

## The Chili-Hamburger-Twinkie Supper

by Cammie Corlas Quinn

When I was ten years old, my parents dropped me off in the city for a day with my grandmother. My brothers and sisters and I referred to her as Grandma-in-Springfield to distinguish her from my other grandmother, Grandma-on-the-Farm. Grandma-in-Springfield was a widow who lived on her social security check in a rundown area of Springfield, Illinois—a “big city” to me at the time.



When my grandma asked what I'd like for supper, I couldn't decide. A cheeseburger? Chili? Both were my favorites. So, after inspecting the neighborhood through the little transom window in her front door, she gathered her large handbag over her ample arm, took me by the hand, and walked me several blocks over cracked sidewalks to an old, inner-city grocery store.

That evening in Grandma's little kitchen with the formica-top table that had shiny metal legs, Grandma and I feasted on cheeseburgers, canned chili, and twinkies. It was one of the finest meals I've ever eaten.

Throughout the remainder of my childhood, my grandma showered me with unexpected gifts. She sometimes beckoned me to meet her at her dresser, where she reached deep beneath her soft clothing for a \$5 bill. “Now don't you tell your dad,” she'd say, her fleshy cheeks shaking.

Usually I wasted her money on something frivolous like candy, but Grandma never seemed to care how I spent it. My grandma died before I was ever able to fully express my gratitude or treat her to a special meal of all *her* favorite foods.

Grandma may have temporarily spoiled me, but her excessive giving taught me a lesson. Sometimes it is good to shower extravagance on a child, a relative, a friend, or even a stranger. The idea is not to spoil the recipient, but to exhibit lavish love. Who doesn't want to be treated like a king or a queen for a day? There's not much call for worry—plenty of parched days will come when the recipient will need to draw off those precious memories.



Though the cheap candy I bought with my grandmother's money is long gone, her lavish love will never run out. If anything, it has grown over the years. The memory has become the real gift—the knowing that someone once loved me that much.

*“For thus says the LORD God of Israel: ‘The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the LORD sends rain on the earth.’” (1 Kings 17:14 NKJV)*