the oven and platters of frosted Santa cookies, all placed on a tablecloth. As children we waited to receive permission to reach down and grab one — I repeat, one of the treats. You could have another later that evening. Today the Snack Table had evolved into metal tins of thick, rich chocolate brownies, Tupperware containers loaded to the brim with frosted cookies, bags of chips in all flavors and sizes, just ripped at the top and placed on the card table. There were heated pots of cheese dip and plastic containers of chip dip and more nuts and cookies and Chocolate Santa

suckers, pretzels, and Oreo cookies.

No one has taken over the position of table monitor. They, meaning child or adult, can just slowly pass by reach in and grab handfuls of what they so desire, at anytime they desire it. The little ones are flying on a sugar high.

Where had they gone, those that I was most familiar with, where had these new little strangers come from? I sat back many a time and asked, "Who exactly was I having Christmas with?"

No I have not gone senile, it is just merely a thing called change and sometimes change brings moments of emptiness, even at the very same time it adds more love to your life. So much love, as a matter of fact, we could no longer spend two to three days in the same house together without some type of Psychiatric help. Yes, it was a slow growing shock to the system, to watch your favorite holiday, with your favorite people, become a moment designed only for a Prozac user.

It was such a Christmas celebration a few short years ago that I had an epiphany. I would like to be able to tell you that the epiphany occurred as I sat in silence gazing out over a landscape of clean white snow, which sparkled under the moonlight; for it seems that would be a perfect setting for an epiphany to occur. But alas, it came to me in a much less flattering setting. It happened as I watched the back of my brother crossing the room. You see as my father had aged his once tight fitting slacks began to bag through the rear and my stepmother would frequently repeat an old-time adage, "I think the family moved out of the back of his pants." Now out of the most faithful of love and admiration for my brother, I have to acknowledge that my epiphany arose when I realized that the family had moved out of the back of my brother's pants. It was then that I recognized something in his walk and his gestures and expressions that made me smile, for they had once belonged to my father. At that very moment, from behind me came a hardy laugh from one of my sisters, had I shut my eyes and not turned around, I might have believed my grandmother was there. Caught in a moment of newfound awareness, out of the corner of my eye, I spotted one of the children, who had now grown to adulthood. She had long thick hair which fell in waves down her back, the hair was my mother's and full like my sisters. Sitting on the floor at her feet was a new little granddaughter with red curls, also, a gift from my mother. Another one of the children sat with her palm turned toward her cheek as she bit her fin-

gernail, something I had seen my mother do time and again. But this young girl had never known my mother, her grandmother, and would never have seen my mother holding her hand in such a position. I gazed further around the room. One of the boys sat on the couch, leaning forward with his elbows on his knees. I'm not certain what it was maybe his round full face or his sleepy brown eyes, but he looked like pictures of my father as a young man, with his hat cocked to the side of his head. One of the granddaughters sat on the floor with her short dark hair and there was no denying that her every action was a pass down from one of my sisters. A couple of the children and a couple of the grandchildren carried the laid back demeanor of my grandfather. One of the boys resembled my brother at a young age, which, in turn resembled my uncle at a young age. One of the grandchildren's six-year-old photos was an amazing image of my own mother's 6-year-old photo.

My father who had been a salesman, had a personality that drew people to him. One sister was a salesperson, who, when in her working environment, my father's voice fluctuations flowed from her mouth, as she used his deal making techniques. One of the other sisters had recently been observed putting together a complete meal from the leftovers in her refrigerator and then was heard saying, "Are you sure you don't want anything more to eat? Here don't you want a piece of pie?" Well hello Grandmom! Just like her grandmother, she had a love for antiques, and the knack for decorating, and creating with them. Then a part of her father came through when she discovered she could sell. Her selling may have come

through more advanced technology, but nonetheless she could do it well.

Creativity had been a mark of this family early on. My grandmother, who was good with her hands, could create decorations from items around the house and knit sweaters and coats with a tremendous talent. My grandfather was a poet and a writer and a man who found great enjoyment in a crossword puzzle and could quote poems with such perfection, it was like listening to music.

My father too was a writer who wrote full-page ads filled with entertainment, he was an athlete and a man who believed in being active in his community and served honorably in the military. My mother was a musician, who could play a variety of instruments and like my uncle was a singer, who both could sound out a note in perfect pitch.

Sitting in this room was one brother and two children who served in the military, and another of the children held the position of sheriff. There was one son and one daughter, along with two children and three grandchildren who sang and one who was soon to sing with the church band. One of the children created pop-up cards by the first grade and won a scholarship in art.

While two other children also did outstanding drawings, one being featured in a calendar. Two of these children had a talent for rigging something out of nothing when the mood struck. There was at least one brother and one sister in the family who had an ability to write and another sister, who left everlasting memories with a poem called "The Weed" as a child. A brother and one of the sisters were athletes, while three of the sisters, two children and two or three grandchildren played instruments.

There was a sister that was a dancer and a child that was a dancer and a son who could swing like the very best on ABC's American Bandstand. This room also contained at least four who had done public speaking. Yes, it was a room filled with creativity. But, before going any further I feel the need to apologize to anyone whose talent I have accidentally omitted.

This amazing group of family members is only at its beginning. As the years pass we have yet to see the talent that is still to emerge. On the horizon maybe more writers, more readers, more musicians and singers, more artists and athletes. Every adult and child that sat in this room had some characteristic be it a physical trait, personality trait, or form of creativity that was a gift passed down through the family line.

Some of you may be thinking, what's the big deal! Why was that such an epiphany — most families have handed down traits. But that was not the epiphany. For me it was the realization that no one had left, they were all still there, it was just in different shapes and forms, those no longer with us, could be seen in the eyes, actions, and physics of all the little strangers — who were really not strangers, for they were a part of those who came before. So today, when we gather together and arrange our chairs in a circle to open the gifts, I see mother, father, grandmom, granddad and our uncle for I now understood that there are no little strangers unfamiliar to us, for when you look closely you know that no one ever left without leaving a part of themselves within our ever-growing circle.

Doylene Foreman, Nov. 11, 2003. Doylene is the daughter of the late Doyle and Audrey Fay Quenzler.

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