

On Christmas morning, my family had to do all of the chores before we could open our gifts. We used to get up around 4 or 4:30 a.m. but we cheated on Christmas Day and got up at 5 a.m. My sister and I would run into the living room and peek under the tree to see where our packages were and then went out to do our chores.

My job was milking the cows, and I would bundle up and go to the barn with a lantern and milk as many as ten cows before coming into the house. I'd do it in about forty-five minutes to one hour, which was much faster than usual. My sister Dorothy would turn the separator by hand, a machine that would separate the milk from the cream.

After that we had a big breakfast—sorghum and biscuits and gravy—and then went into the living room and opened our gifts.

-Margaret Adair Kruse

WINTER SOLSTICE

On Winter Solstice of 1930
Bright rays of morning sunshine
Danced through frosted windowpanes
Decorated by Jack Frost, last night.

Taking one last snuggle
Under our warm woolen blankets,
We slid into the frigid bedroom,
Quickly dashed down the stairs
For pot-bellied stove's warmth.

School vacation had begun,
Year's shortest day had come.
Winter Solstice!
And season's first snowfall
Had fallen last night!

From the kitchen,
The fragrance of sizzling pork sausages
And Mom's baking powder biscuits
Whetted our appetites.

Mom was scrambling the eggs
As Dad came from the barn
Toting frothy, fresh milk.
As he sat down for breakfast,
Told us "Better dress warm today and
Get ready for a day full of fun!"

Snowballs, sledding and snowman building
Gave us pink cheeks and cold noses
That needed some warmth.
Mom's hot cocoa and fresh baked gingersnaps,
Was a most welcome remedy.

Shelling popcorn was our next job.
Two ears rubbed briskly together
Loosened kernels going ping, ping
Into the pans we held on our laps.
We tossed the cobs into a crate.

All the dropped kernels
Soon were swept up,
Tossed onto the snow.
The birds had a feast.

In the black corn-popper
Were tossed handfuls of kernels
To be shaken and shaken
Above the hot fire
'Til the kernels exploded.

Soon the big bowl
Looked like a drift of fresh snow.
Thick bubbling syrup
Was drizzled all over,
Until it shimmered like ice.

Quickly we buttered our hands
And picked up a handful!
Formed into round sticky balls-
Soon 'Snowballs' piled on the platter.

Dusk came early,
Followed by velvety darkness.
Ate supper by lamplight
After chores were all done.

Time to bundle up warmly
From our heads to our toes,
To search the high heavens,
On this special night.

“Look, the moon is hiding
Behind a faint crooked smile.”
Stars twinkle so brightly
In the cloudless sky.

There’s the North Star.
The two Dippers nearby.
There’s Orion and Cassiopeia
What a wondrous sight.”

Recalling the star that announced our Lord’s birth
We stood in awe as night sentinels.
Reluctant to go in,
But chilled to the bone,
We trooped into the warmth.

Soon the aroma of
Marshmallow topped cocoa
Mimicking drifted snow,
And popcorn balls for munching
Greeted us.

We got out the dominoes
For some family fun,
Before sleepily burrowing
Under our warm woolen blankets.
Winter Solstice had blessed us.