

The Day My Family Met A Leprechaun

On Saturday morning like so many chilly February mornings, I'm up early about 6am. The rest of the family sleeps in while I read the morning news. As I read, my mind begins to ponder the family activity for the day. Little did I realize this day would become one most amazingly blessed and heart felt days a family could experience.

Drinking my Norwegian coffee, reading my newspaper, I realized it was snowing quite heavily, no wind just giant flakes falling gently, clinging to the limbs, bushes and covering the dirty January snow. If this keeps up, we may just have to stay home for the day, I thought. Saturday for the past three or four weeks has become the day we would go to a local ice arena. My four year-old daughter Julie has been taking ice skating lessons and today looked like a quiet winter day for the family to venture out and get some exercise.

Everyone was up and Mary was fixing breakfast for our dynamic duo Dan and little Jewels as we called her. Together they're a powerhouse of energy, always looking for ways to stay active. Dan the studious student who is involved in grade school sports and loves his outings in Cub Scouts is not one to sit around with nothing to do. Julie is a kinetic motion machine, the athletic type, not one to sit and play with dolls. We take a vote to see if the big flake snow is going to keep us from ice-skating today. The day was young and we were not in a hurry on this quiet day. We decided to venture out and take our time.

We loaded up the station wagon; the two kids buckled up in the back seat and off we went. It had been snowing for the past three hours. It is falling so lightly that little snow has accumulated and the plows have already been down our street and it can't keep up much longer. We figure just take our time, on a nice day the trip to the ice arena is about a twenty minute drive, today maybe forty minutes to an hour. That's ok, because it's only 9:30 and this will get us there in time for a full morning of ice-skating and time after for late lunch.

As we traveled out of the residential neighborhoods and headed down the county road to our destination, I discovered the road conditions to be a little more challenging. The wipers were going and traffic was moving slowly for the conditions. The county plows have yet to travel this segment of highway and drivers were being extra cautious. We were making pretty good time considering

the conditions. The countryside was covered with this wonderfully soft fluffy blanket of snow. Traveling slowly allowed us to take in this visual winter wonderland.

I looked up the road ahead and saw a car moving toward us in the other lane, it appeared the driver was losing control of the vehicle and it was coming at us. Time changed into a slow motion time lapse, frame by frame. If I crossed into the other lane, I'd hit the oncoming car behind the of the out-of-control vehicle. All in a matter of seconds I chose to move to the right shoulder, before we knew what happened, the vehicle coming toward us spun around hitting the back driver's side of our car, pushing us into an icy pond.

The air bags exploded and the car filled with smoke. The kids buckled in the back seat didn't know what hit them. Julie started crying. Mary couldn't breath and was complaining of chest pains. I looked down on the floor and the water was starting to trickle in. The next thing I knew a short stature gentleman wearing a brown leather jacket opened the door on the passenger side and heard his voice with the Irish baugh "Step out this way mam" assisting my wife to safety. He than went to the back of the wagon and opened the tailgate so the kids could crawl out the back. "You lads come out the back here". I followed behind as they were helped out of the sinking car. Just as I was about to crawl out, I crawled back to retrieve insurance paperwork from the glove compartment. The water was slowly creeping up the floorboard. I crawled out the back to find everyone basically doing well.

People were coming to our aid. Police arrived and a couple of ambulances were on the way. I turned to Mary and the kids "where is the little man who helped you and your mother out"? We looked around and looked at one another. We asked witnesses who began arriving at the scene, no one knew or saw anything. They had no idea who or what we were talking about. Our family saw him and heard his voice with the Irish Baugh "Step out this way mam....!!! You lads come out the back here"....!!!! Where could he have vanished? Traffic heading north was at a crawl the snowplows heading south were making their pass clearing the highway.

We didn't have time to say thank you! His appearance is still a mystery. The kids were doing better by the time the police showed up. Strangely enough a neighbor with his kids drove by and asked if he could help. They offered to take the kids to their house until things are worked out. The ambulances arrived at the scene, one for the driver of the car that lost control and another for my wife Mary who was experiencing chest pains, and breathing problems. As Mary was place in the back of the ambulance I sat in the front seat with the driver. He

asked if I was OK, I mentioned my thumb was bruised on impact. Needless to say they called a third ambulance for my ride to the hospital in the back of an ambulance.

Mary and I rendezvous in the hospital after be checked out at the Emergency Room. We counted our blessings and called for a ride home from our neighbor who was kind enough to take in the kids. That was the day my family met a leprechaun. The afternoon was moving into early evening as we all sat at the kitchen table piecing together a day that had a happy ending. We all walked away from an accident with the help of a little man with a baugh. Just another reminder of how God watches over us. Was he a guardian angel or a Leprechaun? I don't know but he sure spoke with an accent.

_____Gerard Nerburn