My Remembers

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Dust Storms and Blue Whislers

Whin the dust storms roared across the north of us in Collin County we were face with another problum. The time would usual be late fall whin the last of the cotton was being scrap pick by the old women and children, while the old men would drive those horses and mules huffing and puffing up and down the field plowing the black earth. They were laying the plowed ground by for the winter before the rain and snow came while the women were dumping ther sacks of cotton. It seem that all would wind up at the wagon the same time whether they had a full sack or not. The men with those teams of puffing tired horses would some how slow down enough to all meet on an end, walk over in a huddle, roll a smoke, take a chew of tabacco.

Being a boy between seven and ten, these are the words I remember hearing come out of those huddle of men and women. While all would look to the north and north west, men would say, Look like we're in for it. The women would say, Child, I show hate to see them kind of storms come through. No telling what you get out of this one. Look yonder, girl, you see that red in or on the top of that blue. You no what that mean. We gonner get a good storm with dis here cold spell.

One of the older women who had been around longer and was more wiser would say, Cold spell. Shit. Dat look like one of dem blue whisler. She call the blue norther a blue whisler because it whisle through the cracks of the old house and make them sing. Some one would say, Oh, my, God. We better get to de house so me and dem chillen can start nailing up tin to dem window and try to chink up some of dem hole. Child, you no how bad that sand storm can be along with that blue whisler. The last time we had one I forgot to put the top on the flour can and we ate sand for the longest. We better go. Another say,
Look yonder, girl, you see that red in or on top of that blue. You no what that mean. We gonner get a good storm with dis here cold spell.
Don't forget to screw the top on all your food. I hate this sand storm cause that make me have to wash all most twice this week. All that sand get in your clothes and bed. Its trouble, child. Somebody else say, Better off than some sister so and so, ain't hardly got no window in they house and she said that they can't get that white man to put none in. Last word said would be, I'll be praying for you all. Somebody say, Me too. We'll see you Sunday at church if the Lord willing and the creek don't rise. Come on kid. Let hurry home and get them hole stuff up and you kid get in enough wood for tonite.

Now that is what and how the women did whin the storm come. It wouldn't be right to leave out the story of how the men would react. The men just about finish ther smoke and chaw, whin one would say, Man we better head for the barn. Look like a blue whisler headen this way and look like it pushing a sand storm in front of it. Boy, the way it look, it will be here in a cupple of hours.

Here is one case of helping each other. This field where the men and my Dad were working was across the creek and past the barn so Dad was right at home. The other two men was my Uncle Ronney and my cousin Fat or Tank, whatever you wish to call him. Any way Dad would tell them, You all got longer way to home than I do, so take a wagon and head home. You no you got to go milk, gather egg, feed the stock for Ray. I'll take the other teams to the barn and take care of them and get all the stock bed down. That mean he had to unharness the horses, feed and lock them up, feed the hog if I had not fed them. Usually I fed every day but with the storm coming we would feed extra and shut up the chickens, chop wood and get it in.

Ruth and Mom was chinking holes. This is one time Mom would say to Bessie Lee, Girl, get you little butt out there with Jr. and get some chips in so you can stay out of my way.
Anyway by the time Dad would get through, the storm would hit—wind and sand first. Some time the sand was so thick you could hardly see. So much sand would come through it would stack up side of the house and fence row like snow. The next thing some few hours later, it was time to get the drip bucket and tub ready to catch water or snow coming in the house.

Let me remind you it was not just in winter time. These storm would also come in early spring. We would get the same kind of storm only they would be worse on the young cotton and corn crop. The sand storm would chop, slice and cover the crop. We use to get a lot of hail in the spring of the year and lose the wheat crop which was about to head out into grain. The cotton and corn could be planted over, but part of the grain would be lost for that year.

Beside the lost of crop when the blue whisler came along with the sand storm, the sand were as good as a sand blasting of the type use in shop these days. As disastrous as it may seem, those sand storm created jobs. After the storm, paint jobs were needed. Just like the well diggers during the drought come by to find water, paint crews travel through the county looking to paint houses and barns. You had to paint, or barn and house would dry rot or eventual the sand and wind would beat it to the ground.

By the grace of God one thing about the sand storm, it help the farm ground. This is black land country and I don't think I have to tell any one about the sticky, black mud when it get wet. When the sand storm come through, it left a thin layer of sand on top of the black soil. When this was turn under and mix with the black soil, it loosen it enough that a field that was not rocky would plow up easy without sticking, and when you plant seed in it the seed had breathing room to pop out of the ground faster.

But with the ground a little loose, more rocks turn up in a
already rocky field. So before planting time and after harvest of all crops, whin the land was laid by for the winter, women and children were able to go in to the rocky fields, pick up rock, and load them on a wagon. And the farmer would use the rocks to plug up drains and washed out ditches, which was ther form of land conservation. The rocks were use for mud road, ditch crossing, tamping around fence post, decoration of yard and making up of lime and water for a white wash paint. Picking up rock was another way for a famley to earn a little extra money from land owner.

There could be a sand storm or a blue norther or both together which was the worst. One thing for sure, if you ever look to the north and see red over blue, head for cover. The red was the sand from the west; the blue was the wind that boiled up the sand and it looked like the red sand was riding on the winds. This was the sand storm and blue norther combined. You ain't never been whip till you get a sand whipping.