

**Brian: In Honor of His Golden Birthday:**

**By Gail Grenier Sweet ©2006**

When Brian was about eight or nine years old, he told us this story:

“When I was in heaven waiting to be born, there was a kid ahead of me in line. His name was Winfrey Fruitinkle and he was supposed to be born in our family. But I got in front of him, so I wound up in our family instead.”

I think this was Brian’s way of telling us that even at age nine, he knew he was cooler than the rest of us. Brian was famous for wheedling his way to the front of any line, so I half-believed his “remembrance.” Why wouldn’t he be as pushy in heaven as he was on earth?

Winfrey Fruitinkle. Ha!

\*\*\*

Also around age nine, Brian named the giant maple that stands just to the south of our home. He called it “The Lovely Giant,” and that’s been the name of the tree ever since. I don’t know why Brian named that tree; maybe he just had a feeling for nature, like a Native American.

\*\*\*

When Brian was born, he had a birthmark about the diameter of a 25-cent piece at the base of his spine. It was brown. The doctor said, “That’s a Mongoloid spot, and it’s a typical mark on Eskimo babies.”

Brian looked like an Eskimo when he was born – a fat little Eskimo. He was 9 lbs., 3 oz, with dark hair and squinchy eyes.

Brian’s Mongoloid spot faded soon after birth. But when he was in about fourth or fifth grade, I took him to a Pow Wow in Milwaukee. One of the Indian boys asked him, “What tribe do you belong to?”

My Grandma “Memere” Grenier (born Edna McGrath) looked more like an Indian the older she became. I think there was a lot of courtin’ and sparkin’ between the Indians and the white folks in Canada, where her people came through on their way from Ireland to the USA. Who knows how much Indian blood Memere had? Could some Inuit people have traveled from the tundra to the warmer Prince Edward Island, where the immigrant McGraths landed?

Maybe there’s some Eskimo in Brian after all.

... An Eskimo whose name is *not* Winfrey Fruitinkle.

The End