

A day on the ranch.

As soon as the clock chimed five A.M. we'd hear father's feet hit the floor if we were awake. I don't think it took him five minutes to dress. His room was at the far end of the hall and as soon as he was dressed he would walk along the hall knocking on the doors of which there were three, calling loudly "Räsie, Annie Max, John, George, Joe, time to get up",--and oh did we sleepy kids hate that sound!, but the older children, which was myself, Anna, John and Max knew if we did not heed that call we'd regret it.

He would go ~~up~~ to the kitchen, light the kindling, which was laid the evening before, and fill the tea kettle with water then grab an arm load of milk buckets and head for the barn or the corral where the milk cows were kept. In the barn in winter in the corral in summer. One half an hour later my mother would come to our rooms and in her gentle voice, tell us to get ~~up~~ up and go to work, or else dad would take it out on us.

Resentfully I'd get up and dress, go to the horse barn saddle a pony and go out into the pasture after the work horses needed for the day. Gladly they would come to the barn where they were fed a measure of grain and a bin full of hay.

Until I was sixteen I could'nt very well put the work harness on them so I'd go out and help with the milking until it was finished and dad would harness the teams. Then I'd help carry the buckets full of milk to the house and into the cellar where mother was skimming the cream from the pans of milk. She had already skimmied about 40 or 50 pans of milk, beside having peeled

potatoes, mixed up pancake batter and sliced enough bacon ready to fry.

When the men and I came with the last of the milk dad would take over and she would go to the kitchen and finish breakfast.

She had to make pancakes for three men about four or five kids so she never got to eat breakfast until the men and I had finished. Then she would feed the younger children and herself. When sister Anna was old enough she did that while mother finished cooking breakfast. After that mother would bathe the baby and maybe one of two of the younger kids while Anna washed and wiped the dishes and cleaned up the kitchen. Meanwhile I'd follow the men which were father, myself my two uncles and a hired man to the barn-- help hitch up the teams and when they were gone clean out the horse barn and go to the field with a horse drawn hay rake or a fork or a hoe to cultivate the corn which ever was needed ~~for~~ to do for that day.

I loved the out of doors, the singing of the birds and the flowers and the smell of new mown hay, but after this grind lasted for days on end I was pretty sick of it. I did that from the time I was twelve until I reached womanhood and by that time I became ill from the effects of all this hard labor day after day. The doctor said I was too young to do so much for so long a time. This illness lasted for twenty years and I was miserable nearly all of the time. Of course I was married then and my husband helped all he could but I still had my work to do in our home. At the ranch each day had it's job to be done and dad believed that children must learn to work first of all.

In the winter we could sleep lots longer, but my two oldest brothers and myself helped milk the cows, clean out the barns and then wash about 40 or 50 milk pans and a dozen milk buckets and later wash the cream separator. Then we had to go to school. We walked and I used to be so tired when I sat down in the desk that I'd some times go to sleep. After school it meant hurry home, about a quarter of a mile, feed the chickens, help feed the hogs, help milk a few cows and so on. Anna helped mother in the house with the cooking and the smaller children. Mother was not very strong and the work she was forced to do along with having a baby every two years was terribly hard on her. She ~~was~~ never was really well and her work and her children were a great burden to her. This grind lasted until we left home or got married. The girls were better in mind-ing and doing the work than the boys. They would sneak around ^{some} ~~some~~ way and try to outwit father by doing as little as they could but most always they paid for it, for dad found out what they did and what they didn't do, so either he made them do more or whiped them. When he ordered any one to do a job, we did it or else! There was no fooling around with him. Many winter nights we had to pick over dried beans, which were raised on the ranch, of stones sticks etc. or help shuck corn by the hour. We certainly knew how to work tho our schooling was rather slim, for dad tho that if we could count to 100 and read through the third reader and write our name that was enough.

Raising children on the farm is one of the best things that can happen to them, providing the work for them to do was reasonable, and providing there were no cars, telephones, T.V.s as there were in my time. Children seemed to be satisfied then. They played base ball, rode horse races some learned to play musical

~~musical~~ in struments who liked it. The girls learned to do sewing
crochet, knit and play the piano. They all attended country dances,
at Grange Halls with their parents who loved to dance themselves.
Some played the fiddle and the guitar, mouth harp or sometimes a
drum.

There were no electric gadgets for the house and men used horses
to do their farming with and did it much better than some do now
with their big machines.