

Dear Family and Friends,

May this letter find all are well and prosperous. Another year has just flown by. "Don't blink. Just like you're six years old and you take a nap and you wake up and you're twenty-five and your high school sweetheart becomes you wife. Don't blink. You just might miss your babies growing like mine did, turning into moms and dads. Next thing you know, your 'better half' of fifty years is there in bed, and you're praying God takes you instead. Trust me, friend, a hundred years goes faster than you think. So don't blink," Kenny Chesney.

I began writing a Christmas letter the first year I was married in 1964, and now 51 years later, I wished I had kept copies of all of them. Some were even written on Big Chief tablets with pencil. What a family history that would have been!!! There would have been all the cute things that my three most precious babies did, little things that, perhaps, I have forgotten. There would be a record of their milestones, and other noteworthy news.

My brother, Jack passed away just short of his 80th birthday. He left his wife, Juanell, a son, a daughter, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. I don't ever remember seeing him angry and he was rarely affectionately demonstrative. My most cherished memory of this reserved man was a few years ago when he told me that he loved me. I will forever treasure those three little words. Memories pressed between the pages of my mind. Memories sweetened through the ages just like wine.

Without my children, my house would be clean and my wallet would be full, but my HEART would be empty. What precious gifts each of you are!! Each with unique personalities, and holding special places in my heart. To Tammy, my first born, you were the most amazingly beautiful baby ever. No one could hold a candle to you, and still can't. I loved dressing you up and showing you off. You have grown and matured over the years, and are a daughter any mom would be glad to have. And Tomaline, you are really your own person, and march to a different drummer, sometimes, much to my chagrin. But, oh, such a beautiful kind spirit you are. Like your mom, it doesn't take much to tug at our heart strings and bring us to tears. Richard, my only son, and last baby, I was always so proud many times over the years. You amaze me with your math skills and your memory— my, my, I have a tough time with names, but you can quote Bible and verse. Your brain must be so full. Don't let anyone say you can't because you will figure out a way. But most of all, I am blessed with children of faith. I love you guys so much.

Tammy still lives in Grand Island, and her family has grown exponentially. Kevin has three children, Kia, my oldest great-granddaughter, age 13 in April; Jackson and Brianna. Krystal has two children, Bianka and Lucas, my youngest great-grandson. Phillip and Jonathon have no children as of yet. And the world being in such a mess, maybe this is a blessing in disguise.

Tomaline is still out there coast-to-coast, but with one difference, she and Elizabeth are driving their own truck. I never know where they are, today, Arizona, tomorrow, North Carolina, the next, Timbuktu. Down all the highways you travel, blacktop, stone or gravel. On every journey through and through, may God's angels ride with you.

Tomaline's children are well. Jarrette's lifestyle isn't what we would like, but she is safe and well. Keep her, as well as the rest us in your prayers. Michael is, and always will be a gamer. Emaryl is turning into a beautiful young lady, and just celebrated her 12th birthday. She made the honor roll last six weeks. We are so proud of her. JaKoby loves football and fishing. He did well in flag football. His speed and agility are amazing. Kierra is such a sweet spirit. She is always trying to do random acts of kindness. She goes to 4H, and participated in her first food show recently. At the kindergarten level, it is just a learning experience. She goes to gymnastics, and is just about to nail that back handspring. We also attend church on Sunday and Wednesday. All three great-grands rode in the annual Christmas parade this year. Kristian, Mike's son, was here for a short visit this summer. He has grown so much, and like his dad loves the video games.

Rickey continues to do odd jobs in and around Shreveport and Mars Hill in Arkansas. In July, he was roofing when a board gave way, sending him tumbling 12 feet below. He broke C-3 in his cervical spine. He had surgery, and is recovering well, despite the poor evaluation at the VA Hospital ER. It was in a follow up appointment that the fracture was discovered. All praise to God, and the many prayers that were spoken.

Shane, Rickey's son, still loves to fish. Tammy says a little rain never stopped him, and he is happy to catch anything that swims. I heard he caught a mermaid once, but he had to throw it back. His mom wouldn't let him keep her. LOL. He has gotten so big; I don't think I would recognize him. He is blessed with a good mother.



Tammy has taught him well.

Tomaline and Elizabeth rented a RV and they headed off down country to Copper Breaks State Park near Quanah, TX with three kids, Michael and an old grandma in tow. We had a great time camping, picnicking, fishing, swimming. In a short few days, we did a lot including getting chiggers and destroying the awning on the RV. Kierra was baiting her own hooks by the time she lost her bait. She just might, one day rival her meme. JaKoby is already an old fisherman, and telling tales with the best of them. Even Emaryl gave it a try. But fisherman of the day was Tomaline, reeling in a catfish. She was so excited; you'd have thought it was 25-pound largemouth bass.

Elizabeth and Tomaline just had to brag about the RV, and it WAS nice. There were satellite televisions everywhere, enough beds to sleep a really large family, and all the conveniences. It HAD (key word, had) an electrical awning. Elizabeth rolled it out, and we all enjoyed it for awhile. Then everyone got busy, the kids, playing, Tomaline and I getting ready to cook steaks on the grill, and Elizabeth, well, I don't remember what she was doing, but all of a sudden like it does in Texas, the wind came up from nowhere. Someone said it was a 70 MPH gust and the awning was gone in a flash, flapping uselessly across the top of the RV. Tomaline and Elizabeth got on top, the wind still gusting and tied it down. We hadn't a clue how we were going to drive down the road with the braces twisted and sticking out every which way. But other RV'ers came to our rescue. It is with gratitude I speak of those unsung heroes.



Texas Longhorns were bred almost out of existence, and by the 1920s only a few small herds remained. J. Frank Dobie helped gather small herds for the Texas state

parks. Since 1948 the official state Texas longhorn herd has been kept at Fort Griffin State Historic Site. Smaller longhorn herds are located at Possum Kingdom State Recreation Area, Palo Duro Canyon State Scenic Park, Abilene State Park, Dinosaur Valley State Park, and Copper Breaks State Park. These herds are so docile that they will take food offered right out of your mouth, and give wet slobbery kisses in return.

Between Quanah and the park, there are four dolomite hills



known as Medicine Mounds, which are considered sacred by the Comanche and Kiowa Indians who believed that the landmark was a ceremonial and religious site, known for its healing properties and mystical spirits.

Cynthia Ann Parker was captured in 1820 by the Comanche. She was assimilated and married a Comanche brave. Quanah was her first born. She was later "rescued" by the white settlers near Copper Breaks, but died broken-hearted two years later. Quanah was the last great Comanche Chief, leading attacks against hunters and the US Army in the Panhandle in an effort to retain tribal lands and save the great buffalo herds, that were mercilessly and wastefully being kill off at an alarming rate. Finally cornered in Palo Duro Canyon in 1875, this last tribe of Plains Indians was forced onto a reservation at Fort Sill in Oklahoma.



Copper Breaks is also a member of International Dark Skies Association, dedicated to preserving and protecting the night time environment and our heritage of dark skies through quality outdoor lighting. Light shining into the night sky above the horizon causes skyglow, and can be seen miles away. The hypothesis is that organisms have evolved over millennia exposed to roughly equal periods of light and dark. This disruption of circadian rhythm can cause hormonal imbalance in all living things. Light pollution has been linked to increased incidence of hypertension, attention deficit disorder, obesity, diabetes and some forms of cancer.

Star-gazing at Copper Breaks was a breathtaking adventure. The piercing darkness was punctuated by hushed silence. On that crystal clear night, we saw millions of stars that make up the Milky Way. Via telescopes we had spectacular views of Jupiter (365 million miles from the Earth) and Saturn (on average 746 million miles away) in real time, just tiny pencil eraser-sized images that look just like the pictures in books.



I was reminded of *Aurora Borealis* by C.W. McCall,

One night last summer we were camped at ten thousand feet up where the air is clear, high in the Rockies of Lost Lake, Colorado. And as the fire burned low and only a few glowing embers remained, we laid on our backs all warm in our sleeping bags and looked up at the stars. And as I felt myself falling into the vastness of the Universe, I thought about things, and places, and times.

I thought about the time my grandma told me what to say when I saw the evening star. You know, Star light, star bright, first star I see tonight. I wish I may, I wish I might, have the wish I wish tonight. The air is crystal-clear up here; that's why you can see a million stars.

I remember a time a bunch of us were in a canyon of the Green River in Wyoming; it was a night like this. And we had our rafts pulled up on the bank an' turned over so we could sleep on 'em, and one of the guys from New York said, "Hey! Look at the smog in the sky! Smog clear out here in the sticks!" And somebody said, "Hey, Joe, that's not smog; that's the Milky Way." Joe had never seen the Milky Way.

And we saw the Northern Lights once, in the Bitterroot Mountains of Montana. They're like flames from some prehistoric campfire, leaping and dancing in the sky and changing colors. Red to gold, and blue to violet... Aurora Borealis. It's like the equinox, the changing of the seasons. Summer to fall, young to old, then to now. And then tomorrow.

And then everyone was asleep, except me. And as I saw the morning star come up over the mountains, I realized that life is just a collection of memories. And memories are like starlight: they go on forever.

God could not physically be with us so He gave us dogs...and notice dog spelled backwards is God, and they both show unconditional love. After losing three dogs to old age, dying as they had lived with absolute devotion, all approximately a year apart, I vowed not to have another dog, but little beggin' brown eyes prevailed, and Hachiko (Hachi), a pound rescue, wiggled and squirmed his way into our hearts. Then Chiquita came from across the alley. She moved right in and chose not to leave. No one can fully understand love unless they are owned by a dog, and she truly thinks we are hers.

It wasn't long before we got a chance to tent camp with Faith Christian Fellowship at Mackenzie Reservoir, located near Silverton, Texas on Tule Creek, a tributary of the Red River. The reservoir supplies water for Floydada, Lockney, Silverton, and Tulia. What a glorious adventure! Barefoot, dirt-streaked little urchins ran and played in the sand, marveled at cherished rocks and stones, exclaimed over strange insects, captured on that bright sunny day, screaming when they thought they saw a snake, then the false bravado of not being scared at all and finding prehistoric dinosaur bones lurking just beneath the dust. Pastor Flores took them swimming, and they came back, oh so clean and sweet-smelling for awhile. Under a star-studded Panhandle sky, we worshiped and sang around a huge bonfire, flames leaping out from some fire-breathing dragon hidden in the ashes. In the distance, coyotes howled at the moon, blending their primitive song with ours. As the fire burned itself out and only glowing embers remained, one by one, the night lights flickered out and we fell into peaceful slumber. Memories of the long ago past flooded my mind and heart.



Francisco Vasquez de Coronado Spanish Conquistador was among the first to explore Tule Canyon. He encountered the Texas Indians whom were camped and hunting buffalo. Later the area was dominated by various Apache tribes. By 1700, the Comanche, who had quickly adopted the horse, began moving into the South Plains. Several decades of hostilities between the Comanche and Apache resulted in the defeat of the latter.

Colonel Ranald S. Mackenzie marched north from Fort Concho near present-day San Angelo, Texas to pursue and punish hostile Indians along the headwater of the Red River. On September 25, 1874, Mackenzie was encamped near Tule Canyon. A large Indian camp was reported by scouts about 30 miles to the northwest in Palo Duro Canyon. A surprise attack was launched against the Cheyenne, Kiowa, and Comanche.

There was little opposition. The battle was a catastrophe for the Indians. With their resistance largely shattered, most had little choice, but to return to the reservations on foot. More than 1,400 horses and mules were captured and a winter's supply of food was destroyed. The Indian mounts were taken to the Tule Canyon army camp west of present-day Lake Mackenzie. After selection of a few of the better horses, the remainder were shot and killed. While other skirmishes and battles continued as late as April of 1875, the earlier way of life for the South Plains Indians was largely ended and the lands were open for settlement.

Sarah, Larry's daughter has a beautiful home in the Northwest Territories of Canada overlooking Prelude Lake. She has to carry a gun when she is out walking because of bears, her own pretty pink rifle. She works three days a week, teaching elementary. Instead of daycare, Sarah pays her mom, Moyra, to caring for her little girl, Oonah on those days. It didn't take Oonah long to understand about Santa. She is already speaking in sentences and can say "Doll house for Christmas, please," "Can I have some, too, please?", "You jump, Mama," and "You splash, Mama." One of the biggest words she says is pterodactyl, a flying reptile from the Jurassic

and Cretaceous periods. She is amazing with gymnastics and can do a somersault, and loves to dance. Sarah will teach her to skate on their own ice rink in the backyard.

Last winter Jeff drove me down to Detroit so I could fly to Texas on November 22nd. On November 21st, I had my last drink of alcohol, almost an entire 26er of whiskey.

Health wise, that December was one of the worst in my memory. After we had decorated the Christmas tree while singing Christmas carols, and I had gone to bed, my blood sugar got so low that I passed out. Twyla and Mike had a hard time getting me through the night. I was like a crazy man. Then I hurt my eye and had to wear an eye patch for awhile. My finger got so infected that I thought it might have to be amputated. Then I was in bed almost two weeks with a terrible cold. My two front teeth got so rotten that it stank up the whole house.



In January, I started going to FCF and listening to Pastor Marcus. I stood in front of the entire congregation and admitted I was an alcoholic for most of my life. I felt the Holy Spirit come down and take away my urge to drink. I am now over a year sober with no urges to drink again. My diabetes dramatically improved. I started eating everything Twyla put on my plate including all those yucky green and yellow vegetables that I wouldn't eat before. And in February, I started walking downtown to the baseball batting cages three times a week and swinging at 30 pitches. I got down to 193 pounds and was taking half the insulin, half as many times a day. I was feeling so good that I felt like running to Twyla's house from the batting cages.

In February, Twyla adopted a dog, Hachi that brightened the household immediately. He is such a good companion for Kierra. They even sing (howl) together. He always had us in stitches at the funny things he would do like spinning around trying to catch his tail and then spinning around in the opposite direction. Chasing after a mouse under the snow was hilarious. I missed in the spring when Kierra and he would dig in the garden and throwing dirt all over the place. I liked taking him for a drive and buying him an ice cream cone at the Dairy Queen.

I was feeling pretty good when I went home on March 10th.

A friend, Dave Martin, gave me free tickets to the Toronto Rock lacrosse game at the Air Canada Centre so I was able to take my nephew, Jessie; his son, Riley and a friend of Jessie's to the game, costing nothing, but our food.

It was a good summer and I ended up going to 53 lacrosse games. I had 8 different steady drivers. It's easy to get someone to drive you to the games when you can use your free lifetime OLA passes to get them in.

I had a visit from a movie producer Joanne Storkan from Hollywood, California. Tom Ryan, coach of the USA team at the World Indoor Lacrosse Championship in Halifax 2007, came with her. They did a 3-hour video with me in the Gaylord Powless Lounge. I'm really excited to see the finished product when it comes out.
<http://www.honestenginefilms.com>

I read the New Testament twice and the Old Testament once. I always thought my departed Grandmother Power was keeping her eye on me, but in reality it was the Holy Spirit looking out for me on the pathway through life. I've always believed in doing unto others as you would have them do unto you.

With the help of long time friend, Jeff Davis, I got on track for the first time in my life, saving money. By the end of this year, I was putting \$600 per month into my Scotia non-taxable savings account and by the end of this year I'll have \$8,000 put away for Twyla and I to take a month-long holiday, two weeks on the Alaskan cruise ship plus another week in British Columbia visiting some relatives and friends and seeing some neat places. I want to have \$20,000 so we can go to Alaska in the summer of 2017. We have to make some sacrifices so I won't get down to Texas for the next two winters. It'll be tough, but this vacation is the dream of a lifetime for both of us.

Anyway, from March 10th to September 24th, I ballooned up to 219 pounds and my blood sugars were erratic. I completely changed my diet, absolutely no sugar, chocolate bars, pop, processed meat, cow's milk, just lots of fruit and vegetables, canned salmon, eggs, 12 grain bran bread and my "Magic Milk Shake." My blood sugars are more regular and I lost 10 pounds in a month, and I have ever so much more energy.

We hope everyone has a great year and that everyone is happy and healthy.

Twyla, Larry, Michael, and Kierra



