The surprise quarter my youngest son found in his shoe the other morning won't go far in paying for his gas money to come home from college for Thanksgiving.

The 25 cents is rather insignificant ... until you know the rest of the story.

When my kids were little and they spent weekends visiting their grandparents, Grandpa Terry began a tradition my boys have cherished all their lives.

As youngsters, my kids weren't much for picking up after themselves. In fact, they still aren't. The dorm room they now share looks much like a laundry war zone.

But the boys learned at a young age that if they lined up their shoes nice and neat next to the door at Grandpa's house before they went to bed, they'd wake in the morning to find a quarter inside.

The proposition never failed.

After pink milk and a bedtime story, each of them would place their shoes perfectly side-by-side next to the door and then crawl in bed.

In the morning, as if by some magical fairy dust, a quarter would appear in the heels of the shoes.

Each boy had a white cardboard coin folder and Grandma helped them tuck their quarters into

those tiny pockets for safe keeping.

When the pockets were full, Grandma would take the boys for a treat.

This continued every time one or both boys spent the night at Grandma and Grandpa's house, until Terry died nearly two years ago.

Fast forward to a college dorm room where books and clothes and food wrappers litter the floor every night before bed. There are no neat rows of shoes, or anything else for that matter, and quarters are scrounged from seat cushions and pants pockets once a week for laundry.

Tyler has three pairs of shoes in Chadron. If he can find two that match in the morning, those are what he wears to class.

One day last week, he woke up to find all three pairs of shoes lined up neatly in front of his dresser. He thought it was odd and blamed his brother until Isaac claimed he had nothing to do with it.

Without much more thought, Tyler grabbed the tennies closest to him and slipped them on, untied of course.

When he walked into the bathroom to brush his teeth, something irritated his foot. Off came the shoe and there inside was one shiny quarter.

Don't try to tell Tyler that quarter, or the goosebumps that followed, came as the result of a mere coincidence. He got an entirely different message loud and clear.