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Since reading the book "Blizzard", I have been wanting to add a chapter of my own. The book was written by Roy L Alleman, and was a compilation of the experiences of many people during the winter of 1948-49.

My experiences started on November 17, 1948. I had only been in my veterinary practice since June of that year and although the two man practice needed some help, it wasn't quite ready to support a third man. So several mornings a week, I tuberculosis tested cows for the government in their quest to eradicate T.B. (which we have done during my life-time).

Dr. Frank Christ was a federal veterinarian who lived in Arcadia and was in charge of quite a large area, so he welcomed all the help he could get. He would ride with me occasionally to see how things were doing and help me all he could. He was a very nice man.

When we T.B. tested cattle, we injected about a tenth of a cc of of tuberculin in the hairless fold of skin along the tail head of the cow. Then in seventy-two hours, we went back and observed the injection site. If there was swelling at that site, it meant that the cow was sensitive to the tuberculin and probably had been exposed or was actually infected with tuberculosis. Then it was up to me to make a judgement as to how to dispose of the cow: either call her a suspect or send her to slaughter. But that is another story...

The morning of November 17, a Thursday, the sky was cloudy when I left the house at 6:00 a.m. The previous Monday I had injected several herds of cattle about fifteen miles north of Burwell, just off Highway 11. Dr. Christ was going to ride with me that day and was going to stay in the Burwell Hotel and I was to pick him up there. When I picked him up and as we started north through the canyon road, it started snowing. The flakes were those big wet ones that splatted on the windshield almost like rain. The car radio said "clearing by night".

When we turned off Highway 11, and went west to our first ranch, it was snowing pretty heavy. The road from there on would be a sandhill trail. That is where the road just starts off across the country, requiring one to seek the valleys or low hills, and go until you come to a gate that leads through to another pasture.

The first place happened to be my uncle's, Howard Karre's. He had the cattle in the barn, so we examined all of them and headed on up the trail about a mile to Leonard and Fay Butts'. They weren't home, and I knew they wouldn't be, because they were over helping the Bill Crandalls' get their cattle in, which was our next stop, about 1 1/2 miles on west. By that time the visibility was getting terrible. Sometimes I had to roll down the window and try to determine the edge of the trail by looking for tufts of grass that were not covered by the blowing snow. We finally reached the Crandalls' and that is where we spent the rest of the day and all day Friday. We checked the cows that were in the barn, then went to the the house to weather out the blizzard, which by that time was blowing and snowing and drifting.

The Crandalls were very nice people and treated us very well. Of course, the Butts' were there also, so we visited and ate and slept and

looked out the windows at the storm, wondering if it would ever end. The outside toilet was on the other side of a snow drift, but we all managed to make it. I helped Bill do some chores but there wasn't much we could do. The cattle didn't come out to eat what little hay we could find for them. Ranchers usually have a supply of feed ahead because they have experienced storms before...

Some time after noon on that first day, the phone rang. The Grandalls and Butts' about fell off their chairs because the phone line only ran between their two places which meant there was someone at the Butts' house. It was my uncle Howard. He had worried about us and walked up to the Butts' place. He had really risked his life and did, in fact, get lost a couple of times during that trip.

Any cows that were out in that storm were almost blinded by the wet snow freezing on their faces and over their eyes. Man had the same trouble so we worried the rest of the time if Uncle Howard got back home.

The storm raged on Thursday night and all day Friday, snowing, howling, and drifting. We all got real well acquainted and almost became like family. I felt that we couldn't have been stranded at a better place.

Saturday morning was beautiful. The sky was perfectly clear, the sun was shining bright, and everything was white. The wind had blown so hard most of the snow was in large drifts with bare spots in between. We dug out my car and finally got it started - then we headed for home. We drove on the bare ground until we came to a drift, then I drove through as far as I could and we would scoop the rest of the way through. We finally got to Highway 11 and down the highway about five

miles by dark. When we went by my Uncle Howard's place, he joined us.

When we got as far as we could, we went back his place to spend the night. We knew the canyon road just north of Burwell would probably be worse than what we had been traveling on, so my uncle offered to take us in with a team and wagon. He needed some coal and other supplies anyway. I left my car in a man's yard along the highway and we took off.

We got to Burwell Sunday evening and had to dig Dr. Christ's car out. When we lifted the hood, all one could see was snow. We finally got it started and headed for Ord. The highway between Burwell and Ord was clear so we didn't have any trouble getting home.

I walked into my house in Ord about dark on Sunday evening to greet my wife of two months who hadn't known where I was for four days!

She had some of her own experiences to tell. The electricity had gone off and she had to go to bed with the cat to keep herself warm.

My partner took me back up during the next week to get my car.

That was the start of one of the worst winters in the history of Nebraska - the winter of 48-49 - which all of us old timers still talk about. We had much more snow and every time the wind blew, which was pretty often, the roads drifted shut again. There was a three day period around new year's day that was impossible for anyone to get in or out of Ord in any direction. One of my partners, Dr. McGinnis, took the month of February off to go to California to visit his son. My other partner, Dr. Ferguson and I just as well have gone with him for we didn't do much veterinary work.

Later that winter, I was called out to the Sand Flats, which is an area about fifteen miles northeast of Ord to see a sick cow. About five miles out of Ord I ran into a snow drift right on the State Highway. I scooped myself out, went up the road a ways, made a u-turn, and went back to town. I didn't think any cow was worth getting snowed in again away from home for a day or two.

Another time, Allen Edwards called and had a heifer calving and having problems. It was a beautiful moonlit night, but most of the side roads were still blocked. He said he would have his son, Leonard, ride a horse out to the highway which was open. This was about two miles from Allen's farm, so I met Leonard at the appointed place. He stayed at a farm house nearby, I loaded what I thought I would need to deliver the calf, and away we rode off into the moonlight. The horse had to pick it's way around the snow drifts, through the fields, and occasionally on the road. We got there, delivered the calf, and rode back to the highway. Leonard rode the horse home and I came home in

the car. I'm not too sure that I would be dedicated enough to do that today...

I had a call from Morrow's north of Scotia about ten miles. I drove about six miles on the road and it was blocked from there on. So, I loaded what I thought I would need in a bucket and started to walk. About a mile and a half up the road, I stopped at Carl D. Jensen's farm. His son, Jim, saddled up a horse for me so I made the rest of the trip horse-back. If I remember correctly, when I got back to Jensen's with the horse, I ate dinner with them. They were old family friends and I had grown up about three miles from their place.

I had several team and wagon rides that winter and a few on the tractors. People didn't have the snow removal equipment that they have today. In fact, I can remember only two farmers that had "farm hands".

The Army Corp of Engineers sent soldiers with bulldozers into the area to help open the roads and to make trails to hay stacks so farmers could feed their cattle. The farmer's wives were so glad to see them and so grateful to be dug out after a month to six weeks of total isolation, they invited the soldiers in to feed them no matter what time of the day or night they came through. In fact, Shirley's parents lived on the farm southwest of North Loup and when the bulldozers opened their roads up, her mother fed them a meal in the middle of the night.

Some roads were only opened one-way so there were sometimes several hundred yards of one way road that prevent one from seeing the other end. Lots of people met in the middle and then someone would have to back all the way up!

Then when the snow thawed in the spring, we had another problem - MUD! Roads were impassable and bridges washed out. One time I wanted

to go to the Spalding area and had to drive clear to St. Paul to get there.

We had a lot of other experiences similar to that. Sometimes when I think back on it, I can't believe that I stayed here in this country another forty-five years!

This was written in 1993.



Dr. Dale Karre

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