Nicholas Meat
Quarterly
Company News and Updates for the Loganton Community
Enjoy this special Holiday Edition of the QUARTERLY from Nicholas Meat! HOLIDAY 2025

A Christmas Prayer — Christmas Eve 1881

by Rian B. Anderson

On Christmas Eve 1881, young Matt longed for a rifle but realized his family couldn't afford it. However, he received an even better gift when he witnessed his Pa's selflessness. Matt learned the true spirit of giving and experienced the most meaningful Christmas of his life.

It was Christmas Eve 1881. I was 15 years old and feeling like the world had caved in on me because there just hadn't been enough money to buy me the rifle I'd wanted so badly that year for Christmas. We did the chores early that night for some reason. I just figured Pa wanted a little extra time so we could read in the Bible. So after supper was over, I took my boots off and stretched out in front of the fireplace and waited for Pa to get down the old Bible. I was still feeling sorry for myself and, to be honest, I wasn't in much of a mood to read Scriptures.

But Pa didn't get the Bible, instead he bundled up and went outside. I couldn't figure it out because we had already done all the chores. I didn't worry about it long though; I was too busy wallowing in self-pity. Soon Pa came back in. It was a cold clear night out and there was ice in his beard.

"Come on, Matt," he said. "Bundle up good, it's cold out tonight."

I was really upset then. Not only wasn't I getting the rifle for Christmas, but now Pa was also dragging me out in the cold, and for no earthly reason that I could see. We'd already done all the chores, and I couldn't think of anything else that needed doing, especially not on a night like this. But I knew Pa was not very patient at one dragging one's feet when he'd told them to do something. So I got up and put my boots back on and got my cap, coat, and mittens. Ma gave me a mysterious smile as I opened the door to leave the house. Something was up, but I didn't know what.

Outside, I became even more dismayed. There in front of the house was the work team, already hitched to the big sled.

Whatever it was we were going to do wasn't going to be a short, quick, little job. I could tell. We never hitched up the big sled unless we were going to haul a big load.

Pa was already up on the seat, reins in hand. I reluctantly climbed up beside him. The cold was already biting at me. I wasn't happy.

When I was on, Pa pulled the sled around the house and stopped in front of the woodshed. He got off and I followed.

"I think we'll put on the high sideboards," he said. "Here, help me."

The high sideboards! It had been a bigger job than I wanted to do with just the low sideboards on, but whatever it was we were going to do would be a lot bigger with the high sideboards on.

When we had exchanged the sideboards, Pa went into the woodshed and came out with an armload of wood – the wood I'd spent all summer hauling down from the mountain, and then all fall sawing into blocks and splitting. What was he doing? Finally, I said something."Pa," I asked, "what are you doing?"

(continues inside)



"You been by Widow Jensen's lately?" he asked. The Widow Jensen lived about two miles down the road. Her husband had died a year or so before and left her with three children, the oldest being eight. Sure, I'd been by, but so what?

"Yeah," I said, "why?"

"I rode by just today," Pa said. "Little Jakey was out digging around in the wood pile trying to find a few chips. They're out of wood, Matt."

That was all he said and then he turned and went back into the woodshed for another armload of wood. I followed him. We loaded the sled so high that I began to wonder if the horses would be able to pull it.

Finally, Pa called a halt to our loading, then we went to the smokehouse and Pa took down a big ham and a side of bacon. He handed them to me and told me to put them in the sled and wait. When he returned, he was carrying a sack of flour over his right shoulder and a smaller sack of something in his left hand.

"What's in the little sack?" I asked.

"Shoes. They're out of shoes. Little Jakey just had gunny sacks wrapped around his feet when he was out in the woodpile this morning. I got the children a little candy too. It just wouldn't be Christmas without a little candy."



I had given at Christmas many times before, but never when it had made so much difference.

We rode the two miles to Widow Jensen's, pretty much in silence. I tried to think through what Pa was doing. We didn't have much by worldly standards. Of course, we did have a big wood pile, though most of what was left now was still in the form of logs that I would have to saw into blocks and split before we could use it. We also had meat and flour, so we could spare that, but I knew we didn't have any money, so why was Pa buying them shoes and candy? Really, why was he doing any of this? Widow Jensen had closer neighbors than us. It shouldn't have been our concern.

We came in from the blind side of the Jensen house and unloaded the wood as quietly as possible. Then we took the meat and flour and shoes to the door. We knocked.

The door opened crack and a timid voice said, "Who is it?"

"Lucas Miles, Ma'am, and my son, Matt. Could we come in for a bit?"

Widow Jensen opened the door and let us in. She had a blanket wrapped around her shoulders. The children were wrapped in another and were sitting in front of the fireplace by a very small fire that hardly gave off any heat at all. Widow Jensen fumbled with a match and finally lit the lamp.

"We brought you a few things, Ma'am," Pa said, and set down the sack of flour. I put the meat on the table. Then Pa handed her the sack that had the shoes in it.

She opened it hesitantly and took the shoes out one pair at a time. There was a pair for her and one for each of the children – sturdy shoes, the best, shoes that would last. I watched her carefully. She bit her lower lip to keep it from trembling and then tears filled her eyes and started running down her cheeks. She looked up at Pa like she wanted to say something, but it wouldn't come out.

"We brought a load of wood, too, Ma'am," Pa said, then he turned to me and said, "Matt, go bring enough in to last for a while. Let's get that fire up to size and heat this place up."

I wasn't the same person when I went back out to bring in the wood. I had a big lump in my throat and, much as I hate to admit it, there were tears in my eyes, too. In my mind I kept seeing those three kids huddled around the fireplace and their mother standing there with tears running down her cheeks and so much gratitude in her heart that she couldn't speak.

My heart swelled within me and joy filled my soul that I'd never known before. I had given at Christmas many times before, but never when it had made so much difference. I could see we were literally saving the lives of these people. I soon had the fire blazing and everyone's spirits soared.

The kids started giggling when Pa handed them each a piece of candy and Widow Jensen looked on with a smile that probably hadn't crossed her face for a long time. She finally turned to us. "God bless you," she said. "I know the Lord himself has sent you. The children and I have been praying that he would send one of his angels to spare us."
In spite of myself, the lump returned to my throat and the tears welled up in my eyes again.

I'd never thought of Pa in those exact terms before, but after Widow Jensen mentioned it I could see that it was probably true. I was sure that a better man than Pa had never walked the earth. I started remembering all the times he had gone out of his way for Ma and me, and many others. The list seemed endless as I thought on it.

Pa insisted that everyone try on the shoes before we left. I was amazed when they all fit and I wondered how he had known what sizes to get. Then I guessed that if he was on an errand for the Lord that the Lord would make sure he got the right sizes.

Tears were running down Widow Jensen's face again when we stood up to leave. Pa took each of the kids in his big arms and gave them a hug. They clung to him and didn't want us to go. I could see that they missed their Pa and was glad that I still had mine.

At the door, Pa turned to Widow Jensen and said, "The Mrs. wanted me to invite you and the children over for Christmas dinner tomorrow. The turkey will be more than the three of us can eat, and a man can get cantankerous if he has to eat turkey for too many meals. We'll be by to get you about eleven. It'll be nice to have some little ones around again. Matt, here, hasn't been little for quite a spell."

I was the youngest. My two older brothers and two older sisters were all married and had moved away.

Widow Jensen nodded and said, "Thank you, Brother Miles. I don't have to say, 'May the Lord bless you,' I know for certain that He will."

Out on the sled I felt a warmth that came from deep within and I didn't even notice the cold. When we had gone a ways, Pa turned to me and said, "Matt, I want you to know something. Your ma and me have been tucking a little money away here and there all year so we could buy that rifle for you, but we didn't have quite enough. Then yesterday a man who owed me a little money from years back came by to make things square. Your ma and me were real excited, thinking that now we could get you that rifle, and started into town this morning to do just that.

But on the way we saw little Jakey out scratching in the wood pile with his feet wrapped in those gunny sacks and I knew what I had to do. So, Son, I spent the money for shoes and a little candy for those children. I hope you understand."

I understood, and my eyes became wet with tears again. I understood very well, and I was so glad Pa had done it. Just then the rifle seemed very low on my list of priorities. Pa had given me a lot more. He had given me the look on Widow Jensen's face and the radiant smiles of her three children. For the rest of my life, whenever I saw any of the Jensens, or split a block of wood, I remembered, and remembering brought back that same joy I felt riding home beside Pa that night. Pa had given me much more than a rifle that night, he had given me the best Christmas of my life.

About the Author

Rian B. Anderson wrote this story one freezing night in the desert while working as a sheep herder, pondering the true meaning of Christmas to share with his six children. The story circulated electronically for years as an anonymous tale before he was identified and it was formally published in 2001.



RECIPE FEATURE

WHOLE BEEF TENDERLOIN WITH WORCESTERSHIRE BUTTAH!

Recipe by Michelle Lundstrom

Follow her on Instagram @themoneymichelle

If you're looking for a holiday showstopper, save this one! A whole beef tenderloin with Worcestershire butter. Michelle likes to call it ***Buttah*** because it is tender, buttery perfection! With the holidays here, this recipe can be the centerpiece for entertaining and feeding a crowd!

- **4.3 lbs Dry Aged Whole Beef Tenderloin**

  Add a rub of equal parts of Kosher salt, black pepper, granulated garlic, granulated onion

Worcestershire Buttah

- **3 sticks salted buttah, softened**
- **2 Tbsp fresh rosemary, finely chopped**
- **2 Tbsp fresh thyme, finely chopped**
- **2 Tbsp Worcestershire sauce**
- **5 large cloves garlic, minced**
- **Zest of 1 lemon**
- **1/4 tsp ground black pepper**

Using a fork, mix the softened butter into the rest of the ingredients until combined. Refrigerate until ready to use. You can melt this to baste on the beef or you can also use it at room temperature to top steak once it comes off the grill.

Cook on grill at 250°F for the first hour, basting with Worcestershire butter. Increase to 275°F and continue cooking until the internal temperature reaches 135°F, then remove the beef from the grill. Raise the grill temperature to 475°F and sear tenderloin on all sides until the internal temp reaches 140°F. Let it rest before slicing.



Holiday Greetings!

Twas the night before Christmas
And all through the hills,
The good folks of Sugar Valley
Were sharpening their skills.

Alfalfa was thrown for cows, horses and deer,
And tables were glowing with holiday cheer.
Gifts had been wrapped and placed under the tree,
As family and neighbors were remembered dearly.

This special day comes but once a year,
To extend glad tidings to those far and near.
With a grateful sigh, we wish you sweet dreams,
For tonight love is born under stable beams.

So let's give thanks, celebrate and share,
Let's spread hope and kindness,
and steaks medium rare!
From all of us here at Nicholas Meat,
We send warm wishes for a holiday that's sweet.

May your heart be merry, your days be bright,
Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night!