

When the blizzard of 48/49 hit Boone County I was a 7th grade student in a one-room school house. It was a November day, my father, who had finished picking corn was busy moving stacks of hay in by the feed yard. Shortly before school was dismissed the sky turned very gray, the northwest wind began to blow and there was a rather sudden drop in the temperature.

As soon as I arrived home I started to do my chores which included bringing into the house corn cobs and coal for our cook stove. We used the old cook stove to heat the dining room and kitchen. Our other downstairs room were heated by a oil-burning stove. My bedroom, which was upstairs was heated by imagination.

That evening and into the night and the next two days and nights the snow came. The snow was pushed by strong winds and the temperature continued to drop. The snow drifts varied from a few feet to as high as the eaves on the buildings. For the next five weeks we were going to be snowbound.

I believe that it was during the first full day of the blizzard that we lost our electricity. This was actually not a big problem for us since we had just received electric service in September and we had not become completely dependent on it. We had our kerosene Lamps, lanterns, a hand-cranked cream separator and a washing machine with a gasoline motor. There was a large pile of corn cobs and a good supply of coal on hand. The fuel oil for the oil burning stove did run low several times before the National Guard was able to deliver some using a vehicle called a Weasel.

Mother, like most other farm wives had canned vegetables and meat during the summer which was stored in the cellar. We milked cows and raised chickens so it appeared that we have sufficient food, however, the flour, sugar, baking soda/powder, etc.

began to run out after several weeks. Dad and a neighbor each took a sled, some gunny sacks and started walking the four miles to Loretto (a small town located on highway 14). After an hour or so rest they loaded their flour, sugar, etc. in the sacks, tied them to the sleds and began the trip home. I believe that it took them most of the day for the round-trip.

For some reason the blizzard did not take our telephone lines down and we did have a source of communication with the families that were on our party-line. Each farm had their own set of rings on the phone, ours was two longs and one short. Everyone on the line knew who had what series of rings and most everyone listened in regardless of whose ring sounded. This form of "mass communication" allowed us to keep abreast of the progress being made in getting the roads open plus other bits of information. It helped to ease the feeling of being isolated.

With the main roads to the school blocked it looked like we might have a long vacation. The vacation was short lived, the teacher was one of the neighbor ladies and her husband rigged up a wagon box on some skids which allowed her to get to the school house by a horse-drawn wagon box-sled. Other farmers in the area improvised ways to get the children to school. Several of us were within a short distance from the school, we plodded through the snow, and our education continued.

Finally after about five weeks of being snowbound a make-shift road was made through several different fields. With the help of teams of horses standing at the ready to help cars along we were able to get into Albion (the county seat) and get some supplies and also some presents for Christmas.

January and February brought more snow and wind from time to time and reblocked recently opened roads. These intermittent

blizzards were not as severe as the blast we received in November.

When the winter finally ended and the spring thaw came it was sometimes hard to decide which was worse, being snowbound or being mired down in the mud.

Living through the blizzard of 48/49 was an experience, one that I would not wish to repeat, but one that I found exciting at the time and still do when I recall it. It was also interesting to me that in the Children's Blizzard of 1888 my grandfather was a student in the same area but in a different school house.

Glenn Hartsock
Bella Vista, Arkansas