My Remembers
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Changes on the Farm

As we continue life day in and day out, night after night the years creep by us before we even realize where they have gone. So as you read, let your mind drift back to the thirties and forties, and I will attempt to guide you through one of the most dramatic changes of the times and how effective it was as it touched the life of the farm families. Families were being separated by the Depression and then after the prosperous period that followed, were separated again by the war. This time young men and fathers left for city jobs or were called to war. Those left behind had to double and triple their work load. It was once sun up to sun down. We soon found ourselves working some time twelve to fifteen hour a day, which took us into the night especially during harvest.

As a boy growing up there were two different kinds of life involved in this story of my boyhood. As a black boy who ran barefoot all summer and hole in shoes in winter, I came in contact with the men who were the big land owners and I realize they were an asset to the poor white or black family who had no land nor a house to live in. You had three choices. You could move on a land owner's farm who would let you share crop or you could work for him by the day. Or you could do like many black and whites did and that was to live like gypsies, hall your family and everything you own, on to a team of mules and cover wagon or a old car or truck, pitching tent along the road side over night, and stopping by everybody house and every land owner, picking up little odd job be it chopping cotton, picking cotton, or clearing bottom land for firewood. I seen all of this.

My father was a share cropper until he left Haggard place to try to make it as a tenant on Lavon Farm. I really don't no if there were any other black share cropper farmers in and
around during my growing up days other than my dad and Bud Thorton on the Harrington place. Being a share cropper family we were able to live better than the field hands.

As a share cropper son during the Depression and dust storm days, I saw the life of many farm owners as well as black farm hand families change. I remember by the time the Depression was over the only one that was left on the farms was the older man and woman and young children. Those in the age from around fourteen or fifteen years to those in their twenties disappeared. This was one of those times we would see lots of travel coming by my house. I remember some saying they were going to California. Some say Chicago and some to New York. I remember those that were in school, the older ones, would disappear.

Although farming were about the safest place to keep you from going hungry, there were no money and no crop to work. The drought had burn up the crop. It had dried up creek and shallow wells along creek beds. During this time the only ones left on the farm had access to water. I can remember well that we had a live spring. We dug it out enough to hold water. So we carried water to the garden in order to raise food. People who had no access to water had to move on somewhere else.

I also remember during this time a lot of men coming through the country promise to find water on the farms. Oil digger came and dug well on the owner farm for a little or nothing, any where from $25 to $100. I think those who could find water charge about $25. Some time the farm hand and nabors farm hand team up to dig the well.

Because of the drought, white farmer son and daughter as well as white and black share cropper who had son and daughter fourteen or fifteen or older left and move into the city, move with other family or made it on their own in other part of the United State. During that time it was nothing for two or
three family to move into one house together in the city, sometime building another patch up room on to the all ready run down house.

In the late thirties the dust storms gone, the earth around Collin was rich and the crop was flourishing. Cotton, corn and wheat was making good and the market was good. Crowded families in town began to thin out as the old farm houses that had been empty for several years came to life again with middle age farmers or farm hands. In Collin County most of the blacks come in from South and East Texas. The white farmers and farm hands come from Oklahoma and Kansas. The crops were good enough for this part of Texas to draw people from far and near. Although many farmers were still mostly using horses and mule, larger owners were able to buy a tractor along with hiring more help. The dust bowl had come and gone along with the Depression, and the economy was just about to stabilize itself. Over all thing began to look good for farming families.

So here it was. We crawl into the thirties, we almost faded away during the mid thirties, we came to a bright and blooming late thirties, a smooth ride into the early forties with smiles and happiness. Then all of a sudden we woke up one day in 1941 and the dream we had began to slip away. And blooming as farming was, and bad as the world needed its commodities, the farmers found out that we were all most as bad off as what we had just came through. It was Mother Nature taken its toll in the thirties. Now in the forties human nature began to take its toll.

The war came. Those able to work was ship off to war. That left old men, women and children to work the farm. There were a few middle age men that got deferment from service. But as the war pick up, factory in city opened. This draw the middle age men, young and old women to the city looking for a better
living. Of course the money was better, but it left very few farm hand to work the crops which was badly needed to feed people. But as it was thing got worse. Even the farm peoples had to rely on commodities from the relief county agent. Horse and mules began to disappear. They were use for food and army use. So for a half decade farming suffered another set back. It was quite a struggle. Crop were plentiful but labor were few. Every one no time was about to make another change. Materialistic things changed. New inventions of equipment take the places of old.

A few years ago before my dad died, he and I would ride through the country together and talk about how it use to be and what ever happen to certain houses, barn and old tractors. There are only a few old timers who still think about old times. But I think you grand and great grand children, no matter who you are, need to no about how folks made it during those Depression and dust bowl years. This is my story as I remember what happen and how it happen in those faded years rolled by.