

The Nebraska Life Magazine  
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Dear Whomever:

I read in my issue that you would like to hear from people about the Blizzards of 1948 and 1949.

It was November 18, 1948. I was twelve years old and my sister was 9. We had walked to Saint Cecilia School. We hadn't listened to the Radio that morning, so we left about 7:30 to head to daily Mass at 8 o'clock as usual. My parents, Clarence and Helen Kohl had left for work at about 6:30 A. M. driving to the Regional Center, had not taken any preparation to stay those 4 days. We lived on East 5th street about 5 blocks to school. I remember my sister saying it is so cold we should hurry and get into the church. Never dreaming what the next 4 days would be like.

Later that morning it began to snow and blow and the staff had decided it best to cancel school and instruct the students to stick together. We couldn't see more than 2 feet ahead of us. Several students were crying as we could not see the street corners. But I knew about where we were and finally seen the Berries Grocery Store. Then we knew we were about home. We stopped in the grocery store to catch our breath. Tracy and Helen owners of the little store gave us each a Hershey bar and let us warm up a bit. We really appreciated their kindness. We finally got home and waited for our parents to come and they never showed. The house seemed pretty cold so I went to the basement where the furnace was. I realized we had no electricity. We had coal stoker furnace and it wouldn't auger the coal into the furnace but I did find a red hot coal bed and added coal about every hour and a half to keep it going. I set the old wind up clock alarm each time so I wouldn't forget to restoke the furnace. We had no phone to call anyone. I was afraid to go to bed for fear I would not hear the alarm clock. I put my sister Uretta to bed and piled several blankets on the bed and she slept clear through the night. Which I was very thankful.

I really appreciated that we had a gas stove so I made us a hot breakfast consisting of scrambled eggs & bacon and jelly bread which made my sister happy. She was afraid something had happened to Mom and Dad but I just told her to pray. Her comment was you better too! We got the monopoly game out and played it to keep our self busy. When the snow finally quit blowing I couldn't believe how high the drifts were. We couldn't get the back or front door open. We decided to shell some popcorn for a snack, which I made in the cast iron skillet with bacon greese that was a real treat. We lite the oven on the gas stove and put our coats and hats and gloves on chairs close so they would dry. In the evening we played again by candle lite. I fixed a pot of golosh for supper, so had plenty to eat.

My mom had canned tomatoes and meat in the freezer to use plus canned fruit, so we survived quite well.

My parents, Clarence and Helen finally after four days on the 22nd came home. They had to stay as they had no relief to cover their shifts.

The state took forever opening second street for people to get to work and relieve my parents. It was a Happy day about 4:30 in the afternoon when they arrived. We had lots of stories to share with them. My Dad immediately started shoveling the back door open. He ask for a bowl to put snow in so we could have snow icre cream so we could celebrate.

We decided that we should have a plan if it happened again. They showed us how to lite the Karosene lantern and how high to place the wick and how to fill it. They were so proud that I had figured out how to keep the furnace going etc.so we had no frozen pipes. I was unable to get the ashes taken out to the garden but it all turned out ok per my Dad.. We kept warm with the oven going along with the furnace. But no blower without electricity! I had watched my Dad many times shake the ashes etc. Dad said it was probably better that I didn' try with the wind so strong..

I would hate to have left my 12 year old to care for her sister. I guess in those days we had more responsibility put on our shoulders.

It all turned out fine. I will never forget that Blizzard of 1948 and how the wind howled all night long and what a feeling I had when morning came and I knew everything was going to be ok.

End

By Kay Marie Kohl Mangers

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