

A Penny's-worth of Thoughts

Visiting one of our Friends in Brandon recently got me thinking about Nebraska and my Grandpa Mike.

This is Janet. Janet and her husband, Joel own the Inside Scoop, which is a house divided into antiques on one side, and penny candy and a soda fountain on the other. The candy and toys on the shelves behind her in this photo are a colorful snapshot of childhood Christmases I spent at my grandparents in Plainview, Nebraska.



My eleven siblings and I would pile into two station wagons and wile away the two-hour drive through little towns and miles of cornfields by playing the License Plate game, the Billboard Alphabet game, Auto Bingo, and saying the Rosary [if you were in the same car as my mother]. And just when we would grow tired of the games and of the lack of leg room we'd round the corner and spot the Virgin Mary in the bath tub and we'd know that we had arrived!

Homes would reconfigure when we arrived for visits. And Grandpa Mike's was no different. Tables would expand. Chairs would appear. Food would be abundant. Candy bowls would materialize. TinkerToys, puzzles, and decks of cards would emerge. When it came time to open Christmas gifts we would all fit into a small living room and within minutes be sitting amongst torn, colored paper and bows and dolls and socks and more games and more puzzles.

At some point in the evening the house would quiet down and everyone would go off in groups to assemble toys, to break in a new board game, to start a puzzle. And my Grandpa Mike would be sitting at the kitchen table in a thoughtful game of Parcheesi, my brothers and sisters taking turns as opponents. I found out later that he and my grandmother didn't play by the rules on the box. They made up their own version of the game and that's what got passed down to me! I was too young to admire their creativity and rebellion in doing this, but I do now. *Thinking outside the box*. They took that literally. I must have absorbed it, as only a child could, because I've spent a good deal of my life outside of the box.

If you ever visit the Inside Scoop [and I hope you do], you'll see several Parcheesi boards hanging on the walls. I'm guessing you'll find remnants of your childhood, too. All the good parts.