

What I saw, or
They are Jumping Out the Window
07-28-2013 by Harry Zirkelbach

In the evening of 23 December 1982 snow began to fall onto Denver. This would increase, continue until midday Christmas. More than 2 feet of snow fell the 24th.

On that Christmas morning the Zirkelbach family skied to Mass along East 7th Ave Parkway, never found a path made by any vehicle. Facing a gentle breeze, that group going to 8:00 AM Mass never met another pilgrim 'til a block from Church.

Cars would be found on some streets, abandoned some time during the Christmas eve snows. Usually the makes could not be identified, just a white stationary bulge, in the otherwise smaller snow crests hiding everything..

There's was not the only ski-pole combo stacked outside Church that morning. Yet less than 50 attended that Christmas Mass, which happened to be a Sunday, a world of difference from the customary regulars, enhanced by well dressed Christmas-only Church goers.

On returning from Mass, the family exchanged gifts in their warm two story house, began one of the more joyful of Christmas breakfasts, for all provisions had inadvertently been obtained days before the holiday. The doorbell did not ring. There was no traffic noise from anywhere. Here was the greatest storm the children might ever witness; a piece of epic Christmas tales to recount the remainder of their lives.

Exchanged gifts were quickly forgotten. Snow and storm was the conversation center, midst all the turkey and trimmings that enjoyable, leisurely breakfast.

It was a short time after reorganization of the dining room that the older children began to trek outside. Snow fall was intermittent, difficult to tell if snow fell or was being blown from one of the many sizable drifts in the spaces between trees, houses and garages. Homes on both side of 700 block Steele had been constructed with a basement floor that was higher than the street so houses looked as if built, then the street excavated. Thus appear extra tall from the street. This morning the 700 block Steele was a big white snow covered block long gully with little sign of much else.

There was no point of requesting walk be shoveled. That would begin a day or two later. So out to the white world the children began to mar the tranquility.

Then one parent began to realize something was different.

The driveway to their two story garage was on the south side of the house. The burgeoning storm had whistled thru gaps between houses and garage and deposited a double-high drift in the driveway at the back of the house.

The car had been garaged before the storm began, still there.

The oldest child, had gone to the girls bedroom, southwest corner of the 2nd floor, opened that window, removed the screen, climbed onto the sill, leaped to the ground, swan like. At first lost in the drift, he emerges; his laugh, challenge to siblings. Equally courageous, fearless, brainless, they had begun to prove they possessed the same attributes. That's when the father learns, gets camera, goes outside, recorded the sixth or so leap.

This photo wasn't that great. While waiting for the next chapter, the matriarch learned of the stupidity, ending the demonstrations.

Well, at least I did photograph one fearless leap.

You don't have a storm of the century without endless highlights.

And there were plenty for the eleven who shared 745 Steele Street Christmas 1982, where an adjunct to, and reinforcement of those memories, was the sharing of the laundry to swap stories while drying togs worn for each adventure into the remains of that memorable snowfall.

Sleep came easily, and the day was repeated in dreams that white night, 1982.