

they are still quite young and need all of the support and love they can get. I can't imagine living in a foster home without any contact with my family, regardless of how dysfunctional they are.

I believe our experiences make us who we are despite the grief they may have caused. Spiritually I know someone is watching over me and guiding me down my path. And I am certain that my brother Wayne, my father, grandfather, and grandmother—who recently died of cancer—are all a part of my spirit. Along with my extended family and friends who support my honesty and accept me for who I am.

Melanie Mark has a Criminology diploma and is actively raising awareness about sexual exploitation and its effects on youth, in her community.

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Emma K. Penner

Every time I opened Baba's apartment door the same wonderful smell drifted out. And I always knew what it was.

"Perogies!" I would scream and run into her kitchen. "This time can I help roll them Baba? I grew since last time. I know I did!"

Baba's perogie table was as familiar to me as the smell of the house. It was faded and thin and it dipped down in the middle; that's what made it a special perogie table. Each time I went to her house I asked my great-grandmother the same question, "How come your table sags in the middle?"

"Well, I have rolled perogies on that table for a long time," explained Baba. "I brought it from Slovakia, it's older than me!" At that point she would always laugh.

The only problem with the table was that it was too tall or I was too short, so I couldn't help Baba roll the perogies, something I had been dying to do forever.

"This is what we'll do," explained Baba. "We'll go to Simpson's Department Store and buy a perogie table just for you." I was ecstatic.

Once we arrived at Simpson's we headed straight for the furniture section. I pulled Baba's strong, callused hand all the way. Finally we found a little table that was just right for me. A few hours later we were back at Baba's, and I was ready to test out my new table. Baba gave me some dough and some potato filling. She didn't have to explain; I was sure I knew exactly how to roll the perogies and pinch the ends.

However, my perogies weren't turning out very well; they looked like balloons. I glanced over at Baba's perfect crescent shaped perogies. I knew what was wrong.

"Baba, I know why my perogies aren't working! My table doesn't sag. We need to fix it."

Together we carried the table to the basement and got out my great-grandfather's old tools. Baba and I sanded out the middle for an hour, until it was just right. We hauled the table back up the stairs and began rolling again. It was just me, Baba, and the perogies.

Emma K. Penner is 17, and a Grade 11 student at HumberSide Collegiate in Toronto. She is a musician and an avid hockey player.