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Sidney, NE

BLIZZARD OF 49

I was driving home from high school in Anselmo, NE, as the blizzard struck. The blowing snow was so heavy that I couldn't see and ran into the ditch in our 1937 Ford. Then I walked the remaining quarter of a mile to our farm.

I had twin brothers a year old, and we were fortunate to have a kerosene stove in addition to the wood burning kitchen stove, but my father was afraid that we would soon use all the kerosene and our drafty house would be too cold for the babies, so the next day when it seemed to clear off a little, he hitched Bess and Butch to the lumber wagon, put some hay in the bottom to stand on, took the fence pliers to cut fences, and started across the pastures to Anselmo about three miles away. Late that evening, he called from our grandparents home in town and said that he had put the horses in Harland Raymond's barn, and he would start home the next day.

After securing kerosene and other supplies, he started across the prairie for home. The wind and snow came up again and increased in fury. He had to stop from time to time and pull snow from the horses nostrils.

The horses struggled and struggled as the snow became deeper. Then they both went down. He didn't think that they could get up again. My father decided that he would pull off the harness from the team and let them drift. Then upset the wagon box and get under it.

When he got down to remove the harness, he slapped Butch on the rump to move him over, and Butch struggled to his feet and so did Bess, and they plunged ahead as fast as they could go.

My father ran and caught the end gate of the wagon, pulled himself in and made it home. He was gone two days making that six mile round trip.

When we were able to get to the cattle, we were short eight heifers that had been selected to add to the breeding stock. We didn't find them until the snow melted. They had drifted to within a few hundred feet of the buildings, hit the fence, and had frozen to death.

The car remained in the ditch until the Army Engineers came and opened the roads about a week later.

It was a challenging time for us, but we survived, and recovered eventually from the disaster. Some cattlemen lost far more than we did. We were all thankful that we endured as well as we did.

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