

A Shower of Miracles

By Sheila Johnson

In July 1974, I received the most cherished and memorable surprise visit from my family who drove twelve hours from El Paso, Texas to Aurora, Colorado. My Grandpa, Grandmother, Mother and Father literally showed up on our doorstep three days before the Fourth of July. Our newborn daughter was less than one month old and had already brought so much joy into our household. Michelle, her senior by eighteen months, was delighted to have a baby “doll” to talk to and hopefully carry. Her Dad and I were ecstatic to add to our growing family, and hoped that our two girls would grow to become best friends over their lifetimes. My family had taken a long, hot, unusually dry trek to Aurora, Colorado to greet the newest member of the village and I was overcome with joy!

My Grandfather, whom I called Papa, had not traveled outside of the state of Texas since his military service in WWI. For him, this was a stretch beyond his comfort zone. Papa had the most beautiful pearly white teeth that really complemented his ebony smooth skin. He was a man of few words and always held a belly full of laughter that was ready for release when he was happy. And yes, we heard the explosion of gladness. My Grandmother said she never thought she would live long enough to see any of her great-grandchildren, and her delight in meeting her second great-granddaughter overshadowed the fact that she complained of the heat every mile of the way! And Daddy—he knew how to wear proud. His eyes glistened with tears of joy, his mouth was stretched from corner to corner, not seeming to move for several minutes! He kept saying how sweet and innocent Andrea Nicole looked and hoped that she would stay that way forever. And my Mom! Oh was she proud of that little one who looked just like her. Baby pictures of my mother added credence to her pronouncement of family genes. She had squeals of happiness the length of their seven-day stay.

The four grand and great-grandparents arrived just in time to prepare and enjoy a family celebration of our country’s independence. The Fourth of July had always been a major celebration in our household when I was growing up in El Paso. My Grandfather and my Mother were both Republicans which always brought snarls of disapproval from my Grandmother and Father, yet the four of them always delightfully ended their “political” conversation by eating the best barbeque and drinking the finest beer.

But on this day, July 4, 1974, the liberal-conservative conversation had just begun, when the sun disappeared, the sky darkened, rain began to fall, then hail, then snow! Then more snow. And within an hour we were looking at a beautiful rainbow that stretched across the blue sky. We were all in awe. It snowed on the Fourth of July! We all knew that this was a miracle sent just for us to witness. It was the first and last snowfall that my Grandmother experienced and she thought it was a miracle just like childbirth. It was no coincidence that she and I experienced our first snowfall in Aurora, Colorado on the same day.

My grandparents died a few years after that wonderful visit, never to visit Colorado again. I miss them dearly, and I will never forget how God showered us with miracles of family, laughter, joy, rain, hail, and snow in such a short breath of time.