

## Chapter 6 Work, Work, Work!



*The Frost beet thinning crew. Front row: Myron, Gerald, Kathryn and Kitty. Middle row: Irma, Marian and Lorna. Back row; Thelma, Eunice, Ira and me with wind blown hair. Mother was good at chopping heads with a camera*

We all had our appointed chores, there were always dishes to wash and dry, beds to be made, floors that needed swept, help with the cooking, and tending the smaller children. Each of us girls learned to bake bread and had our turn at it at a fairly young age. I remember standing on a chair to reach into the pan. Baking bread was actually kind of fun, getting our hands in to that gooey mixture, it stuck to our fingers as we worked more flour in and mixed it and mixed it. Sometimes, I think I had as much flour on me

as there was in the pan. We baked eight loaves of bread every other day. The best part of it was when we got to make "fry cakes" (scones) with some of the dough. Just think of a nice hot scone right out of the hot oil dripping with melted butter and honey. Yummy!

Maintaining a livelihood required everyone in the family to participate. Daddy raised mostly sugar beets, hay, grain, kids, and some years, potatoes and corn. We kids were introduced to hard work very young. Besides working in the fields, there also was housework that had to be done. We all had our appointed chores, there was always dishes to wash and dry, beds to be made, floors swept, and helping with the cooking. Mother worked in the fields right along with us so it was family togetherness.

Everyone of us were in the beet fields, the children that were to young would play at the end of the rows, the babies were put in a basket in a shelter. The ones that were



*I'm glad this darn hoe is good for something besides thinning beets.*



*Oh for Grandma Frost's feather bed about now!*

to small to handle their hoes would crawl behind Mother, as she blocked or spaced the beets with a long handle hoe. We wee ones would crawl along behind and thin out the beets, leaving only one plant to mature. Sometimes there would be two or three of us behind her, when we would catch up to where the first person started we would skip ahead. Hey we had a science going there. Sore knees, aching back and green fingers. I soon advanced to my own hoe and row, WHOOPEE!

After the thinning of the beets came the weeds! We usually went through them weeding at least twice. That was not so bad, we could at least walk through with long handled hoes, Daddy kept them sharp and we had to be very careful not to chop out any beets.

The topping of those darned beets was another story. By fall they weighted more than we did. Some years we had to dig them out of the frost and even snow. The beets were pulled up by a horse drawn digger and later a tractor. They were left laying on the ground, tops and all. Our job was to come along and pick up the beets and chop off the tops with a beet knife. A beet knife has about a twelve inch blade with a hook at the end. The hook was used to pick up the beet by snagging it. once the top was chopped off we dropped them back onto the ground in rows. Later we went back and loaded them into a wagon or truck.

When the truck came, we would have to pick up the beets one by one and toss them into the truck bed. Many a time I would get conked on the head with a big beet that did not make it into the truck bed. Mr Warren was hired to haul our beets to the beet dump for many years before we could afford our



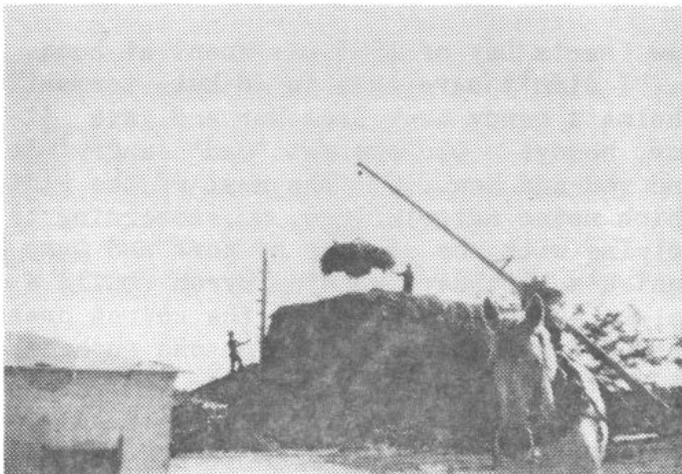
*Loading beets*

own truck. He was a jovial sort of fellow and we kids all liked him.

The Frosts and our neighbors the Gooches would work together to get the job done quicker and a little more pleasant having our friends working with us. One such year we were topping up to Gooches. Lorna, Donna, and I were working together, Lorna took a whack at a beet and somehow she caught my elbow with that nasty hook. We pulled it out and went on working even laughing. All of a sudden the pain hit! I ran home and mother tried to make it bleed to clean it out but it didn't. She gave me aspirin for the pain but it did not help. The pain was so terrible. She put a bandage on it and I didn't have to work for a few days.



*This is a beet knife.*



*Daddy (right) stacking hay and Myron (center) running the jackson fork. Old Prince, the horse, lifted the fork of hay to the stack by the derrick. It is hard to say which one of us is on the horse. worker. He could handle any haying job.*

Haying time was not so bad, we girls did not have to shock or pitch hay onto the wagons, but on occasions we did have to turn the shocks in the fields to dry. We did our share of tromping it after it was on the wagons, but that was really kind of fun. It was like jumping on the bed but not getting scolded for it. Our main haying job was riding the derrick horse to lift the huge jackson fork loads of hay from the wagon to the stack. Myron was a very good little

We also had to pick potatoes in the fall. All the schools would close for two weeks in September for Harvest Vacation. Only it wasn't a vacation. Most all the kids would pick potatoes on their own farms like we did. Even the town kids would get jobs on farms to earn money. Daddy didn't plant them every year. Those years we would get jobs from other farmers to earn money. We didn't always get paid working for Daddy. When we were smaller we worked in teams of two with wire potato baskets. We went behind the spud digger picking up all the spuds putting them into our baskets. Either Daddy or Myron had scattered the

gunny sacks up and down the row waiting for us. We took turns holding the sack while the other dumped our two baskets into it which filled the sack. Once the sack was full, it was left standing in the field to be picked up later by a truck. We were paid by the sack. When we were bigger we worked independently by having a belt with hooks on



*This isn't us, but it gets the idea across. I don't think daddy used four head of horses, but may have. It shows using the spud baskets. It also shows two dumping into the sack just like we did. What it doesn't show is picking directly into the sacks with the harness on.*

the back that held our sacks, two hooks in front that held one sack open and we went down the row dragging it between our legs until it was full. Fun, right? We did have fun working with the Gooch kids. One autumn day while picking potatoes I was just coming into the field eating an apple, Myron threw a large potato clear across the field and hit me right in the mouth. I ended up with the potato in my mouth and the apple on the ground. He was always a good marksman!