

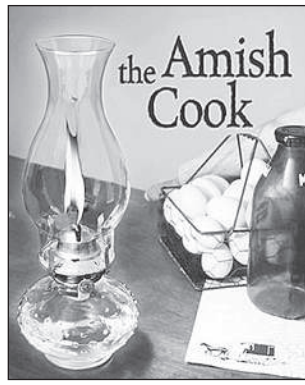
THE AMISH COOK

Everyone gets a snow day

By Gloria Yoder, The Amish Cook

"Mom, today at school they said it is supposed to snow up to 14 inches!" In past years the predictions of how much snow always exceeded the actual accumulation. When I tried to prep the excited children for a potential disappointment, it fell on deaf ears. "But Mom, they said it will — it's actually going to." "Okay, we'll see, it might." Everyone knew about Fern' moving in with winter fury in ways we don't usually see in Southern Illinois. Most folks were fired up about it, but then there are always those who would rather do without.

On Saturday evening when we retired for the night there was a slight skiff over the grass. I wondered where things would be by the following morning. Daybreak brought breathtaking beauty — pure white



covered all the landscape in the quiet outdoors. Besides the birds and the occasional bleating of the sheep, it was perfectly still — there was not a single vehicle or motor to be heard. Church was canceled for the day. As the children awoke one by one, they were elated — snow like they've never seen before! Only they were stressed out that their boots would never be tall enough to keep all the snow out — and yes, it was close to 14 inches! I assured them we'd work

something out.

By midmorning I pulled on Julia's boots which were a tad taller than mine and stomped toward the barn. Wow, it was refreshingly chilly, and yes, I got more exercise in by walking to the barn than I usually would! With the animals drinking their water before it froze, I set out to dig out Daniel's old boots. Though his feet were a good notch larger than mine, I decided it would potentially do the trick in keeping my feet dry — or at least more so. Clomping around in them I mused to myself, "Now I know what it is like to walk in his shoes ..." Well, not really, but it felt good, especially as I did what he used to do.

In the shop I walked past the chop saw in the corner where our wedding 'eck' (corner with the bridal table) had been. Wow, much has happened since then, but

it was okay; I'll never regret that phase in my life, though it did not last as long as I thought it would. Coming back to a warm house felt good — why, I can't imagine what life is like for those who simply don't have an adequate place to stay warm! I loved watching the children romp and roll in the snow and yes, their boots were filled with snow, but thanks to a heater in the living room, it did a fantastic job in drying clothes in short order so they could go again.

After breakfast we all gathered around the living room where we listened in on the phone on conference while one of the church men shared a devotional followed by a children's story, some families singing and general chitchat. A poem read by one of the elders at church got my attention: "I thank thee Lord for mine un-

answered prayers ... yet it seemed hard among my heavy cares that bitter day, I wanted joy but thou didst know for me, that sorrow was the gift I needed most, and in its mystic depth I learned to see the Holy Ghost ..." I couldn't help but think that at his age he must have experienced this for himself; it motivated me to keep going even when life has many prayers and petitions that are unanswered in our natural way of thinking.

Over a foot of snow also means snow to scrape from the driveway. Thanks to generous neighbors, in the first day we were able to use the driveway. Imagine how impressed the boys were to see the heap of snow growing steadily as the driveway was being cleared. They decided it would be a perfect opportunity to make a tunnel through it. Though they haven't completed

the project, a nice roomy tunnel is cut through about half of it.

Monday was snow day at school, but today it's back in swing again. Three of the children ended up not going with a flu they picked up. Hopefully by tomorrow they'll all be back on the run again.

With the flu around, chicken noodle soup always makes people feel better. Here is my recipe!

- CHICKEN NOODLE SOUP**
- 2 quart chicken broth
 - 8 oz. medium or fine noodles
 - 1 cup shredded carrots (opt)
 - 1 cup diced potatoes (opt)
 - 2 cups chicken, cooked and diced
 - Salt to taste
 - Combine all ingredients in a kettle, simmer till noodles and veggies are soft.

EMPTY NEST

He's Not Heavy, He's My Brother

By Curt Swarm, Empty Nest

We stopped at the Three Crosses on Hwy 218 to pray as we headed for Ashland, WI to take care of my brother, Mike's, or Michael's (as he preferred to be called), affairs. He died Sunday morning, Jan. 25, at the

age of 84.

Mike was six years older than me, so we weren't that close. But I have some vivid memories of him. One time I stepped on a nail in the chicken house, and couldn't walk. Mike carried me to the car so I could be taken me to the doctor.

Mike's appendix ruptured when he was a teenager. He was hauled to the hospital in Des Moines in the funeral home's hearse. I thought he was going to die. He almost did, from peritonitis, but pulled through after about a week in the hospital. He gave a speech at school about his ordeal and made everyone sick.

Mike was tall, 6'2" or 3. He played basketball for Monroe. The team went to the State Boy's Basketball Tournament in Des Moines, not as players but observers. It snowed so hard they had to spend the night in Veteran's Auditorium and come home the next day. They slept on the bleachers, he told me. Mom was so worried because she didn't know what was going on until late. The coach had to notify parents by payphone.

Mike was a good student, liked by everyone. Years after he graduated, people were still asking, "What's Mike up to?" I had a hard time with that, because in high school, teachers thought I was another Mike. I wasn't, as they quickly learned.

On the road to Ash-

land, WI, which is way up on Lake Superior, Ginnie noticed a small crack in the windshield. It was about six-to-eight inches long, rising up from under a wiper like a Cobra. I told Ginnie not to worry about it. She said, "A crack is a break."

It was so cold in Ashland. It's been cold here in Iowa also, but that lake effect, to me, seemed to make it so much worse, like a pup turning into a polar bear. Although I did notice the locals running around without hats or gloves, yukking it up like it was a spring day. Not me. I stayed cold for the duration.

We were able to take care of Mike's affairs in short order, thanks to him having made his final arrangements before hand, something we weren't aware of. We met with the funeral home director, Mike's bank, and

the nursing home where Mike had been living for the last three years. Cleaning out Mike's personal items from his nursing home room was the hardest part. I had no idea a person could cram so much stuff into one small room. But he did. Ginnie wanted me to keep Mike's television earphones because at home I have the volume cranked. Huh? She also wanted me to take Mike's walker, "For future needs," she said. Oh. On the night stand was a little urn of his dog's ashes. We wound up with a car load of stuff that I have no idea what we'll do with.

Our last stop was back at the funeral home to pick up the urn of Mike's ashes. The urn was still warm. At some future date his remains will be buried at the site of our father's and mother's and

one brother's grave in Perry, Iowa. Mike carried me when I stepped on a nail, I can carry him home.

It was so cold when we left Ashland, our car let me know how rude I was to awaken it. We heard a snap. The six-to-eight inch crack in the windshield y'd off and was progressing as we watched to the far side of the windshield. A little later it y'd off in the other direction, completing an almost perfect Y across the windshield, as in "Yikes!" We made it home without the windshield falling into our laps, thank God. Mike was with us.

RIP Michael.
Have a good story?
Call or text Curt Swarm in Mt. Pleasant at 319-217-0526 or email him at curtswarm@yahoo.com. Curt is available for public speaking.



Mike

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