

Miller Christmas in Lehr, North Dakota

Electronic mail message from Kenneth Flemmer, Washington, D.C.

I have the fondest of fond memories of Christmas.

In the 50's and early 60's we often celebrated Christmas at Great Grandma (Rose) Miller's house in Lehr, ND. Her 4 children lived in the area. Her house was so small but we all jammed in. It was one of the few times in the year the "Front" room was opened. We numbered around 22. The evening started with a feast, huge turkey the centerpiece. Various tables were used to accommodate all the food and family. This was often not on Christmas day or even eve but an evening when all could make it, not conflicting with some other obligation. This was great if it was a day early, say the 23rd, but a few times it was a day or so late. As a kid this was super bad news, the worst of the worst.

Each family brought gifts. These were placed in the bath tub, just about the only place in the house not occupied! After the meal the table needed to be cleared and the dishes put away. By this time us kids were bouncing off the walls. Finally one of the aunties would announce that we could bring out the gifts. What a mad rush. By now we were bouncing off the ceiling. They were piled high on the table with everyone around and then divided out.

Gifts were opened, youngest to oldest with Great Grandma last. Getting older, with more cousins born was a real problem as the wait was extended to intolerable lengths. When most of the younger cousins had opened their gifts they were sent to play with the toys in the next room (often this was the large bathroom!!). We thought it was for our pleasure but looking back I am sure it was for the adults' sanity!

One Christmas stands out. It must have been the mid 60s. The appointed day for the family Christmas gathering also hosted a blizzard. I am sure we were intolerable but mom and dad decided that no one in their right mind would drive down to Lehr from the Streeter Flat. Being mad and disappointed we were getting ready for bed when the phone rang (must have been around 9) chiding us for not braving the 5 mile drive to Lehr as the rest had braved the storm. I can assure you we flew out of bed and into clothes. The gifts were whisked to the car and the festivities began after a slow drive to town.