

If you paid even a little bit of attention in your history classes in school, you will remember that, in the 1930s, there was a depression in our country and people were in dire straits, no work, no money, no food, no warm shelter. The one thing that people in rural areas had going for them was the ability to raise enough food for their families and, unless they lost their farm, a warm place to sleep.

My mom (Anna Pieper Saaijenga) was born January 22, 1910, and raised on a small farm about 15 miles northwest of Lincoln, Nebraska.



All this sounds hunky-dory at first glance but, besides the depression, east central Nebraska was smacked with a major drought, dust storms, and a plague of grasshoppers. Mom wrote several pages of history. The first gives you a condensed story of their life:

1936 real truth.
The first rain we had was Aug 22 and then
it came with wind hail and dust
We grew no corn very little hay no garden except
beets just a few bus. of oats but an average wheat
crop no fruit of any kind the apples that were on the
trees you could cook all day
corn \$1.25 wheat \$1.34 Oats .65 We are feeding syrup to
the hogs.

Here is the "deciphered" version of the story above:

1936 real truth

The first rain we had was Aug. 22 and then it came with wind, hail and dust

We grew no corn, very little hay, no garden except beets, just a few bushels of oats, but an average wheat crop. No fruit of any kind. Apples that were on the trees, you could cook all day.

Corn \$1.25 per bushel. Wheat \$1.34 per bushel. Oats \$.65 per bushel. We are feeding syrup to the hogs.

She wrote a 2-page story, also, and I will first print the entire pages, and then break up the pages so you can read them easier. At the end of this story is the full "deciphered" version of what these 2 pages below say.

in the 1930's, rain had drought it got dryer & dryer here & here
 rain, then moved in from the West - when it was a few years ahead
 of our area - one year we did not raise any potatoes but we were
 lucky as there had been 2 rows of corn when the plants had plung
 up so we planted all kinds of squash & pumpkins and other what
 we ate all winter

We moved our garden and where the windmill was at the end of
 the lane, don't ask why grandpa ^{my god} Peppers would put the windmill
 so far from the yard but it was in the pasture at least
 we could water the garden and hope that the south wind
 would not cook the vegetable tops

We had about 6 inches of dust on our yard and when it
 looked like we sure would get rain, the dust would hit the
 dust and the dust would fly up, we would get about 100 or so of
 the rain drops
 there was no grass and corn grew about 3 feet tall but no
 ears we cut the corn with the grain binder and shocked it
 like oat or wheat
 left from other years &
 We had straw piles real large ones and we fed that to the cows
 and horses but not much feed value in it but we bought
 molasses and pour it over the straw a sticky mess and the
 flies drove off the straw piles were almost gone so my dad
 and brother would saw down cotton or hallow tree every other
 morning. We girls would have to stand with large clubs
 to keep the cows in the corral or pen and when the cows heard the
 tree fall nothing could stop them till they found the tree and they
 ate leaves ~~etc~~, they did not give much milk on that food
 but 6 cows keep up in milk & butter

The government bought cows where the farmers could not feed
 they shot and buried the ones that were too far gone and the calves
 they shipped to the south ^{later on} etc

The government told farmers to raise sorghum and milo which were
 cheap winter crops that helps to feed the stock we had

We had dust storms so to keep the windows open we web flew
 sack and had them over the open windows 3 times a day we had

to take them down & wash the mud out, dust would come in the
 house then every little crack like snow drifts. a lot of babies
 died so they could not wipe the dust from their lungs, one
 of my uncles Alma's twins died of it she was 2 & month old.
 then we started to rain a little more each year and the grass
 & crops grew, then the grass hoppers came they ate the point off
 of building, the telephone wires look like ropes and of
 course they ate the crops so we had to get saw dust from and
 banana oil and poured out from the fair ground ^{in 1934} a bag per sack
 morning before the rain came up my dad, brother and I would take
 sacks of the poison and dump around the hills and spread by
 hand ~~it was~~ to be safe by the grasshoppers before they could
 get in the fields, it did help.
 We would go each day to the very low lying land and get cows
 stalks for the cows to eat and we always were the same but
 hammit fields etc. as the grasshoppers ate so many holes in
 the clothes at last there was not much left
 there were hard times and we had to make our clothes do for 3 to 4 years
 in the later years my dad and another man bought a stove in
 Malheur which did thought later on when a man moved off
 the farm they would have some thing to make a living. it never
 happen as he passed away in 1941

in 19 the government got the idea that there were to be large
 lakes in the county and that would draw more rain. one
 lake Oak Creek Beach lake took one farm and 13 others to make
 a large lake in the Valley for ~~the~~ recreation, fishing, boating etc
 in 1936 we had a lot of snow so much that we could step over
 the tops of telephone poles. it took till Feb. 2 & before the snow slow
 could open up the road to our way
 of the year of my schooling there were about 2 weeks of some work
 that we never got to school we had 3 1/2 miles to school
 the creek that ran past our yard on the south side, the other banks
 were so deep that you could put a 3 story house on the bottom and
 it would not ~~total~~ touch out of the top and the water was about 1/2 ft
 wide. it was fed by springs

in the 1930^s the rain had drought it got dryer & dryer less & less rain, this moved in from the West where it was a few years ahead of snow area one year we did not raise any potatoes but we were lucky as there had been 2 rows of corn when the plants had plug up so we planted all kinds of squash & pumpkins and that's what we ate all winter

We moved our garden out where the windmill was at the end of the lane don't ask why grandpa ^{and aunt} Pappas would put the windmill so far from the yard but it was in the pasture at least we could water the garden and hope that the south wind would not cook the vegetable tops

We had about 6 inches of dust on our yard and when it looked like we sure would get rain, the drop would hit the dust and the dust would fly up, we would get about 100 or 25 of the rain drops

there was no grass and corn grew about 3 feet tall but no ears we cut the corn with the grain binder and shocked it like oat or wheat

We had straw piles real large ones and we fed that to the cows and ~~horses~~ horses not much feed value in it but we bought molasses and pour it over the straw a sticky mess and the flies love it, the straw piles were almost gone so my dad and brother would saw down cotton or willow tree every other morning. We girls would have to stand with large clubs to keep the cows in the ^{in the area} ~~corral~~ or pen and when the cows heard the tree fall nothing could stop them till they found the tree and they ate leaves ~~through~~, they did not give much milk on that food but 6 cows keep ^{up} in milk & butter

the government bought cows & colts that the farmers could not feed
they shot and buried the ones that were too far gone and the calves
they shipped to the south etc. etc. ^{later on}
the government told farmers to raise sorghum and milo which were
drought resistant crops that help to feed the stock we had

As you can well imagine, many people were desperate for food and crime reared its ugly head. Gramma Martha used to tell the story that it was so hot that they had their beds (in their downstairs bedroom) positioned so that the head end was as close as possible to a window. One morning they woke up to find most of their chickens had been stolen overnight. Common practice for thieves was to reach inside the open windows and put a cloth filled with some sort of "knock-out drops" over the faces of sleeping residents. The chickens could squawk all they wanted but the owners were not going to hear the commotion.

We had dust storms so to keep the windows open we web flaps
sack and took them over the open windows 3 times a day - we had
to take them down & wash the mud out, dust would come in the
house thru every little crack like snow drifts. a lot of babies
died as they could not wipe the dust from their lungs, one
of my mother's Alma's twins died of it - she was 2 1/2 months old.

LOSTROH, EILEEN—Funeral for the infant daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Louis H. Lostroh will be held Monday afternoon at 1:30 o'clock at the family home at Malcolm, and at 2 o'clock at the Malcolm Lutheran church, Rev. Alfred Seager officiating. Interment at Lutheran cemetery a mile south of Malcolm. The body is at Castle, Roper & Matthews.

December 20, a girl.

LOSTROH—Mr. and Mrs. Louis H. (Arlene Piper), Malcolm; December 21, two girls.

Funeral home.

LOSTROH, EILEEN—Died at a local hospital Thursday night. She was two months old and was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Louis H. Lostroh of Malcolm. She is survived by a twin sister, Arlene, another sister, Ardes June; her parents, and her grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. C. H. Pieper and Mrs. G. Lostroh, all of Malcolm. The body is at Castle, Roper & Matthews pending funeral arrangements.

then it started to rain a little more each year and the grass & crops grew. then the grass hoppers came they ate the paint off of building, the telephone wires look like ropes and of course they ate crops so we had to get sawdust bran and banana oil and poison put from the fair ground ^{for 25¢ a large pun sack} and each morning before the sun came up my dad, brother and I would take sacks of the poison and drive around the fields and spread by hand it was to be ate by the grasshopper before they could get in the fields, it did help.

We would go each day to the very low lying land and get corn stalks for the cows to eat and we always wore the same hat & blanket, jacket etc. as the grasshopper ate so many holes in the clothes at last there was not much left those were hard times and we had to make our clothes do for 3 to 4 years in the later years my dad and another man bought a store in Malcolm which dad thought later on when him & mom moved off the farm they would have some thing to make a living. It never happen as he passed away in 1941

CARL PIEPER MALCOLM FARMER DIED FRIDAY

1941

FARMED FOR MANY
YEARS NEAR MALCOLM

MALCOLM, Nebr.— Carl H. Pieper, 63, of Malcolm, died at a local hospital early Friday morning. He came to Lincoln from his native Germany at the age of four and had attended school here. Following their marriage in 1904, Mr. and Mrs. Pieper removed to a farm near Malcolm which has remained their home.

Surviving are his wife, Martha; four daughters, Mrs. L. H. Lostroh and Mrs. Reinold Plautz, Malcolm; Miss Anna, German Valley, Ill.; and Mrs. Fred Miller, Lincoln; one son, Arthur, Malcolm; father, August, and a brother, both of Garland; and seven grandchildren.

Funeral services were held at the home Sunday at 1:30 o'clock and at the St. Paul Lutheran church in Malcolm at 2 o'clock, with Rev. S. Holstein officiating. Burial in the Lutheran cemetery at Malcolm.

FATHER DIES

Folkert Saaijenga and Miss Anna Pieper left Thursday for Lincoln, Neb. The latter received a telephone message of the serious illness of her father, C. H. Pieper. They returned home Monday. Miss Pieper's father died before they arrived. Funeral services were held Saturday.

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The Branched Oak Lake was completed by the Army Corps of Engineers in 1967. The park included 5,595 acres, of which 1,800 acres are under water. About 30 years ago I was told that the only thing left of my mom's old homeplace was one lone pine beside a parking lot. Everything else is gone and the big white house no longer is filled with the laughter and joy of the Pieper family.



On a positive note, it is estimated that one million people visit the area each year to "float their boats" and those pesky grasshoppers, last I heard, were in the market for snorkeling equipment.



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The government bought cows and calves that farmers could not feed. They shot and buried the ones that were too far gone and the calves they shipped to the south...Kentucky, Alabama, etc. Later on the government told farmers to raise sorghum and milo which were dry weather crops to feed the stock we had.

We had dust storms so to keep the windows open we wet flour sacks and tacked them over the open windows. 3 times a day we had to take them down and wash the mud out. Dust would come in the house thru every little crack like snow drifts. A lot of babies died as they could not cough the dust from their lungs. One of my sister Alma's twins died of it when she was 2 ½ months old.

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many holes in the clothes, at last there was not much left. Those were hard times and we had to make our clothes do for 3 to 4 years.

In later years my dad and another man bought a store in Malcolm which Dad thought later on, when him and Mom moved off the farm, they would have something to make a living. It never happened as he passed away in 1941.

In the 1960s the government got the idea that there were to be large lakes in the county and that would draw more rain. One lake (Branched Oak Lake) took our farm and 13 others to make a large lake for recreation, boating, hunting, etc.

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