BLIZZARDS SEEMED WORSE LONG AGO

It is amazing to me how much fuss is made about a little snow storm and the few sub-zero temperatures these days. Children want the school bus to drive to the back door so they won’t have to walk to their wind shelter at the side of the road. Mothers worry that the storm will last more than a day or two, preventing from getting to the supermarket in town. The farmer prays that the computerized milking machine won’t break down, necessitating him to call a repairman.

Those people should have experienced some of the snowstorms we had when I was a child. We youngsters would rather wade through the snow and take a chance on catching a ride on a neighbors’ sleigh going to town to get to school than stay at home and help with all the extra chores. If there was a grandmother around, someone had better get a path shoveled to the outhouse early and then to the chicken coop where warm water had to be carried for the chickens. The eggs were gathered several times a day to keep them from freezing. It seemed that every time you got near the house someone hollered, "bring in some wood for the stove".

There were no meteorologists to tell where the winds were coming from or where they were going, it wouldn’t have helped anyway. All the paths that were shoveled
out early, filled up again while you were eating breakfast.

It was half a century too early to have running water in the house, the pump had to be thawed several times a day with the aid of the steaming tea kettle. With woolen mittens, socks, jackets and pants hanging around the big oak heater in the dining room and the cook stove in the kitchen, the house didn’t smell quite the same as it did on the days when Mom baked. It took a lot longer to fork the hay out of the hay mow than it did for the cows and horses to eat it. It took a strong arm to dig the straw out of the snow covered straw stack, in the barnyard, for bedding after you took the manure out with a wheelbarrow and stacked it on the manure pile.

We could have used the help of some of our city cousins just then, the same ones who always came for a visit every summer and said "it must be fun on the farm in the winter when there not much to do." They could have helped us drag the sled through the snowdrifts twice a day when we slopped the hogs. There were no arguments as to who was going to go to town for pizza, we hadn’t heard of them yet. As long as Mom had flour, baking powder, yeast, sour dough starter and sugar she could whip up some kind of a meal that would "stick to
your ribs”, so you could go out and face the blizzard.

There were no county trucks with snow plows yet, in order to get the new Sears and Roebuck catalog, the Ladies Home Journal, The Country Gentleman and all the new seed catalogs, we were all willing to get out and shovel the snowdrifts so the mailman could get through with his horse drawn mail buggy and the milk hauler could get our forty cent a pound milk to town.

Eventually the storm would peter out and the sun would shine through the clouds again and the cows would stand around in the barnyard sleepy-eyed, chewing their cud. The horses would race up and down the lane stopping to roll on the drifts of snow. The big red rooster from his perch on the gate post, watched his flock of hens as they scratched around the yard. The dogs lapped their water from the water puddles and the cats came out of the barn to preen themselves on the back porch, in the sunshine. Mom could hang her dish towels out to dry on the lilac bush again.

Somebody might just go out to the machine shed and crack and shell enough black walnuts for Mom to bake a walnut cake. Grandma might start making a new sun bonnet from a pattern in the Ladies Home Journal. In the evenings, Dad checked and rechecked the new seed catalogs to plan the crop for that year. The pictures
in the Country Gentleman were retouched with stubby crayons while other pages were dabbed and stuck together with a variety of jellies. We all settled down to a normal life again, hoping another northeaster wouldn't blow in too soon.