

## THE BLIZZARDS of 1948 and 1949

The winter of '48 and 49 is a hard one to forget! I was teaching the intermediate grades at Primrose at Primrose Public School. It was my second year and everything had gone well during September and October. Early in November the snow began to fall. Some days it just snowed all day, but most days the wind howled and whipped the snow into unwelcome drifts. It gave us many days of just plain blizzards. The drifts kept getting deeper and deeper.

When Thanksgiving arrived, there was no way that I could get to my home in the community of Akron. What made it seem so unbelievable was that Akron was only twelve miles north of Primrose. Six of those miles were on highway 52, which was graveled. The other six miles were just plain country dirt roads. When the highway did get opened, the country roads still remained blocked. It was almost a certainty that when a road was opened, it would be closed with drifts by the next day. If you did get some place to get supplies, you hurried back home before the wind could block the roads again. So, Thanksgiving was spent in Primrose. The snows continued on into December.

The day school let out for Christmas vacation, my father was waiting to take me home to Akron. We traveled on roads and wound through fields, and we somehow reached home. In the morning, every road was blocked again and we were confined to the farm. There was no rural electricity in 1948 and the house was heated with cobs and wood. The kerosene lamps gave us the needed light, so we were comfortable. We celebrated Christmas with our homemade gifts, roast chicken, and mince meat pie. We had to forego attending church, but we were all home, and that was what really mattered!

However, I did have one big problem! I needed to get back to school and the only answer seemed to be to walk. The drifts made walking not an option. On Saturday morning, to my surprise, a small plane landed in the field just across from the house. The pilot walked to the house and informed me that John, my future husband, had hired him to fly me into Albion. What a surprise! The plane was very small, so all I could take with me was what I wore. The highway from Albion to Primrose was open enough for us to drive to Primrose that day. The pilot, Gerald Packard not only rescued me, but he rescued many others that winter, plus dropping supplies, medicine, and mail through out Boone County.

Christmas gifts and everything that I had brought home had to remain there. They remained there the rest of the winter. Needless to say, my school wardrobe was very limited. During the summer, I had decided I had saved enough from my \$90 dollar monthly salary to purchase a fur coat. I knew I would never be cold when winter came. Of course a fur coat was the last thing you could wear if you were traveling in a small plane. My fur coat remained at Akron, never to be worn again that winter.

Later that winter, I was able to catch a ride to Albion with a friend who was going for supplies. I bought some fabric for mother so she would have something to sew during the snow blocked days. I also bought some candy bars as a treat for the folks. I wrapped the bars in the center of the fabric, and mailed the package. The mail delivery was sporadic and the package must have laid in the Loretto post office for several days. When the package was dropped from the plane near the house, the folks hurriedly opened it to find that mice had needed a treat too. They had chewed a hole through the folded fabric and into the candy. Both were ruined!

The men spent endless hours moving snow and caring for the animals. They were exhausted at the end of the day. The women had the daily cleaning and cooking, but found the snow bound days an opportunity to do some much needed sewing. There was always mended stacked and waiting. Spring was on it's way so new Easter and summer things would soon be needed. Never a scrap of material was wasted, and as a result a quilt was always in the process of being made. We were fortunate and had a battery radio which could only be used in the evening for a Fibber McGee and Molly program. All thoughts of the outside world were forgotten as we laughed at and with them.

The snow continued on through March. Drifts in front of the school were so deep, the town gave up trying to open the roads any more! The children had to walk on top of the drifts and were able to hold onto the telephone wires. They were even higher than cars. The government eventually did send in large snow plows that blew the snow instead of trying to push it to the sides. Whenever I now see a snow blower on the sidewalk, I think of the monsters that blew our snow in '48 and '49. Late in March we were again unable to travel. Mud was everywhere. We survived the snow and we now survived the snow.

The blizzard, though difficult at the time, taught us to pull together and survive. We learned how to do without, how to be patient, and how to improvise. Most of all we learned we need each other and our Faith, and everything will be alright again. Thanks to the snow we had a beautiful crop that summer!

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