

My First Northern Christmas

By Freddi Dogterom

I remember the first Christmas I spent in Inuvik, Northwest Territories. It was the first time away from family and old friends, the first time I was not going “home” for Christmas.

The cost of the ingredients for a traditional Christmas dinner was prohibitive. A turkey was over one hundred dollars, a single head of wilted lettuce was over thirteen dollars and a can of pumpkin puree for a pie was four dollars! As my brother-in-law worked for the airlines, it was decided to fly in Lobster for our Christmas feast, as it would be less expensive! I also put out a call to my father in the Okanagan and asked him to send a box of some vegetables and fruits that would travel well.

It was with great anticipation that I waited for these gifts. Every day I waited for the notice from the air freight office. Because it was staff rates for shipping – everything else took precedence and we had to wait for there to be room on the aircraft for our freight! Finally the wonderful day arrived! The much anticipated parcels were waiting to be picked up! I drove the ten miles to the airport, loaded the boxes into the cab of the truck so they wouldn't freeze and hurried home to open them.

The contents were not exactly as I had imagined. I had imagined shiny paper, lots of colored fruits and vegetables and rosy red cooked lobsters! The lobsters were alive! Sort of a dull grey-green color, the carrots, potatoes and parsnips still had a fine dirt coating on them – so they too were dull grey and brown. The apples and pears were wrapped individually in pieces of newspaper, making them black and white. The only glimpse of color was a bag of fresh cranberries tucked into one corner. Even though the contents were not the kingly colors I was imagining, the contents were much appreciated, better than anticipated and provided a feast not just for my family but also for an assortment of friends that were also away from home and lonely. It turned out to be one of the best Christmas celebrations ever!

That Christmas always reminds me of the very first Christmas. Joseph and Mary were far away from their home, their family and friends. They were in a far off land. The world was anticipating the gift of a King from their heavenly father. They had been waiting with great anticipation. When He arrived packaged as a baby, it was not the parcel that had been anticipated. There were no kingly colors, no bright streamers and big brass bands. No, just a baby. This baby however came to change the world.

My father in the Okanagan sent a much anticipated gift that made a difference for a day. For one wonderful Christmas day he changed my world.

My father in heaven sent a much anticipated gift that changed the world! He sent His son as a gift to each one of us to make a difference every single day.

As I celebrate Christmas each year I remember my first Northern Christmas and give thanks to my dad for his gifts and love that were sent when I asked for them. Each Christmas I also remember the very first Christmas and give thanks to God for the gift of His son and the love that is freely given to each of us, if we but ask.

Wishing you a very Merry Christmas (this year and many to come) and a time to rest, reflect and restore your energy to enjoy a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

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