

CHAPTER 31

THE WINTER OF '48 AND '49

We were working day and night trying to get our corn out and some hay into the yard for the winter. The weather was dry and warm, for fall weather, but we knew winter would soon be upon us. That was nothing new to us--we had been through many winters before, but we didn't know what lay ahead. November came in dry and warm. Gordon and Phyllis were going to school in town, which was four miles from the ranch. Lavern Buckles, who lived on down the valley about four miles, would ride his horse up to our place and then drive our kids to school in our old 1932 Chevy, as Gordon was not old enough to drive, at this time. This made a good deal for us and saved Lavern a few miles of riding. He was in high school at the time.

On November the 17th it started raining some and by dark that day, it was raining pretty good. Well, it slacked off that night and the next morning it was snowing a real wet, heavy snow. For some reason we took the kids to school that morning. Maybe the car was on the blink--I don't remember--but anyway, we took them to school. It was too wet to work outside, so we did the chores and stayed in. We always had things to do in the shop on days like this. We had gotten the corn out, across the river, and had turned the cattle in the field

over there. They had the cornfield to feed in and a good size straw stack to go to. We had been trying to get Rolland's corn out, but still had some to do there yet. It was now the 18th of November and as the morning progressed, the snow came down in gobs; heavy and wet and the wind started to come up and was blowing a good gale. Shortly before noon, they called from school and told us they were closing the school due to the storm. I said, "I guess we better go get the kids" and Cecil said, "let's take my car, as I need to get a few groceries in case this lasts for a day or two." He had a good Pontiac car, so we jumped in it and headed for town and when we got out to the main road and headed west, we realized we were heading right into a real blizzard. We got to the west end of our place and were going along the south side of Dahlsten's meadow with the wind blowing the snow in the road so bad that we could hardly make it through. Then we got to where there was some protection from the trees and the road was more northwest and we could go all right. We knew we could never make it through that stretch of road on the way back, so we would have to cut across the hay meadows. We made it into town, got the kids and a few groceries, as quick as we could, and headed for home. In this short time the storm had gotten worse and although we only had four miles to go, I will have to admit I was worried. The car had all it could do to plow through the snow, even though we had the chains on. We

cut across Dahlsten's meadow, which was nothing new, as that was a common practice when the road was snowed in. Of course, we thought we could make it across their meadow and then across ours and we would be home--famous last thoughts. A short ways across the meadow, there was a ravine that ran across for a ways and when we got to that, it was blown full of snow already. It was storming so bad we could hardly see where to go and the next thing we knew--kerwamp!--we were in the ravine and could go no farther and couldn't back up. The snow was so deep we couldn't open the doors so we had to crawl out the window. We had a scoop shovel but we knew it was useless to try to get the car out of the ravine without help. We decided that Cec and I would try and walk home and get the team and wagon and come back after the kids. We gave them strict orders not to leave the car and told them we would be back to get them as soon as possible. We were about a mile or so from home and I'll tell you, that was a long mile in that storm. Thankfully, it wasn't too cold yet, but that snow was wet and heavy and at times we couldn't see but only a few feet ahead of us. We got down to our pasture fence and we were glad to see it. We followed it till we got to the corral. We were soaking wet and about exhausted--we had tried to go too fast for that deep snow. We got to the house and my wife was worried because no one knew where we were. She said, "I will let some of them know that you are here,

but what about the kids?" Well, we told her where they were and as soon as we could get on some dry clothes and get the team, we would go get them. We got the team hitched to the wagon and faced into the storm. Smokey and Darkey didn't like facing the blizzard too well, but after we got away from the place they lined out good. They had been standing in the barn and were rested and feeling frisky and it was a good thing they were, because as they were pulling the wagon through the snow they were soon sweating. The wagon had rubber tires, but was still quite a drag through the snow and at times we had a hard time seeing where to go. We wound across our meadow, as best we could, then across Dahlsten's and in due time, we found the car. I assure you, Lavern, Gordon and Phyllis were mighty glad to see us and we were just as glad to see them. We had some hay in the wagon and had brought a couple of quilts along, so they hunkered down in the wagon and tried to enjoy the ride. The team more or less followed the way we had come and seemed to know the way home. We were mighty glad to be home and get in out of the storm. It snowed and blew all night and most of the next day before it quit but this was only the beginning of the most snow that we had ever had in one winter.

I mentioned in my other book (Things I Remember) about the snow and the cold we experienced in '35 and '36 but this winter of '48 and '49 was different

because we got even more snow, but it didn't get as cold as it had in '35 & '36.

This first bad storm was only the beginning of a long siege that was yet to come. After it let up in a couple of days, we neighbors pooled together with horses, tractors and a lot of scoop shovels and got the road opened up so we could travel it again. But this was short lived; it was only a few days and we got another storm and everything was blocked again. This time we didn't wait--the minute it started, Cec and I dashed to town and made sure the kids got back to our place in our old Chevy and then Vern rode on home on his horse and made it all right. When we got home, I didn't see anything of the cattle. We had let them out to the field across the river because they had corn stalks to feed on and also the straw pile. I was worried about them because I was afraid if the storm got worse, they might drift with it and go over the high banks into the river. Then I did a very dumb and foolish thing--I decided to go on foot to find them. I thought it would be better to go afoot than to ride a horse, because it was so slick. I had on five-buckle overshoes and the river was down so I knew I could wade across it with no problem. I pulled up the sheepskin collar on my coat and started out. I glanced around and could see that our dog was following along in my footsteps. He was a plain black dog with a white

ring around his neck, so we called him Ring. I thought he might be some help with the cattle so I let him tag along and it was a good thing that I did. I trudged on through the snow and when I got over in the field, I realized the storm was getting worse--it was snowing harder and the wind was getting stronger. I made it to the strawstack but there were no cattle there so I decided I had missed them somewhere. I thought maybe they had gone down in the brush and trees along the river for a little protection. By this time, the visibility was so bad that I could only see a few feet ahead of me. I angled across the field from the strawstack and finally came to the fence. I followed the fence till I got to the gate and then I had about eighty rods of open pasture to get across to the river. I thought--what am I going to do? There was nothing to guide me since my tracks were drifted over and the visibility was zero. I stopped to get my breath and try to get my bearings before starting across no-man's land and Ole Ring came around in front of me and started across the pasture. I thought to myself--maybe he knows the way better than I do, so I followed him. He was all I could see so I prayed that he knew what he was doing and I felt that he was going in the right direction. We trudged on through the blizzard and I had my head bent down so I could breathe easier. In due time Ole Ring stopped and I nearly tripped over him. I could hear the water running and we were at the river's edge,

right where we always crossed. We waded across the river and it was only a short way up to the corral and the trees to the north of us gave enough protection so we could see for a little ways. We got up to the corral and there stood the cattle, wanting to be let in. What a welcome sight they were--the big Hereford bull had brought them home. They must have been in the brush by the river and I didn't see them when I went over to the field. When the blizzard got worse the ole bull brought them home. I was soaking wet from the snow and exhausted, but was sure glad to get in by the stove and get some dry clothes on. I would be forever grateful to Ole Ring.

In about three days the snow stopped and it looked like the weather was clearing up. We got a trail broke through the snow out to the hay meadow so we could haul hay to feed the cattle. We had eighty head, at the time, and when the weather is bad they can eat up a lot of hay every day. We were using the hayrack and the horses to haul the hay. The snow was so bad we couldn't do anything with the tractor, so we had to rely on the horses. We could only haul a shirttail load at a time, so we had to make more trips. We had several stacks of hay in the yard, but saved it for days that were so bad we couldn't make it to the meadow and as it turned out, we had several days of that kind of weather. As time went on and the snow got deeper, we had to abandon the

hayrack and just use the wagon. We would tromp all we could in the wagon and go with that, but a wagonload of hay to eighty head of hungry cattle didn't last very long so we made a lot of trips.

In the meantime, after the first bad storm, we spent our spare time getting a trail across the hay meadows and by scooping some bad drifts in the road up past the lake, we were able to get to town in the car, but this would not last long. We made it out to my folks for Thanksgiving. We had a good time, ate a good dinner and came back home. In a couple of days we had another blizzard and our road was blocked again. Cecil and I made it into town with the team and wagon about once a week. We would get a few groceries and the mail and get back home and it would snow again. Christmas was coming up and we, as well as our neighbors, needed to get to Ord to do some Christmas shopping. We pooled together and did a lot of scooping on the road and finally got it open and on the 23rd of December we made it to Ord and did our shopping. We made it back home and that night it started snowing again. That was the last time we would have the car out of the garage until the first weekend in March. My wife never got to town in all that time.

We were looking forward to Christmas, but the roads down the valley were snowed shut again. We were planning for my folks to come to our place for

Christmas Eve, also Fox and Reta and their kids and Cecil and Gwen and their son. My folks lived west of Ericson on the highway and the highway crew kept it open most of the time. We knew they could make it to Ericson all right, but knew they couldn't make it to our place in the car. Fox had drug out of the trees, an old horse-drawn sleigh that hadn't been used for years and rigged it up so he could pull it with a tractor. He had chains for his tractor and could get around fairly well. We told my folks to start down the valley and we would come to meet them. We met them about a mile and a half from our place and they were as far as they could go in the car. We left the car there and got the folks and their gifts loaded in the sleigh and headed for our place. Fox and I felt like Santa Claus and his sleigh, only we had a tractor instead of reindeer. We didn't worry about leaving the car, as no one could get to it and they couldn't go anywhere if they wanted to. We got down to our place and had a big supper that my wife had prepared. We exchanged gifts and everyone had a good time in spite of the snow. My folks stayed with us that night and the next morning Fox and I took them by sleigh back up to their car. It wasn't snowing and the wind wasn't blowing so we thought it was pretty nice. We got the car started all right, pulled it back out of the snow that had drifted around it, turned it around and pulled it with the tractor up the road to where they could go on their own. They made

it on home and we were all happy that we had been able to have Christmas together in spite of the weather.

We settled into a routine of caring for the livestock and fighting the snow. It seemed like it would snow and blow about every day. We made it into town by team and wagon about once a week, for awhile, but it finally got so bad we gave up on the team and had to pick our way around on the ridges by horseback. Cecil and Rolland each had a duffelbag from their Army days, so we would tie them on behind the saddles and go into town, get the mail and whatever groceries we could stuff into the bags and hope we could get home before another blizzard would hit.

At this time, a good friend of ours, Dale Stine, had a bread route out of Grand Island. He would bring fresh bread into Ericson everyday, except Sunday. He came up Highway 281, as far as Bartlett, stopping off at various towns along the way. Highway 92 ran through Ericson and it was seven miles east to Highway 281. Well, Highway 281 was a mostly north and south road, so the highway crew had been able to keep it open most of the time, in between blizzards, but the road into Ericson was a different story. It was drifted in bad and there was a drift about twenty feet deep just before one got to 281, so Ericson was isolated, as far as bread delivery was concerned. Dale had not been in Ericson for several days and he

knew the stores there had been out of bread for a few days and not many people in town were in the habit of baking their own, so he brought along a five-foot sleigh. It turned out to be a decent day, cold, but not storming, so when he got to the junction, he parked his truck, took out the sleigh and loaded it up with bread about four feet high. He covered it with a tarp, got it lashed down so it would stay put, tied the rope around his waist and headed for Ericson--he was the whole team. The big drifts were packed so hard one could walk on top without sinking in. Of course, there were shallow stretches where it was a different story and one would shuffle through it knee deep in a lot of places. Dale struggled through the snow and I bet he thought that was a long seven miles. He was young and in good physical shape and he made it all right. They were glad to see him in the stores and the news quickly spread around town and so the town people stocked up on bread. He rested for awhile and was ready to go back to his truck. A farmer who lived at the edge of town was at the store on his tractor, with chains on it, and he took him and the sleigh out of town. He said, "I will take you as far as I can go. I don't know how far that will be but we will try." He got out about three miles and then the going got so tough and they kept getting stuck and had to scoop out, so Dale took off on foot again, thankful that he only had four miles to go. He made it back to his truck and was

grateful that the weather held and another storm or bad wind hadn't hit. If a blizzard had hit while he was going in or coming back out, it would have been a disaster for him. The next week when he made his run, they had the road opened enough so he made it to town and back out all right. This is just one of the things that happened that winter and people worked together and made do as best they could.

Pete Dahlsten had a trail out west from his place that he could go on in the Jeep over to the road that ran south from town and it being a north-south road, didn't drift in as bad as the road down the valley. At this time, the valley road was open down as far as the headquarters at the lake, then was blocked solid on down the valley.

Dahlstens had a friend who lived in Omaha and he liked to come up to their place and spend weekends, hunting, etc. His name was Mac McGinn, well educated and a brilliant man to talk to, but he had a habit of hitting the bottle when he came up there. He was an insurance adjuster at the time. Cec and I had ridden into town on horseback, gotten a few groceries and the mail and were on our way home, hoping to get there before dark. We got to lake headquarters and there in a big snowdrift was a car stuck tight. When we got up to it, we recognized it as Mac McGinn's car. He had come up from Omaha, not knowing how bad it was where we were, and as I said,

they had opened the road into Ericson from 281. We heard afterwards that when Max got to town he hit the bar in the hotel, thinking Pete would show up, but Pete had already been to town and gone home. Anyway, when we came onto Mac, he was high-centered where he had plowed into the drift. I walked up through the snow beside the car, which was still running and the wheel was slowly going around. Mac was slumped over the steering wheel sound asleep and, of course, very drunk. I took a hold of his arm and shook him up a little and he looked kinda blurry-eyed at me like he was seeing a ghost. I said, "Mac what are you doing here?" He said, "I guess I'm stuck but Pete will be along pretty soon." I said, "I don't think so--we saw Pete go home as we left town and he won't try to come this way because the road is blocked." Cec and I took down our lariat rope and tied it on the back bumper of the car and Cec said, "I'll pull with my horse and the saddlehorn." I said, "let me get in and drive the car" because we knew Mac didn't know what he was doing. I got him to move over in the seat so I could get in and drive the car. We thought if we could move it a little, it would come off high-center and we could get it out of the drift. I gave Cec the signal and his horse pulled good and the car moved enough that the wheels got on the road surface and I backed it out of the drift. We unhooked the rope and I got the car turned around and headed back toward town. I told Mac to get back to

town and stay at the hotel till Pete came to get him. I said, "we will call Pete on the phone and tell him where you are but don't try to go the way he does because that route is for Jeep's only." I laid it down to him pretty strong and he had sobered up some by then. By now it was getting dark and colder than a well digger's destination. He made it into town all right and Pete went up with the Jeep and got him. If we hadn't come along when we did I think he might have frozen to death that night because no one knew who he was and he sure wasn't going anywhere and so ended another episode of the winter of '48 and '49.



CHAPTER 32

MORE WINTER

It seemed like it would blow and snow for two or three days, then we would have a decent day and then wham!--it would hit again. We had given up on trying to keep the roads open and our haystacks were getting snowed in deeper, as time went on. Many ranchers were now having a hard time to keep their cattle fed. They couldn't get to the hay and when they did, it took a lot of scooping and any kind of travel was next to impossible. We were a little better off than some. We managed to keep our stock fed; not always as much as they would like to have, but we would try to make up for it on days that were not so bad. We only lost one little calf and I think he had pneumonia. The last time Cec and I tried to go to town with the team and wagon, nearly turned into a disaster. Of course, we went over the hay meadows and picked our way around the places where the snow was too deep for the horses. We had gotten about two miles from home, when suddenly the blizzard hit us right in the face, full blast. It only took us about two minutes to decide to turn around and try to get home. Visibility was zero and the wind went through our clothes like we didn't have any on. We thought we were dressed for the worst, but soon found out different. We hunkered down in the wagon on the hay for what protection the

wagon box gave us and just let the team find the way. Once in a while the wind would slack off a bit and we would peek over the side of the wagon and we could tell the team was doing a good job of following the trail. In due time they got us home and we were thankful that the horses knew what they were doing. They were covered with snow and frost that had frozen to them, until they nearly looked white, although they were both normally black. When we got home that day we realized that there was just too much snow and it was dangerous to try to travel with team and wagon. From then on we went to town by horseback. By now it was into February and many of the farmers and ranchers were losing cattle. They just couldn't get hay to them fast enough and some started running out of hay, which was a real disaster. When there is a lot of snow and the cold stays steady, as it did, cattle require a lot more feed than they normally would. The winter was taking it's toll. Some were trying to get help from the government and that is always a slow process, but after a time, they started what they called the haylift. They had planes setting at Offutt Air Force Base in Omaha, so they put some of them into service. They would load them with baled alfalfa and fly to the cattle that were stranded, come down about as low as they dared and then shove the bales of hay out of the plane. Well, as one fellow said, "it wasn't a cure but it sure did help." Of course, the sad part was that it was too late for some.

However, the effort was truly appreciated by those who needed it.

We were all used to quite a bit of winter in that country, but nothing with that much snow, to last for so long. You remember, the first storm hit the 18th of November and it was now February and we had four or five feet of snow on the level and drifts in many places, twenty and thirty feet high. Many buildings were completely covered. There was a drift in front of the bank in Ericson that completely blocked the street and it was all of thirty feet high, packed down till one could walk right up over it without sinking in. Whenever the weather would allow it, the kids had a great time sledding down this one. It was the deepest one in town. There were cars stalled on county roads and fields that were completely covered over until they were just a big mound of snow. There was no use to try to get them out because one couldn't go anywhere anyway.

The state got some rotary snowplows in action, finally, and they did a fair job of keeping the east and west highways open. Of course, it was a day by day operation because the wind would hit and blow the road full again in an hour's time. It was getting to the place where many people were faced with real hardships. Some had not been able to get to town for so long that they were running out of food. Some were running out of fuel oil and the tank wagons

couldn't get to them and they couldn't get to town to get it. Some were running out of coal--those who used it--but we were luckier than some because we were able to use wood when our oil began to get low, but in that country not many places had wood that they could use. We were generally a group of people who prepared for winter and normally could handle it, but this had just lasted too long and we were losing the fight. We had never called for help for anything before, but had to swallow our pride and admit that we needed help. So through the county commissioners and county officers we called the Corps of Army Engineers in Omaha and they sent planes out to assess the situation. We heard by radio and telephone that if we were in need of food or fuel or medical supplies, we were to tromp out an SOS in the snow in big letters so they could see them from the air. Well, they flew over with several planes and there were plenty of SOS signs for them to see. They reported back to the headquarters in Omaha and the great exodus was underway. There was lots of heavy equipment around the Omaha area and they were anxious to have something to do. The Corps of Army Engineers started sending out the caterpillars with dozer blades to all parts in need. They also sent out weasels, as they were called. They could go up and down over the big snow drifts and get to people who needed help. Local people who knew where the places were, would go with them. In our area the county clerk, Hervey Thomas,

had charge of the operation and I remember he stayed in the office at the courthouse for three days and nights. The caterpillars and dozers that were sent in had orders to go wherever they could to get a trail opened to town so people could get the groceries and fuel they needed. Then they were to come back and open up out to the haystacks and feed areas, so people could get feed to their stock. Then they came through again and opened the roads. The first one that came through our area was unloaded on Highway 281 where the valley road met the highway, which was six miles from where we lived. Fox Kasselder lived about four miles from there, so they called him to meet the cat and operator there, to guide him through the fields and hay meadows. He met them about 2 O'clock in the afternoon, got on with the operator and they started plowing snow. Mr. Thomas called me and told me to meet them a mile or so east of our place, then Fox could go home and I was to guide the outfit on up the valley and into town. Sounds easy, but it wasn't. I trudged through the snow, but it was getting dark and hard to see where to walk and one didn't have much choice anyway. In some places the snow was packed so you could walk on top and the next thing you knew, you hit a soft spot and down you went. I huffed and puffed and finally, in the distance I could see the lights of the cat and hear the groan of the engine as it dozed through the snow. It was the greatest sound that I had heard

all winter. I felt like relief had finally arrived. I got to where they were working and Fox crawled down from the cat and I crawled on. Fox said, "when I get my chores done, I'll take my tractor and follow you into town, then we can come back home on the tractor."

We dozed across the field and then, due to trees and ditches, we had to get in the road. Most of the roadway was covered with five to six feet of snow and somewhere in the snow, my brother's car was completely covered up. It had been there since just before Christmas. I thought I had a pretty good idea of where it was, so we took it slow and stayed to one side of the road and finally found it. We could see the side of it and it looked all right, so we continued on. The caterpillar had canvas curtains from the radiator along each side to the back, so one got the benefit of the engine heat coming back where we were and we were in comfort as far as the cold was concerned. We were getting close to our driveway when I asked the operator if he had had any supper and he said, "no and I haven't had any dinner either." He had breakfast about 6 O'clock that morning and hadn't had anything but a thermos of coffee since. I said, "when we get to our driveway, I'll show you where to turn and we will go to the house and get something to eat." I knew my wife was starting to get supper when I left to meet the cat. We plowed down the driveway and into the yard and stopped.

I said, "let's go eat" and he said, "that is the best news I've heard all day." We got into the house and the table was all set and ready for us and I'm sure we did a good job of cleaning up our plates. We put some coffee in our thermos and went out and headed for town. We were four miles from town, but from here, we had to go out across our hay meadow and then across Dahlsten's meadow. It was quite a sight to look off to the sides and see the snow breaking and heaving up twenty to thirty feet off to the sides. When we got across Dahlsten's meadow, we had to go on the road again. Right away, there was a drift clear across the road and to the trees. It was a good twenty to thirty feet high and continued on for about 400 yards. The operator looked at that and said, "I've never seen anything like this in all my life. I really don't know what to do." Well, he would raise his dozer blade about four feet high and plow into the drift till it stopped the cat and then he would drop the dozer blade and back out. Of course, he would bring a big gob of snow with the blade and then he would push it off to the side and go again. It seemed like a never-ending job, but he kept at it till he worked out a place big enough so that he could turn in the drift, then he would bring out a big bunch each time and push it off to the side.

We left our place about 7 O'clock in the evening and, as I mentioned, we were four miles from town. We battled that

snow all night and when we got to the main street of Ericson, it was just getting daylight. Fox followed us into town on his tractor. I left the operator at the café so he could get some breakfast and Fox and I got on his tractor and headed for home. It had been a long night, but the road was opened up so we could get to town. There would be a lot more dozing to do and more sleepless nights, but for now we could get a few necessities.

CHAPTER 33

MORE OPENING UP

The next day after we got a trail opened, we all made a mad scramble to get to town and stock up on groceries and fuel oil, etc., because we knew if the wind came again, our trails would be full. That was a nice day, for a change, but toward evening it started clouding up and by the next morning, the wind was blowing and it was snowing lightly. It didn't snow much, but the wind blew all the trails full, so we were isolated again. As soon as the wind let up, the dozers came back through and opened the trails again. It wasn't nearly as bad as the first time because they could tell where they had been before. After they got the roads opened up, we opened out to the haystacks, so we could do a better job of haying the cattle. Some haystacks were completely covered. One could make out a hump in the straw and we knew that there was a haystack under there. The first snows had come before the ground had frozen and being covered with snow, the ground did not freeze all winter. This made for tough dozing because we had to be careful or we would doze up big chunks of sod. We were concerned and worried about flooding when all that snow would finally melt off. However, we worried for nothing because the ground was awfully dry and not frozen and when the big thaw came, the water

went into the ground and we only had a few puddles standing around and no flooding at all. This was a good thing for the ground and it was soaked up good for spring, but because the ground hadn't frozen, it made it bad for bugs and varmints. That summer we had every kind of bug and worm that we had ever heard of. We learned that frozen ground took care of a lot of these problems that we had never thought about before. Some of the old timers had said we would have this trouble and they sure were right.

In a few days and nights we got the meadows opened up so people could get to their hay and whatever feed they had. Some were running out of feed and had to buy some.

The dozers ran day and night and some of us who had experience with heavy equipment were on the job because we knew where the roads and the hay meadows, etc., were. We started opening up the roads, which seemed like a never ending job. When we would get the road open, we would be between walls of snow six to eight feet deep on each side of the road. Then a few times the wind came up and drifted stretches of it full again and we had to do it all over. But the snow had finally slacked off and the winds let up and about the middle of March, we got a few days that the snow started melting a little. This helped, as it would freeze some at night and

that made it hard for the wind to move it around.

Before the dozers came in and we were really isolated, it began to tell on the wildlife around our area. We had always had a lot of pheasants around our place. With the river running through our place and the farming that was done down the valley, it made a good habitat for pheasants, but the blizzards and deep snow just lasted too long and the loss of pheasants was heavy. Many of them bunched up for protection and got covered up with snow and smothered and froze. When the snow started melting off, we found many of them and I'm sure the coyotes and other varmints did too. The coyotes chased our dogs right into our yard a few times and we heard they did the same thing in town, sometimes chasing the dogs right down Main Street. I don't know if they ever caught any dogs, but I know they got shot at a few times. This always seemed to happen at night and as far as I know, no one ever killed any of them.

Through all the snow and hardships, people stayed fairly healthy and never lost their humor. There were lots of tall tales that came out of that winter. You can believe it or not, but there were windmills that were completely covered with snow. One fellow said he dug down through the snow to his mill and it was still running (That I doubt). I got up town and met a friend I knew from over in the east part of the county

and he had just come out of the barbershop and he said that was the first time he had seen the sun shining for several weeks. He said his hair had gotten so long and covered up his eyes till he thought it was cloudy all the time. There were some pretty shaggy looking characters who finally made it into town to the barbershop, after being marooned for so long.

It had been a long, hard ordeal but neighbors helped each other and we managed to get through. It was the first time that the government had ever helped out in the winter, but it sure turned out to be a life saver and will never be forgotten by we who struggled through it. The warm days came and in due time the snow all melted and after some road repair in places, we got back to normal and were ready for spring work.

I'm sure we have all heard that lightning never strikes twice in the same place--well don't believe it. There was an electric line that ran past our place and right up by the corner of our property, where it joined Dahlstens, there was a tall pole that the line was fastened to as it carried the line to the next pole, etc. A couple of years before this time, lightning had hit that pole and completely shattered it. The electric company had replaced it and everything seemed to be all right. This was about fifty yards from the river and one afternoon my brother-in-law, Fox

Kasselder, was fishing in the river near the pole. A thunderstorm came up and it started thundering and lightning all around and Fox decided maybe he had better gather up and get out of there. His pickup was setting by the road not far from the fateful pole. Well, he had just started to leave the river and he heard a terrible crash and lightning had shattered that pole again. It didn't take him long to get to his pickup and get out of there. Well, sometime later that summer, a storm came in just about chore time. We were wondering if we could get the milk cows in from the pasture before the storm hit. It just so happened that Donnie Dahlsten had gone out to get their milk cows at this same time. They happened to be in that corner of the pasture where our places joined and the fateful line pole was nearby. Some of our cows were just a short ways on the other side of the fence. All at once, we heard this terrible crash and knew the lightning had struck somewhere close. We jumped in the Jeep and tore up the road to the corner and you guessed it--the lightning had shattered that pole again! On our side of the fence, a short ways from the corner, two of our cows lay dead; the lightning had gotten them. Just across the fence a ways, we saw Pete picking Donnie up off the ground. We dashed on up there, thinking he must surely be dead, but by the time we got to them, it had started to rain a little and Donnie was starting to come to. He was real groggy and didn't know what was going

on, but gradually came to enough that he knew something had happened to him. He had survived the strike, but just across the fence our two cows had not. Pete rushed Donnie to Burwell to the doctor, but by the time they got there, he was fairly well over the shock. The doctor examined him and gave him a shot to settle his nerves and by the next morning he was his normal self again. We had insurance on our cows and did get some settlement for them, but we would rather have had the cows.

I learned to have a respect and fear of lightning from then on.