

Callaway, NE  
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BLIZZARD '49  
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Dear Editor:

It was with great interest that I noticed the article WANTED: Blizzard Memories of 1948-49 in the March-April, 2008 issue of Nebraska Life. Although I am now 84 years of age, I still vividly remember that winter as I turned 25 in January of 1949 and experienced it first hand, here on the farm where I am still living.

Back in early 1999 when the 50th anniversary of that winter was being observed, I wrote a letter to my nephew, Robert Gschwind at Collinsville, Illinois, in which I did some reminiscing of my own experiences during that infamous winter. Bob was born here in the Callaway area and lived here for nine years before moving to North Platte with his parents in 1941 at which time his father, my brother Karl, left the farm and went to work for the Union Pacific Railroad as a brakeman, later retiring as a conductor. Bob was attending North Platte High School during the Winter of 1948-49, graduating in 1950 so he also remembers the winter although he did not have to be out in it. Later, he copied out of that letter my writing about that winter and made a number of copies of it, some of which he sent to me, one of which is enclosed. Rather than re-writing this, or portions of it, I am sending you the entire copy (no need to return it) and you can feel free to use any of it which you may find of interest. The Paul and Herbert referred to in the letter were brothers of mine who were still living then and also farming in the Callaway area. Another brother (I had no sisters) was farming south of Brady. The occasional use of RKG in the letter are my nephew Bob's initials.

You may find the occasional use of an X-rated word which you can delete, of course. Regarding the railroad, the initials K&BH refer to the Union Pacific's Kearney Branch through Callaway (now abandoned) which ran from Kearney to Stapleton and was originally known as the Kearney & Black Hills Railway. Back in 1990 I published a detailed history book of this line, entitled KEARNEY & BLACK HILLS - A Historic Branch of the Union Pacific Railroad, which is referred to in this letter. It was published by the South Platte Press of David City, Nebraska and is long out of print.

I did take a few photos that winter and also obtained a few others of the railroad snow plow wreck. However, I presume you will be swamped with photos so won't include any at this time unless there is a specific type of scene which you might like, which I can send later, if desired. If any of the enclosed is of interest to you, please feel free to use it.

I treasure each and every issue of NEBRASKA LIFE. The cover photo on the March-April issue is an absolute classic!

Sincerely,



Francis Gschwind

WINTER OF 1948 - 1949 ---BLIZZARDS

BY FRANCIS GSCHWIND

.....IT IS NOW 50 YEARS SINCE THE INFAMOUS WINTER OF 1948-49. IT IS HARD FOR ME TO REALIZE IT IS A HALF-CENTURY AGO ALREADY, AS I CAN REMEMBER IT MORE VIVIDLY THAN EVEN LAST WINTER, AMONG OTHERS SINCE THEN. I REALIZE NOW THAT ANYONE UNDER THE AGE OF 60 WOULD HAVE ONLY LIMITED MEMORIES OF THAT WINTER AS, BEING YOUNG, THEY WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN IT FIRST HAND LIKE SOME OF US OLD GRAYBEARDS. I HAVE A SCRAPBOOK I MADE DURING THAT WINTER AND SEVERAL YEARS AGO TOOK IT DOWN TO A SEVEN VALLEYS HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETING IN CALLAWAY ONE NIGHT AND IT PROVED TO BE AN IMMEDIATE HIT. A COUPLE OF WOMEN EVEN BORROWED IT FOR A FEW DAYS AFTERWARD TO STUDY IT MORE FULLY. I INTEND FOR IT TO GO TO THE SOCIETY AFTER I BECOME HISOTRY, LIKE THAT WINTER. I WAS AT LEAST SMART ENOUGH AT THAT TIME TO REALIZE THAT IT WAS AN EPOCHAL WINTER SO EVERY EVENING, AFTER MOTHER AND I WERE THROUGH WITH THE PAPERS, MAINLY THE WORLD-HERALD, BUT ALSO THE CALLAWAY AND BROKEN BOW WEEKLEY PAPERS I WOULD SIT DOWN AND CUT OUT EVERYTHING PERTAINING TO THE BLIZZARD AND PASTE IT IN THE SCRAPBOOK, FROM DAY TO DAY. I WOULD NOT TAKE A SMALL FORTUNE FOR THE SCRAPBOOK TODAY!! ANYWAY, I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT WANT TO SAVE THE PART OF THIS LETTER WHICH DEALS WITH THAT WINTER.

IT BEGAN WITH THE BLIZZARD OF NOVEMBER 18-19, 1948. THIS WAS A THURSDAY AND FRIDAY ACCORDING TO A PERPETUAL CALENDAR I HAVE. DAD HAD PASSED ON JUST A YEAR EARLIER, ON NOVEMBER 14, 1947. AS I RECALL, THE AUTUMN OF 1948 UNTIL THEN HAD BEEN QUITE NICE. ON THE EVENING OF THE 17th, MOM AND I WENT TO CALLAWAY, TO THE OLD STAR THEATER, TO SEE A MOVIE WHICH OUR LUTHERAN CHURCH WAS PUTTING ON FOR THE PUBLIC. IT WAS PRODUCED BY THE MISSOURI SYNOD AND WAS ENTITLED "THE SICKLE OR THE CROSS" DEALING WITH COMMUNISM VS. CHRISTIANITY AND HOW THE TWO WERE INCOMPATIBLE. IT WAS VERY WELL ATTENDED, AS I RECALL, NOT ONLY BY OUR FEW LUTHERANS BUT OTHERS IN THE COMMUNITY BELONGING TO THE VARIOUS OTHER DENOMINATIONS. AS WE DROVE HOME FROM TOWN, AFTER THE SHOWING, THE MOON {FULL} WAS COMING UP IN THE EAST AND IT APPEARED RATHER FUZZY WITH A LARGE HALO AROUND IT--A RATHER STRIKING SIGHT--AND MOTHER REMARKED THAT SHE BET IT FORETOLD A CHANGE IN THE WEATHER. WHEN WE GOT HOME AND I LET MOM OUT BEFORE PUTTING THE CAR IN THE GARAGE, WE COULD HEAR OUR OLD HORSE, PET PAWING AT THE NORTH BARN DOOR AND NICKERING--RAISING QUITE A FUSS. WE MARVELED AT THIS AND SURMISED THAT OLD PET MUST HAVE KNOWN SOMETHING ABOUT THE WEATHER THAT WE DIDN'T. MOM URGED ME TO LET HER IN THE BARN SO I DID.

BY DAYBREAK THE NEXT MORNING OF NOVEMBER 18, 1948 WE KNEW WHY PET WAS SO ANXIOUS TO GET INTO THE BARN THE PREVIOUS NIGHT, EVEN THOUGH IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL AUTUMN EVENING AT THAT TIME. WHEN WE GOT UP A STRONG WIND WAS BLOWING AND THE SNOW WAS COMING HORIZONTALLY! IT WAS MY FIRST REAL TASTE OF A BLIZZARD, FROM A PERSONAL STANDPOINT. WHATEVER BAD WINTER STORMS WE HAD PRIOR TO THAT, CAME WHILE I WAS STILL IN SCHOOL SO I WASN'T AFFECTED BY THEM THAT MUCH PERSONALLY AS WERE DAD AND THE OTHER BOYS. IN THE LAST YEAR OR TWO DAD WAS ALIVE HE TOLD ME ABOUT SOME OF THE BLIZZARDS OF THE PAST, NOTABLY 1888 WHEN THE GSCHWINDS HAD ONLY BEEN OUT HERE FROM OHIO SIX YEARS. I BELIEVE IT WAS IN JANUARY--DAD SAID HE AND HIS BROTHERS WERE OUT SHUCKING CORN WITH TWO TEAMS AND WAGONS AND HAD GONE OUT IN THEIR SHIRTSLEEVES THAT AFTERNOON BUT BY MID-AFTERNOON CLOUDS HAD ROLLED OVER FROM THE NORTHWEST AND BEFORE THEY COULD GET BACK TO THE HOUSE A STRONG NORTH WIND WAS BLOWING AND THE SNOW WAS COMING HORIZONTALLY. FROM WHAT I HAVE READ ABOUT THAT MONUMENTAL STORM, IT WAS OFTEN REFERRED TO AS THE "SCHOOL CHILDREN'S BLIZZARD" AS SO MANY CHILDREN WERE TRAPPED IN THEIR SCHOOLS WITH THEIR TEACHERS AND OF THOSE WHO TRIED TO GO HOME, A NUMBER OF THEM NEVER MADE IT. DAD ALSO TOLD ME ABOUT BLIZZARDS SINCE THEN, SUCH AS THOSE OF 1913,1915,1919, etc. HE THEN TOLD ME THAT SOME TIME IN

THE FUTURE I MIGHT HAVE TO GO THROUGH SOME OF THOSE. HOWEVER, BEING A WISE ASS OF 22 OR 23 AT THE TIME, AND KNOWING ALL THERE WAS TO KNOW ABOUT NEARLY EVERYTHING, I POOH-POOHED THIS, INFORMING DAD THAT WEATHER PATTERNS HAD CHANGED SINCE THEN AND WE WERE NO LONGER HAVING STORMS OF THAT TYPE. I HAD GROWN UP IN THE DROUTH-RIDDEN 1930's WHEN WE HAD A NUMBER OF OPEN WINTERS. I PARTICULARLY REMEMBER CHRISTMAS DAY OF 1934, THE WORST YEAR OF THE DROUGHT, WHEN WE RAN AROUND OUTSIDE IN OUR SHIRT SLEEVES THAT DAY, AND WE KIDS THEN ATTENDING CROSSROADS A&M WERE VERY DISGUSTED BECAUSE THERE WAS NO SNOW, AND WE COULD NOT PLAY OUR FAVORITE GAME OF WINTER, WHICH REQUIRED SNOW, CALLED "FOX AND GEESE". I IMAGINE THAT GAME IS UNKNOWN BY CHILDREN OF TODAY. ANYWAY, DAD TOLD ME I MIGHT CHANGE MY MIND SOME DAY. BEFORE THE WINTER OF 1948-49 WAS OVER, AND I HAD TO WADE THROUGH SNOW UP OVER MY ASS ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS TO DO CHORES, FEED CATTLE AND HOGS, AND SCOOP THE "WHITE BLESSING", I OFTEN SAID TO MYSELF: "DAD, YOU WERE SO RIGHT!! I WISH YOU COULD SEE ME NOW!" THAT NOVEMBER 1948 BLIZZARD WHICH STARTED IN THE WEE HOURS OF THE MORNING OF THE 18th, CONTINUED ALL THROUGH THAT DAY, ON THROUGH THE NIGHT, ON THROUGH THE 19th AND FINALLY BLEW ITSELF OUT ON THE EVENING OF THE SECOND DAY. THE ROADS AND OUR RAILROAD WERE BLOCKED, NO MAIL SERVICE, AND ALL THE OTHER EMBELLISHMENTS WHICH FOLLOWED A BLIZZARD FOR SEVERAL DAYS. LITTLE DID I REALIZE THAT WAS JUST THE BEGINNING! IN FACT, AFTER THAT. IT MODERATED NICELY AND EXCEPT FOR LARGER DRIFTS AND SNOW IN SHELTERED PLACES, IT BECAME A RATHER PLEASANT FALL AGAIN, ALL THE WAY THROUGH CHRISTMAS. THEN ON DECEMBER 28th, WE HAD BLIZZARD NUMBER TWO, WHICH, FOR SHEER INTENSITY AND FEROCITY, WAS ACTUALLY THE MOST WICKED ONE OF THE ENTIRE WINTER--THE ONLY REDEEMING QUALITY BEING IT LASTED ONLY THROUGH THAT ONE DAY. BUT IT HAD THE SAME EFFECT AS THE TWO-DAY STORM OF NOVEMBER, WITH JUST AS MUCH DRIFTING, ROAD AND RAIL CLOSINGS, MAIL INTERRUPTIONS, ETC., AS A HEAVY AMOUNT OF SNOW CAME WITH IT, PERHAPS JUST AS MUCH AS IN THOSE TWO DAYS IN NOVEMBER. THIS STORM CAME ON A TUESDAY, AND SOME TIME AROUND THE END OF THAT WEEK, MOTHER RODE OVER TO NORTH PLATTE WITH MRS. PAYTON, FRED JR. AND GALE, WHO WERE STILL HOME WITH HER ON THE MORGAN/PAYTON FARM NORTH OF TOWN. THEY WENT OVER TO GET MERLE AND EMMA JEAN WHO WERE COMING IN ON THE TRAIN FROM DENVER AS MERLE AND HUSBAND LIVED AT EITHER MORRISON OR EVERGREEN THEN {THEY LIVED IN BOTH NEIGHBORING TOWNS IN THE INTERVENING YEARS UNTIL JIM, MERLE'S HUSBAND, PASSED ON AND SHE MOVED BACK TO CALLAWAY IN 1991 OR 92}. THE TWO GIRLS WERE BOTH TEACHING IN RURAL SCHOOLS AROUND HERE OR BROKEN BOW AND EMMA JEAN HAD GONE HOME WITH HER SISTER FOR THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS. ON RETURNING HOME, MOTHER REMARKED ABOUT THE MONUMENTAL SNOW DRIFTS BETWEEN HERE AND NORTH PLATTE AND ESPECIALLY BETWEEN ARNOLD AND THE JUNCTION SOUTH OF STAPELTON, WHERE SHE SAID AT TIMES THEY ALMOST WENT THROUGH TUNNELS OF SNOW--CUTS THROUGH DRIFTS WHICH WERE MUCH HIGHER THAN THE CAR.

BY NO MEANS HAD THE CLEARING OUT BEEN COMPLETED AFTER THIS STORM BEFORE THE GRANDDADDY OF THEM ALL, THE BLIZZARD OF '49 AS IT HAS SINCE COME TO BE KNOWN, ROARED IN DURING THE NIGHT OF JANUARY 2, 1949, A SUNDAY. BY THE MORNING OF THE THIRD, THE STORM WAS RAGING IN ALL ITS FURY! MOM AND I WERE CONFRONTED WITH ANOTHER FEARSOME DIFFICULTY HERE. WE WERE ALMOST OUT OF PROPANE. IN THE SUMMER OF 1947, DAD HAD PURCHASED A 1000 GALLON PROPANE TANK, ALONG WITH A GAS RANGE, GAS-POWERED REFRIGERATOR, AND A GAS CONVERSION UNIT FOR THE COAL AND WOOD BURNING FURNACE IN THE BASEMENT. HE BOUGHT ALL THIS FROM A LONG-TIME MERCHANT IN BROKEN BOW BY THE NAME OF PETE CAROTHERS--I BELIEVE THE SAME FELLOW THEY PURCHASED THE OLD EDISON PHONOGRAPH FROM IN THE EARLY 1920's, WHICH STILL STANDS IN THE WEST ROOM UPSTAIRS AND STILL PLAYS BEAUTIFULLY. PETE ALSO WANTED TO PUT A GAS LOG IN THE FIREPLACE BUT DAD SAID "NO WAY". UNFORTUNATELY DAD ONLY ENJOYED THE STUFF A FEW SHORT MONTHS BEFORE HE PASSED AWAY. THEN, IN 1948, WE BECAME RATHER DISGUSTED WITH THE BROKEN BOW OUTFIT AS THEY WERE SLOVENLY ABOUT BRINGING OVER GAS WHEN WE NEEDED IT. EARLIER THAT YEAR A COUPLE OF FELLOWS FROM OKLAHOMA BY THE NAME OF PAUL MARTIN AND MARION FORD, HAD COME TO CALLAWAY AND STARTED UP A PROPANE GAS AND APPLIANCE DEALERSHIP WHICH THEY NAMED THE SEVEN VALLEYS GAS AND APPLIANCE CO. SO MOM AND I DECIDED

"TO HELL WITH BROKEN BOW OUTFIT" AND BEGAN ORDERING GAS FROM THE LOCAL DEALERS. UNFORTUNATELY, THEY DID NOT AS YET OWN A STORAGE TANK IN CALLAWAY OR A DELIVERY TRUCK SO HAD HOOKED UP WITH A PROPANE OUTFIT IN LEXINGTON WHICH SUPPLIED THEIR CALLAWAY CUSTOMERS. IN LATE DECEMBER WE ORDERED SOME MORE PROPANE. UNFORTUNATELY, THE TRANSMISSION HAD GONE OUT ON THE DELIVERY TRUCK IN LEXINGTON AND IT WAS IN THE SHOP. BUT MARTIN AND FORD ASSURED US WE WOULD BE FIRST ON THE LIST WHEN THE TRUCK WAS REPAIRED, WHICH SHOULD BE ONLY A VERY FEW DAYS AT WORST. THEN THE SITUATION WAS COMPOUNDED BY THE BLIZZARD. ON THE MORNING OF THE 3rd WE INFORMED THEM OF OUR PLIGHT AS WE WERE ALMOST OUT. THEY TOLD US THAT THEY COULD FURNISH US A NUMBER OF BOTTLES OF PROPANE WHICH COULD BE HOOKED UP TO OUR TANK SO PAUL CAME DOWN FROM THE OLD GSCHWIND HOMSTEAD WHERE HE, LEONA AND THE GIRLS LIVED AT THAT TIME {THEN OWNED BY HARRY LAMB WHO SOLD IT TO HERB GSCHWIND SOME YEARS LATER} AND HE AND I WENT TO TOWN TO GET SEVERAL BOTTLES OF PROPANE AND ONE OF THE FELLOWS TOLD US HOW TO HOOK IT UP TO OUR TANK. HOWEVER, IT WAS SOON EVIDENT THAT THE RATHER INEFFICIENT CONVERSION UNIT IN THE FURNACE COULD DRAIN A BOTTLE RATHER RAPIDLY, SO WE CUT OFF HEAT TO EVERY ROOM IN THE HOUSE EXCEPT THE KITCHEN AND CUT THE THERMOSTAT WAY DOWN BESIDES. WHEN THE GAS RANGE WAS INSTALLED IN THE SUMMER OF 1947, WE MOVED THE OLD CORNCOB AND WOOD-BURNING KITCHEN STOVE DOWN INTO THE BASEMENT AND WE FIRED IT UP TO KEEP THE WATER PIPES IN THE BASEMENT FROM FREEZING. SOME TIME DURING THE STORM {OR IMMEDIATELY AFTERWARD} MRS. MAY SENT REX OVER ON HORSEBACK WITH A SMALL KEROSENE-BURNING HEATER, WHICH WE PLACED IN THE BATHROOM.

THE STORM RAGED ON, WITHOUT LETUP, ALL DAY ON THE 3rd, THAT NIGHT, ALL DAY ON THE 4th, THAT NIGHT AND ON INTO THE 5th. LATE THAT AFTERNOON THE SUN MADE A FEW FITFULL APPEARANCES, THE SNOW FINALLY DIMINISHED INTO FLURRIES BY SUNDOWN, AND THE WIND WENT DOWN DURING THE NIGHT. IT WAS BRIGHT, CLEAR, AND COLD, THE NEXT MORNING BUT THE SIGHT THAT GREETED OUR EYES WAS LIKE SOMETHING OUT OF SIBERIA!! THERE WERE MONUMENTAL DRIFTS ALL OVER. I STILL MILKED SEVERAL COWS THEN, HAD A FEW HOGS, AND MOM AND I HAD SOME STOCK COWS. HERB AND PAUL HAD THEIRS ON THEIR OWN PLACES. BESIDES, PET, I HAD THREE OTHER HORSES--MAUDE, A BAY MARE, A SORREL GELDING WHICH WAS ALWAYS WILLING TO DO MORE THAN HIS SHARE OF WORK WHENEVER HOOKED UP (AND MAUDE WAS MORE THAN WILLING TO LET HIM) AND THE GRAY SADDLE HORSE WHICH DAD HAD BOUGHT AT A SALE, ALTHOUGH NAMELESS, I CALLED HIM "GRAYBUTT". THE HORSES WERE ALL SNUG IN THE BARN ALTHOUGH I WOULD STRUGGLE TO TAKE THEM OUT TO WATER EACH DAY BUT THEY WEREN'T VERY THIRSTY, ESPECIALLY WHEN FACING THE ELEMENTS AT THE TANK JUST EAST OF THE BARN. I KEPT THE MILK COWS IN THE EAST BARN WHERE I MILKED THEM AND LET THEM OUT JUST LONG ENOUGH TO GO TO WATER BUT THEY WEREN'T VERY THIRSTY EITHER AND WERE ALWAYS GLAD TO GET BACK INTO THE BARN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE WHICH, UNFORTUNATELY CREATED A LOT OF MANURE AND LIQUID IN THE TROUGH WHICH I HAD TO SCOOP OUT AFTER THE STORM. THE STOCK COWS HAD IT QUITE GOOD AS THEY WERE ACROSS THE ROAD IN THE FIELD SOUTH OF THE HOUSE AND STAYED BEHIND THE TREES WHICH WERE JUST ACROSS THE ROAD FROM THE FRONT YARD, AND THE GROVE AROUND THE PLACE HERE AND THOSE TREES GAVE THEM DOUBLE PROTECTION AND THEY CAME THROUGH THE STORM NICELY. IN FACT, THERE WAS ONE BABY CALF BORN IN LATE DECEMBER, AND HE CAME THROUGH IN GREAT SHAPE, WAS JUMPING AND BOUNCING AROUND AFTER THE STORM AS THOUGH HE ENJOYED THE WHOLE AFFAIR! THE HOGS WERE ANOTHER MATTER. THEY WERE SAFE AND SNUG IN THE WEST SIDE OF THE BARN BUT THERE WAS A 10 FT. SNOWDRIFT JUST OUTSIDE THE DOOR. BEFORE I COULD GET THEM OUT, I HAD TO DIG A MONUMENTAL TRENCH THROUGH THE DRIFT WHICH INVOLVED A LOT OF SWEAT AND TOIL, NO BLOOD, AND MAYBE NO TEARS, ALTHOUGH I WAS CLOSE TO IT AT TIMES BEFORE I FINISHED THE JOB.

THE ROADS WERE ALL CLOSED, OF COURSE, SO THERE WAS NO MAIL FOR SEVERAL DAYS. SO WAS THE RAILROAD AND AT STAPLETON THE SITUATION WAS GETTING RATHER DESPERATE AS THERE WAS A LOW SUPPLY OF COAL FOR FUEL, THE GROCERY STORES WERE RUNNING OUT OF STOCK AND THERE WERE OTHER SHORTAGES, AS IN THOSE DAYS, THE RAILROAD STILL BROUGHT IN A LOT OF STUFF, IF NOT THE GROCERIES. I HAD TO DO A MONUMENTAL AMOUNT OF SCOOPING TO GET ANYWHERE AROUND THE PLACE, AND BY NIGHT

TIME I WAS THOROUGHLY EXHAUSTED AND HAD NO TROUBLE SLEEPING WHEN I FINALLY FELL INTO BED!! MOM STILL HAD SOME CHICKENS BUT THEY WERE SAFE IN THE CHICKEN HOUSE AND SHE HAD NO TROUBLE GETTING FEED AND WATER TO THEM ONCE I HAD SCOOPED A PATH TO THE CHICKEN HOUSES. WE WERE STRUGGLING WITH THE GAS BOTTLES AND RUNNING LOW ON THEM. IN THE HOUSE WE WORE SWEATERS ETC. TO HELP KEEP WARM. ALTHOUGH THE BLIZZARD WAS OVER, EVERY TIME THE WIND CAME UP AGAIN, WHICH WAS OFTEN, ALL THE PATHS WERE CLOSED AGAIN AND HAD TO BE SCOOPED OUT AGAIN. I SCOOPED THE ENTIRE DRIVEWAY OUT SEVERAL TIMES AS THE BOYS AT THE GAS COMPANY INFORMED US THE DELIVERY TRUCK IN LEXINGTON WAS ABOUT REPAIRED AND AS SOON AS THE ROADS WERE OPEN, WOULD BE HERE WITH PROPANE. EVERY TIME I SCOOPED THE DRIVEWAY OUT THE WIND WOULD BLOW IT SHUT AGAIN AND I HAD TO REPEAT THE PERFORMANCE, A MONUMENTAL JOB EACH TIME. THE HARDEST I SAW MOM LAUGH, DURING THE ENTIRE ORDEAL, WAS ONE DAY WHEN PAUL CAME DOWN IN HIS PICKUP. IT WAS FULL OF SNOW, AND HE SCOOPED THE SNOW OUT IN FRONT OF THE BARN. I SAID TO MOM; "YOU TELL PAUL TO SCOOP HIS GOD DAMED SNOW OUT OF HIS PICKUP AT HIS OWN PLACE AFTER THIS!" MOM LAUGHED UNTIL THE TEARS ROLLED DOWN HER CHEEKS. ANOTHER THING I CAN LAUGH ABOUT NOW, BUT IT WASN'T ONE BIT FUNNY TO ME THEN, INVOLVED CORNER POSTS. I HAD SOME SHOCKED CANE IN ONE FIELD AND SOME ALFALFA HAY STACKS IN ANOTHER SO I WOULD HOOK THE TEAM TO THE HAYRACK AND LOAD UP EITHER CANE OR HAY FOR THE STOCK COWS. THE FIRST TIME I CAME OUT OF THE CANE FIELD WITH A LOAD, AS I CAME OUT THE GATE AND OVER AN THROUGH A SNOWDRIFT, THE HAY RACK SLIPPED SIDWAYS, BROKE DOWN THROUGH THE SNOW AND CAME DOWN IN SUCH A MANNER THAT THE CORNER POST CAME UP BETWEEN THE FLOOR AND THE SIDE MAKING IT IMPOSSIBLE TO MOVE THE HAYRACK. SO I HAD TO WALK TO THE HOUSE, GET A SAW, AND GO BACK AND SAW OFF THE CORNER POST, NO SMALL JOB ITSELF. I DIDN'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THE TEAM RUNNING OFF AS THEY COULD NOT GO ANYWHERE UNTIL THE POST WAS REMOVED. A COUPLE OF DAYS LATER THE SAME DAMNED THING HAPPENED WHEN I CAME OUT OF THE FIELD WHERE THE HAY STACKS WERE LOCATED SO I HAD TO REPEAT THE PROCESS. HERB WAS MANAGING TO GET INTO TOWN FOR SUPPLIES AND THE MORNING COFFEE SESSIONS AT THE LOCAL CAFES AND HE SAID SEVERAL PEOPLE ASKED HIM HOW HIS MOTHER AND BROTHER WERE GETTING ALONG IN THE SNOW. HE REPLIED THAT THEY WERE DOING OKAY BUT HE WAS AFRAID HIS BROTHER FRANCIS WAS GOING TO RUN OUT OF CORNER POSTS BEFORE SPRING!!

DURING ALL THIS, PAUL AND I FINALLY MADE IT TO TOWN ONE DAY WITH A TRACTOR AND WAGON. AFTER I GOT THERE, I DEEPLY REGRETTED I DIDN'T HAVE MY CAMERA ALONG. WHEN WE GOT TO TOWN, THERE WERE ALMOST NO CARS ON MAIN STREET BUT THE SCENE THAT GREETED OUR EYES MUST HAVE RESEMBLED EARLY DAYS SOMEWHAT. PARKED ALL ALONG WERE OTHER TRACTORS AND WAGONS, AS WELL AS A NUMBER OF TEAMS AND WAGONS, BELONGING TO OTHER FARMERS WHO HAD COME IN FROM VARIOUS DIRECTIONS TO BUY THEIR SUPPLIES. NEEDLESS TO SAY, THE GROCERY STORES HAD A GOOD RUN OF BUSINESS!! FINALLY, A FEW LDAYS AFTER THE STORM, HERE CAME THE PROPANE TRUCK FROM LEXINGTON UP THE HILL AND MOM AND I REJOICED IN NO SMALL WAY. IF WE HAD OWNED A BAND, WE WOULD HAVE HAD IT OUT SERENADING THE TRUCK'S ARRIVAL. BY THE NEXT WINTER, SEVEN VALLEYS GAS AND APPLIANCE HAD THEIR OWN SUPPLY TANKS AND TRUCK IN CALLAWAY--IN THOSE DAYS THE PROPANE CAME IN TO THE BULK TANKS BY RAIL TOO. THE ONE INDIVIDUAL ON THE FARM WHO CAME THROUGH IT ALL IN THE BEST SHAPE WAS FRITZ THE SPITZ DOG. HE WAS SAFE IN THE HOUSE EXCEPT WHEN HE HAD TO GO OUT TO DO HIS NECESSITIES AND HE ALWAYS SAW TO IT THAT HE GOT THAT DONE MIGHTY QUICK! I DON'T REMEMBER HOW MANY CATS WE HAD AT THAT TIME OR THEIR NAMES, BUT THEY WERE ALL SAFE AND SNUG IN THE BARN AND THEIR APPETITES WERE NOT IMPAIRED IN THE LEAST, THROUGH IT ALL.

ALTHOUGH THERE WERE NO MORE TRUE BLIZZARDS AFTER THAT, FOR A WHILE, OR AT LEAST MAYBE WE NEVER CONSIDERED THEM TO HAVE BLIZZARD STATUS AFTER THE GREAT ONE, THERE WAS STILL MORE SNOW AND WIND, WHICH HELPED COMPOUND THE PROBLEM. EVERYTHING WOULD BE BLOWN SHUT AGAIN AT VARIOUS TIMES. THE RAILROADS, INCLUDING OUR BELOVED K&BH, WERE CONTINUING TO HAVE ALL KINDS OF PROBLEMS AND WHAT WAS SO DAMED FRUSTRATING FOR ME WERE ALL THE PLOW TRAINS WHICH CAME UP THE BRANCH FROM TIME TO TIME AND I COULD NOT GET OUT WITH MY CAMERA TO

PHOTOGRAPH THEM EXCEPT FOR ONE OCCASION, AS SHOWN ON PAGE 288 OF THE K&BH BOOK. ONE TIME HERB AND I WERE DOWN ON THE RIVER HAY MEADOW LOADING UP HAY AND HERE CAME A PLOW TRAIN BY WITH TWO 400 CLASS ENGINES, COUPLED TENDER TO TENDER (BACK TO BACK--PRESUMABLY TO GIVE BETTER TRACTION IN CASE THE OUTFIT GOT STUCK, WITH ONE ENGINE FACING BACK THE WAY THEY CAME.) I COULD HAVE HAD A STROKE AS I HAD NO CAMERA WITH ME INASMUCH AS I HAD NO IDEA WHATSOEVER THAT A PLOW TRAIN WAS COMING UP THAT DAY. ON THE NEXT PAGE (289) IS AN EXAMPLE, FOUR YEARS LATER, WHEN I CARRIED A CAMERA WITH ME, JUST IN CASE, AND MUCH TO MY SURPRISE (AND JOY) HERE CAME A PLOW TRAIN ALSO TOTALLY UNEXPECTED. BUT GETTING BACK TO 1949, ANYTHING CONCERNING THE K&BH AND ITS SNOW PROBLEMS CAN BE FOUND IN THE CHAPTER "SNOWBOUND" IN THE K&BH BOOK SO I WON'T GO INTO THAT IN MUCH DETAIL HERE. HOWEVER, THE TRAGIC SNOW PLOW WRECK NEAR HOAGLAND ON JANUARY 18 WAS ANOTHER UNFORGETTABLE EPISODE THAT WINTER. IT TOOK THE LIFE OF BRAKEMAN E.L. REDMAN, A REGULAR ON THE BRANCH, WHOM I KNEW QUITE WELL AND I KNOW RKG KNEW HIM TOO--THEY APPEAR TOGETHER IN THE BACKGROUND IN THE K&BH BOOK IN THE CATTLE LOADING SCENE AT CALLAWAY WITH BROTHER HERB IN THE PICTURE, ALSO. STRANGELY, WHEN THAT PLOW TRAIN WENT UP ON MONDAY THE 17TH, I NEVER EVEN SAW OR HEARD IT GO BY--KNEW NOTHING ABOUT IT. THEY GOT AS FAR WEST AS THAT MONUMENTAL FATEFUL DRIFT THAT DAY BUT THEN BACKED BACK TO CALLAWAY LEAVING VARIOUS SECTION CREW MEMBERS FROM ALONG THE LINE IN THE ARNOLD HOTELS. THE NEXT MORNING, I WAS GOING TO THE MAIL BOX WHEN THE PLOW TRAIN WENT BY, BUT BELIEVE IT OR NOT, I DID NOT KNOW THAT ONE OF THE TWO ENGINES WAS A 400 CLASS OR I WOULD HAVE FLIPPED MY WIG AS 400'S NEVER CAME UP HERE IN THOSE DAYS. I DON'T KNOW WHY I DIDN'T NOTICE OR DISCOVER THIS--MAYBE I WAS A LITTLE SNOW BLINDED OR PERHAPS SOME SWIRLING SNOW AROUND THE TRAIN MAY HAVE OBSURED THE DETAILS ON THE LARGER 400 (LARGER THAN THE 105 ACCOMPANYING IT). IN THOSE DAYS. THE FARMERS ELEVATOR HERE IN CALLAWAY WOULD BUY FAT HOGS FROM FARMERS AND SHIP THEM OUT ONCE A WEEK. DURING THE STORMS, OF COURSE, THERE WAS NO HOG BUYING. HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO A STORY I HEARD LATER, AS THE PLOW TRAIN LEFT CALLAWAY THAT DAY, BRAKEMAN REDMAN WAS STANDING ON THE REAR STEPS OF THE CABOOSE AND AS THEY WENT BY THE ELEVATOR, HE YELLED AT THE MANAGER. JOHNNY FREDERICK, JR. THAT HE WOULD BRING HIM BACK AND EMPTY STOCK CAR FOR HOGS FROM STAPLETON, WHEN THEY RETURNED. WHEN THEY GOT TO ARNOLD, AND ALL THE VARIOUS SECTION CREWS WERE LOADED THEREIN, HE DECIDED IT WAS TOO CROWDED AND WARM IN THE CABOOSE AND DECIDED TO RIDE THE BRAKEMAN'S SEAT ON ENGINE 414, THE SECOND ENGINE, A DECISION WHICH WAS TO COST HIM HIS LIFE. THE BRAKEMAN'S SEAT ON THE 400'S WAS SANDWICHED BETWEEN THE BOILER AND THE WINDOW, WITH THE FIREMAN'S SEAT DIRECTLY BEHIND--ONE COULD NOT GET IN OR OUT OF THE BRAKEMAN'S SEAT IF THE FIREMAN WAS IN HIS SEAT. I THOUGHT ABOUT REDMAN WHEN I RODE THE BRAKEMAN'S SEAT FROM CALLAWAY TO STAPLETON IN THE 414 ON APRIL 7, 1955. WHEN REDMAN LEFT THE CABOOSE AT ARNOLD, CALLAWAY SECTION MAN SLIM MORRISON WAS SEATED ON THE COAL BOX IN THE CABOOSE, NEXT TO THE STOVE AND REDMAN WARNED SLIM THAT HE OUGHT TO GET OFF OF THE COAL BOX AS, IF THEY MADE A SUDDEN STOP, HE COULD GET THROWN AGAINST THE HOT STOVE. ALTHOUGH THAT HAPPENED (THE WRECK) EARLY THAT AFTERNOON, I DID NOT KNOW ABOUT IT UNTIL THAT NIGHT. MOM WAS "RUBBERING" ON THE PARTY TELEPHONE LINE WHEN NEIGHBOR ANNA (MRS. LES HICKENBOTTOM) WAS TALKING ON THE PHONE TO SOME LADY SHE KNEW UP IN THE HOAGLAND-GANDY AREA AND THE LADY WAS TELLING ANNA ALL ABOUT THE WRECK. MOM THEN REPORTED IT TO ME AND MOM SAID THE MAN KILLED WAS A FELLOW CALLED "RED" (REDMAN'S NICKNAME) AND I ALMOST WENT INTO A STATE OF SHOCK AND WAS PRACTICALLY IN TEARS WHEN I HEARD IT. A SHOCK WAVE WENT ALL UP AND DOWN THE BRANCH WHEN PEOPLE HEARD IT AS HE WAS WELL-KNOWN ALL ALONG THE LINE AND WELL LIKED BY EVERYONE WHO KNEW HIM. WHAT WAS ESPECIALLY SAD WAS THE FACT THAT HE AND HIS WIFE WERE GOING TO START THEIR ANNUAL VACATION THAT WEEK (NO DOUBT IN A WARMER CLIMATE SOMEWHERE) BUT BECAUSE OF ALL THE PROBLEMS THE U.P. WAS HAVING AND BEING SHORT HANDED, HE DECIDED TO POSTPONE THE VACATION UNTIL THE SNOW MESS WAS CLEANED UP. IF ONLY HE HAD STAYED IN THE CABOOSE---IF, IF, IF, IF, ON THE OTHER HAND, IT BOTH FIREMEN HAD BEEN IN THEIR SEATS, INSTEAD OF FIRING THEIR ENGINES AT THE TIME, THREE MEN WOULD HAVE BEEN DEAD. AND IF THE PLOW HAD TIPPED OVER TO THE RIGHT, INSTEAD OF LEFT, TWO ENGINEERS WOULD HAVE DIED. AND IF THE TRAIN HAD NOT BEEN

FORCIBLY AND SUDDENLY STOPPED BEFORE THE CABOOSE CAME BY, FILLED WITH MEN.....!!!! as it was, one fireman (EUGENE ROCK) WAS BADLY INJURED AND COULD HAVE BLED TO DEATH, IF NOT FOR THE QUICK THINKING OF ANOTHER MAN (SEE THE K&BH BOOK) WHO ALSO LOST HIS LIFE TRAGICALLY SOME YEARS LATER. WHEN DIESEL 1147 WITH TRAIN 95 STRUCK A SNOW DRIFT AND WAS STALLED IN IT IN MARCH OF 1966 AND I IMMEDIATELY WENT UP AND GOT PICTURES (IN THE BOOK) ROCK, WHO BY THEN WAS THE ENGINEER ON THE TRAIN, WAS AS WHITE AS A SHEET AND STILL SHAKING WHEN I GOT THERE. THE HORROR OF 1949 WAS REVIVED FRESH IN HIS MIND AGAIN! RKG'S MOTHER KNEW ROCK--SEEMS TO ME SHE MET HIM IN A DOCTOR'S OFFICE IN NORTH PLATTE. HE, TOO, WAS A NICE GUY--NOT SURE HE IS STILL LIVING OR NOT AS HE IS NO LONGER LISTED IN THE NORTH PLATTE TELEPHONE DIRECTORY.

THE WINTER OF 1949 ROLLED ON WITH MORE SNOW AND WIND BUT THE ONLY TRUE BLIZZARD I REMEMBER AFTER JANUARY WAS ANOTHER BIG ONE IN MARCH. I AM A LITTLE HAZY ON IT BUT BELIEVE IT WAS ONLY A ONE DAY AFFAIR BUT ANOTHER ROUGH ONE AND WITH A HEAVY, WET SNOW, IN CONTRAST TO THE EARLIER SNOWS THAT WINTER. I KNOW IT BENT OVER AND TOOK OUT, BY THE ROOTS, ONE OF THE RUSSIAN OLIVE TREES THE FOLKS HAD ALONG THE SOUTH YARD FENCE (ONLY ONE LEFT NOW). I MAINLY REMEMBER THAT WE HAD NO MAIL DELIVERY BUT HERB SOMEHOW GOT TO TOWN AND GOT HIS AND OURS. I SADDLED UP OLD GRAYBUTT AND RODE TO HIS PLACE TO GET OURS. ON THE ROAD, DUE EAST OF HERB'S PLACE WAS A HUGE DRIFT ABOUT 8 OR 10 FEET TALL AND A ROD OR TWO LONG, WHICH BLOCKED THE ROAD. THE SNOW WAS SO HEAVY AND PACKED THAT I FELT OLD GRAYBUTT COULD WALK RIGHT OVER IT, AND HE DID. HERB AND HIS NEIGHBOR PIRL ELLISON WERE BOTH OUT IN HERB'S YARD WATCHING AND THEY BOTH SAID, "MY GOD, FRANCIS IS GOING TO LOSE THAT POOR OLD HORSE IN THE DRIFT" AND WERE AMAZED WHEN WE WENT RIGHT OVER IT "A-FARTIN' AND A-BLAZIN'". FOR ME, AT LEAST, THAT WAS THE FINAL EPISODE OF THE MONUMENTAL WINTER OF 1948-49. THERE HAVE BEEN A NUMBER OF REMINDERS OF IT THIS WINTER IN THE PAPERS AND ON TV. A WEEK OR TW AGO, KNOP-TV AT NORTH PLATTE HAD A SHORT FEATURE ON IT ON THE 6 O'CLOCK LOCAL NEWS AND, MUCH TO MY SURPRISE, ONE OF THE VIEWS THEY SHOWED WAS REAR ANGLE VIEW OF THE SNOWPLOW WRECK AT HOAGLAND! WE HAVE HAD A NUMBER OF BLIZZARDS SINCE THEN, SOME OF WHICH YOU CAN FIND IN MY "SNOWBOUND" CHAPTER IN THE BOOK, BUT NONE WERE OF THE DURATION OR INTENSITY OF THE JANUARY 1949 STORM. SOME YEARS AGO WE HAD ONE ON NOVEMBER 18-19 WHICH WAS VERY REMINISCENT OF THE 1948 STORM THOUGH. HOWEVER, IT WILL TAKE SOME DOING TO EQUAL THE ONE OF JANUARY 3-4-5, 1949! A FEW YEARS AGO WE HAD A NASTY LITTLE HALF-ASSED BLIZZARD WHEN WHEN I WAS IN TOWN A FEW DAYS LATER, A YOUNG FELLOW IN HIS 30'S OR SO ASKED ME IF THIS WAS LIKE THE JANUARY 1949 STORM. WHEN I LAUGHED AS IF HE HAD TOLD ME ONE OF THE FUNNIEST STORIES I EVER HEARD, HE LOOKED AT ME REAL PUZZLED, UNTIL I EXPLAINED TO HIM THAT COMPARING THAT STORM TO THE ONE IN 1949 WAS LIKE COMPARING A SUNDAY SCHOOL PICNIC TO A RACE RIOT!!!!