My Frozen Foot

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(603 Words)

January 16, 1952; I was 11 going on 12. It was a beautiful, but cold Saturday night. In my home town of Glendive, Montana there was no TV and wouldn't be for many years. We made our own fun; we talked, played cards or Monopoly with Mom and Dad. We played with our toys and read our books. During the day, we played outside even with the temperature at -20 degrees.

Many of us received ice skates or hockey sticks for Christmas, 1951. A neighbor turned his wife's garden plot into a skating pond for his kids and their friends. One day a group of us, ages 10 to 14, decided to play ice hockey. After supper we put on our skates, went to this frozen skating rink, and chose up teams. We began a fierce game; skating back and forth chasing a puck for about an hour. Finally, we were beat; ready for some hot cocoa and our nice warm beds.

I went home, took off my skates and screamed for Mom. My right foot's big toe and the tip of the toe next to it was white and frozen solid. Mom, using traditional wisdom, put my foot in a bucket of snow to slowly thaw out the foot; then called the doctor.

The doctor told Mom to take my foot out of the snow immediately; that was an old wives tale. He wanted to defrost my foot slowly. Mom opened the inside door but keep the outside, storm door, closed. I put my frozen foot beside this open inner door. The temperature was about 55 degrees instead of the 72 in the house (and 20 below outside). I lay on the floor for about 2 hours with my foot propped up against the wall near the door. Slowly my foot thawed out.

About midnight, Dad picked me up (I couldn't walk very well) and put me on the couch in the living room to sleep that night. Mom set up the couch so the blankets would keep me warm but none would touch my foot. I would also be close to them if I needed help. I lay there in agony. I slept a little, but it was a restless sleep.

About 4:00 a.m., Dad woke me up, told me to take care of my 6 year old sister as he was taking Mom to the hospital. There I was, crippled with a throbbing foot and an outside temperature of 20 degrees below zero, and I was babysitting.

About 8:30, Dad came home without Mom. He bundled me up and carried me to Aunt Mary's home about 100 yards away. My sister trudged along beside us. Dad had called Mary from the hospital so she was expecting us. Aunt Mary made my favorite breakfast. After breakfast Dad told us the news; we had a baby brother; born January 17, 1952. Mom had mentioned something about a baby coming, but we really didn't pay attention. We had noticed Mom had gotten fat but with school and playing with our toys, our minds were elsewhere.

I now aggravate my 74 year old baby brother when I remind him that my frozen toe is one day older than he is. The only residual affect from my frozen toe is that this toe is much more sensitive to heat and cold than the rest of my foot. When it starts to get cold, I feel it in that big toe before feeling it anywhere else. It's my personal weather barometer.

The End