

BLIZZARD OF '49

One of the legendary blizzards of the Great Plains happened in January and February of 1949. I was just shy of five years old. On New Years holiday, we got a visit from my Klemke grandparents. My sister was about to be born any day. The weather started to turn bad before Grandpa and Grandma headed back for Minatare, and they stayed with me on our little farm west of Merna, NE.

In the meantime, Dad and Mom left for the hospital in Broken Bow-and that would have been about the third of January. My sister was born on the 12th. My parents missed an opportunity by naming her Judy, instead of Stormy.

I can remember staying out there on the farm with my grandparents, and probably really getting acquainted with them for the first time. Grandpa would get bundled up, and go to the barn to feed the milk cows, and take an axe to break the ice in the stock tank, so the animals could drink. During this stretch, Grandpa had a birthday occur (on the 9th), and I felt that I should provide him with a gift. My grandma suggested that I give him an orange, as he really liked oranges. That filled my desire, though I can't speak for Grandpa.

The other memory of this time is that the snow drifted to the eaves of the house. Ours was a small house, and I was a small boy, but that seemed like a lot of snow to me. What I have learned in reading of the Blizzard when I was older was that this was a series of blizzards, one following the other. As soon as the snowplows would get the roads cleared, the wind would drift them shut again. It was bad enough that National Guard

aircraft were used to drop hay to the cattle in the Sandhills. Pilots also airdropped food and supplies to isolated farmers and ranchers.

The snow and the cold eventually gave way to spring, and then the next result of these storms made itself known: MUD.

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