



Alice gets a piggyback ride from Dad

DEPRESSION DAYS

During the early 1930's when all banks closed, a cloud of fear settled on our small town. Everyday conversations about crops and weather took on a tone of worry, now focusing on money and the future of our country. Our Redding bank was one of those that never reopened. Grandma Adair made it very clear that there was no money to be wasted. We overheard Dad warn her that we were too young to be burdened with worry about mortgages and such, and to "please let us enjoy childhood."



Ready for a Hayride

We knew there wasn't much money to spend but we were no poorer than others, it was just a fact of life; the way things were. A small pottery bowl on the dining room buffet held a few coins that were available for school necessities. It gave us kids a sense of affluence.

In addition to the economic crisis, drought had become a major problem in Iowa. Further west however, farming families like ours were dealing with even greater problems. To us kids the term "dust bowl" was confusing. Bowls were containers for mom's vegetable soup or the delicious ice cream we froze as a special treat; dust was something we swept out of the house and never collected in a bowl. This term became a topic during our Current Events class in school. We learned that farmers had not used prudence in conserving the soils' health, but had let it wear out. An extended lack of rain caused widespread drought, turning the fields to dust, which the winds blew endlessly. The overproduction of agriculture and livestock had caused prices to drop. Fewer hogs on the market would mean higher prices to the farmers. To stabilize farm prices the Agriculture Department ordered millions of piglets slaughtered. Our neighbor Bruce was very angry when government employees came and slew his piglets, then tossed them into a ditch. Such a wasteful act seemed to be stupid while there were so many people who were relying on breadlines to satisfy their hunger.

In class we also talked about how the farmers were affected by hobos, bread lines, and the New Deal. Hoboes were wandering men looking for work or a handout. A hobo would politely knock on the back door asking if we had work for him to do in exchange for a meal. Many times Dad offered them work on the farm, such as chopping wood, or mowing the lawn. Occasionally he hired them for a season. Bread and foodstuffs were supplied by charitable organizations and church donations to feed the hungry. Long lines of people formed by these buildings to get food. The newspapers called them Breadlines.

The New Deal was made up of organizations such as NRA, (National Recovery Administration); WPA, (Works Progress Administration); REA, (Rural Electrification Administration); CCC, (Civilian Conservation Corps); and SCS, (Soil Conservation Service). Each of these organizations was created to help our country rise from the devastating widespread depression.

In our Current Events class we learned that the Depression was worldwide. Other countries also suffered drought conditions, food shortages, and unemployment. One morning our teacher brought his unwieldy radio to school. As we watched him position it for the least static, we wondered what was so important that it necessitated lugging his radio to school. Suddenly, we heard Adolf Hitler's strident, powerful voice; speaking in his native Ger-

man language all the way from Berlin, Germany. The translation told of the perceived glories of the Third Reich government. The German people were in the throes of depression and Hitler seized the opportunity of promising them relief and glory in his Third Reich. We knew that Germany was far away, but hearing his voice in our classroom brought the world situation closer. It seemed to thrust us out of childhood into a world apart from our comfortable small town of Redding, Iowa.

Many farmers in our county, our father included, were not happy with President Franklin Roosevelt and all the new directives for farmers. In the election year of 1936, our county republicans organized a parade with a wagon float of penned piglets. It was decorated with *ALF LANDON FOR PRESIDENT* banners and sunflowers, the state flower of Kansas, his home state. Many of us youth marched along with the parade and had a great time. Although national polls had indicated a victory for Landon, Roosevelt was the victor.

Our memories of the depression days are not sad because we always had something to eat, to wear, and a bed to sleep in. Grandma Adair loved to go to church rummage sales where she found nice clothing for each of her families. I remember a lovely outfit of dress, coat and hat that I was proud to wear. We loved to wear the dresses that our cousins, Dale and Oakland, had outgrown and Mom had remodeled to fit us. Even though times were hard, our folks kept a sunny outlook, and gave us a childhood rich in ways that we still cherish today.

HOMEMADE ICE CREAM

Homemade ice cream was a favorite summer treat, often made with strawberries from our farm. Dad would bring home a big chunk of ice from the local ice house, wrap it in burlap, and place it in the cellar until after the farm chores were completed. Meanwhile we scrubbed the wooden ice cream tub while Mom scoured the canister and dasher. We watched her put the dasher firmly into the canister and pour in a rich cream mixture; then she placed it in the freezer's tub.

Once the canister had been placed, Dad packed crushed ice all around it and mixed in rock salt to lower the freezing point. Finally, the big moment had arrived! Anticipation was high. We took turns turning the crank, beginning with the youngest. As the cream began to freeze, the older kids took turns until it was very hard to turn. That meant the ice cream was ready!

The dasher had churned the cream back and forth to form ice crystals and