

THE HARD WINTER OF 1936

1936 was a very cold winter with lots of snow. We still lived at the Milky Ranch with a cow-calf operation. That flat country with very little brush and no trees was covered in 2 to 3 feet of snow and the cattle couldn't get to the grass. Many ranchers lost their herds to the cold and starvation.

Daddy saved his herd by several innovative strategies and plenty of hard work. I have no personal memories of this hard winter. I am sure that Sis, baby Ted and I were kept cozy and warm in our little ranch house. I am sure that Daddy had cut a good supply of firewood and that we had plenty of food.

Daddy had good credit and was able to buy cottonseed cake to supplement feed the cattle. But how do you get the feed to the cattle when the ground was covered with two to three feet of snow? There was no time to build feed troughs. Daddy hired dozens of CCC boys. (Civilian Conservation Corps was a New Deal program that gave government work to men who could otherwise find no employment.) These men came to the ranch in a big bus and with their boots and shovels they tromped down snow in large enough areas that Daddy and Delma could put out the cottonseed cake on the tromped down snow so the cattle could get at it. I am sure they did this near the water tanks. I am sure they had to chop the ice on the tanks every morning so the cattle could get at the water. We had a team of strong work horses and a fresno scraper that were used to clear roads and carry the heavy sacks of cottonseed cake.

By hard work and good common sense Daddy saved his herd.

A little word of explanation about Delma Hunt: He was a hired man who had grown up in Dry Lake, the same place Namina grew up. He was a very large man and very strong. (We children thought he was a giant.) Daddy told me he never could have made it through that winter without Delma and his great strength and ability to work hard.