



# 1936

Memories of

Gaylord Atkinson

Original Recording: July 11, 2009

Gaylord Robert Atkinson

Interviewed by Dhyan Atkinson

Pictures and context from the internet



*Dhyan in Italics: You said you had a topic to talk about.  
What is it?*

**Dad:** The year 1936! It was a very eventful year and almost none of it was good.

First of all, there was probably the biggest snowstorm of my life between Christmas of 1935 and New Year's Day of 1936. The roads were snowed shut and it was cold. When it was time for school to start, there was no way to get out with any vehicle. Dad shoveled a path from the house to the railroad track, which had been plowed, so we could walk down the railroad track to school.

*What made you think there was going to be school?  
Didn't they close down schools for bad snow storms?*

Well the snow storm had been a week earlier but there was still snow there after New Year's when we were supposed to go back to school. Everybody else would have been about normal by then but we were still snowed in because we were out in the country.

*Blizzard pictures 1936 – from the internet*



*How deep was the snow?*

There were drifts at least six feet high. Our road had banks on either side that were 2 or 3 feet high, and the snow filled in the space from bank to bank. So Dad had to shovel snow at least 3 feet deep for 300 yards to get down to the railroad tracks.

*How old were you in 1936?*

I was eleven.

*Do you remember what grade you were in at eleven?*

I started high school in 1939, so in 1936 I was probably in 5<sup>th</sup> grade or so. Anyway, we were snowed in all January and all of February. We kids went to town after school to buy the necessities from the grocery store and carried them home: sugar, flour, and things like that.

## Life in 1936

Some of America's most extreme weather occurred in 1935 and 1936. In fact, most of the decade's records happened in these two years. Forty percent of the states recorded the lowest yearly precipitation on record, eleven states recorded the lowest one day temperature, while twenty-six states recorded the their highest one day temperatures.

All across the northern section of the country, winter brought bitter cold temperatures. New record snowfalls were recorded. Missoula, Montana had a February total snowfall of 43 inches. The West Coast experienced extreme rainfall. Record cold temperature was registered in Great Fall, Montana with a minus 49 degrees. Fargo, North Dakota remained below zero for thirty-seven straight days. *(continued...)*

Following the record snowfalls and cold temperatures, Spring 1936 brought severe flooding in the Midwest, Middle Atlantic, Ohio Valley, and Northeast. The floods caused 270 million dollars of damage, and the lives of 107 people.

Mother Nature wasn't finished yet. The tornado season started in April, 1936. Seventeen tornados blew through northern Mississippi, Tennessee, northern Alabama, and Georgia. Four hundred and forty-six people were killed in rare nocturnal tornados.

It was a very hot summer! Some of the cities that recorded record highs were Minneapolis, Minnesota-108 degrees, Fargo North Dakota -114 degrees, Fort Smith Arkansas -115 degrees, Tulsa, Oklahoma - 117 degrees. On August 18, 1936, Iowa had its hottest ever August day with the average high temperature for 113 reporting stations of 106.5 degree. The summer heat was so intolerable, that many families slept outside at night to escape the heat of their houses.



**Then on March the first, three things happened:**

The first was the one-and-only earthquake that I experienced in Nebraska.



The second is that a warm front came through and started melting the snow like crazy. Turkey Creek, which was down the valley just a quarter mile west of us, was flooded way out of its banks.

Third was that they opened our road on that day. They scraped it with a snow plow. For a little over two months, we had been completely snowed in.

*I never knew there were earthquakes in Nebraska. What do you remember about it?*

I think it was just about the time we were getting up. It wasn't much of one. It rattled dishes. It didn't do any damage but it was an attention-getter!

*I bet. Were all of you kids excited about that?*

We were concerned. It was a novelty.

*I imagine!*

Okay, so then we move on to the next event which happened in early summer, after the wheat harvest. We had a corn field west of the railroad track across the road from a wheat field. The wheat field had been harvested and obviously had been infested with chinch bugs. Now the wheat was not giving them any nourishment so they started moving out of the wheat field and across the

road to our corn field. And then they went over onto the railroad tracks – anyplace that they could find any plants to suck on.

*They ate corn?*

They sucked the juice out of it. The rows of corn were running parallel to the road and the rows were just falling, one after the other, as the chinch bugs attacked them. Dad made a line of creosote and kerosene a few rows back into the field, to try to divert them, and he dug posthole every once in awhile, and filled those with kerosene. It slowed them down but it didn't stop them.

*Cinch bugs, all stages of development (from the internet)* →



At one point you couldn't see the ground on the road. It was completely covered with bugs. It just looked like the ground was moving.

*Amazing!*

They went on to the railroad tracks and when the trains came it made the rails so slick that the trains couldn't go very well.

*Buying a house from the Sears catalogue! 1936*

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**HERE** is an unusual bungalow, well suited for modern living conditions. The exterior is very practical and finds much favor on account of its simplicity. The lines of the hip roof are broken by the dormer on the front and by projection over the dining room at the side. Lining out of doors, as most of us do in summer, the front porch will be appreciated. The windows are very well designed and attractively arranged.

**The Living Room.** From the front porch, we enter the living room, which is 11 ft. 9 in. wide by 18 ft. 5 in. deep. Near the corner and are attractively designed fireplace in the left wall, on each side of which is a window, and the triple window in the front wall.

**The Dining Room.** The dining room is located next to the living room and is lighted by two large windows contained in the bay projection.

**The Kitchen.** From the dining room we pass into the kitchen where considerable thought has been given to the placing of many features for use and practical arrangement of other equipment. The kitchen sink is located underneath the double window on the left wall, on each side of which suitable kitchen cabinets are furnished at option price. A place for broom, mop, etc., is formed by the chest opening of the right wall. The built-in breakfast alcove occupies the space at the rear. Table and seats for this furnished at option price.

**Bedrooms.** A plastered arch is used in the opening between the dining room and hall which connects the two bedrooms and bath.

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At the base price quoted, we guarantee to furnish all material consisting of lumber, lath, millwork, flooring, shingles, building paper, hardware, metal and painting materials according to specifications. See attached price list for base price and options.

## How Much things cost in 1936

Average Cost of new house: **\$3,925.00**

Average wages per year: **\$1,713.00**

Cost of a gallon of Gas: **10 cents**

Average Cost for house rent: **\$24.00 per month**

A loaf of Bread: **8 cents**

A LB of Hamburger Meat: **12 cents**

Studebaker Car: **\$665.00**

Ladies Swimming Costume: **\$6.95**

*“Free cup coffee and donuts for the unemployed” – Bread line during the Great Depression*





*Walking the rails during the Great Depression. (from the internet)*

So let me divert to the railroads for awhile.

On the north edge of our farm we were just south of the moraine left by the glacier from the last ice age. And the incline from Pawnee City to the edge was very steep.

Dad said that when they made a cut for the railroad, they got down to ground water and couldn't go any deeper, so the railroad track was quite steep.

Okay, let's forget the chinch bugs for a minute. This was another very memorable thing. The railroad was a major line that, during the wheat harvest, brought big loads of wheat from southern Nebraska and northern, central Kansas, going for a couple 300 hundred miles along the Kansas/Nebraska border. It was coming from west of our place, then going down to St. Jo (St. Joseph). Missouri.

These trains were so long and heavy that they used two locomotives to pull it, which was known as a double header. If they stopped in Pawnee City, which they always did, they stopped well southwest of Pawnee City, went up to Pawnee City and did their business: dropped off cars or picked up cars. Then they went back so they had about a mile-and-a-half to get up speed to try to make the hill, over past our house. It was very impressive to hear these double headers, where the wheels, apparently, were not quite the same diameter.



So the sound  
would go in sync and out of sync.... like  
Chug. Chug. Chug. chug-chug-chug. It was very  
impressive the sound. I still remember it clearly.

When they were pulling up we always wondered, "Are they going to make it? Or aren't they going to make it?" So here they were coming, slowing down: Chug. Chug. Chug. Then chut-chut-chut-chut! The wheels would slip on one of the locomotives.





They would close down the steam and try to bring them back. But once that happened, more often than not, they were doomed. I don't remember that they ever recovered once one of the locomotives started slipping. So the train stopped. They broke the train half way back, took half the train up the hill. There was a side track just up the hill for just this purpose, just beyond our farm. They put half the train on the side track, went back and got the other half, hooked it up, and went on.

As a little kids that was extremely impressive: to hear those double headers coming up. Occasionally they made it, but most often they didn't make it, and they had to stop and break the train. This took at least a half an hour, if not longer, before they could get going again.

*What time of day would you hear this happening?*

In the early evening. That was the time that train came through.

## Life in 1936



*America's Little Sweetheart*

*Shirley Temple in "Poor Little Rich Girl" 1936*



## Life in 1936



*The Devil is a Sissy*  
1936

*Freddy  
Bartholomew,  
Micky Rooney,  
Jackie Cooper*



## Life in 1936



### 1936 Libeled Lady

*The movies of the 1930s were often uplifting and Hollywood churned them*

*out. People who were struggling to put food on the table, enjoyed seeing fantasies of a better life and movies were very popular. There was no movie theater in Pawnee City, however and my Dad did not remember seeing many movies as a child.*

*Did you hear that once a week? How often did that happen?*

Almost every day during wheat harvest.

For there to be chinch bugs, it obviously had to be right during wheat harvest. During that time even a shorter train couldn't make the hill. The rails were so slick, right there, with squished bugs.

So much for the chinch bugs and the railroad.

The next thing, I'm not sure was in 1936. Probably it was earlier, during the dust bowl, around '33, '34, or '35. I was in grade school on that day. The dust blew in from Oklahoma so thick that the city street lights came on. It was so dark. And dust was every place.

*Did you have any idea that this storm was coming. Was there any kind of forecast on the radio?*

We didn't have a radio!

*Dust storms – 1930s*



*You didn't have a radio? (a mind boggling thought.)*

**We didn't have electricity. We didn't have running water. We didn't have a newspaper. We didn't have anything!**

*I forgot. Was the entire town caught off guard?*

The whole region was!

*Wow! Do you remember a little bit of dust blowing in and then it getting dark like that? Did all of you kids look out the window?*

I remember during recess noticing that the street lights were on. And it was dark. It was dark like just before a major thunderstorm.

*Did they send you home?*

No, I don't think so.



*Boy! - and kids today think they have it hard! Do you remember going home in all that dust?*

No.

*Do you remember, were you stuck in your house? Did you not go to school the next day? How long did that dust storm last?*

I think it was just one day or two days. I don't know. I just remember being out in recess and it being very dusty and dark.

*When something like that would happen – how would you get any sort of national perspective? Was it much later that you understood that this was a dust storm that blew in all the way from Oklahoma?*

I don't remember.

*The dust was obviously at least street light high. Was the dust cloud any higher than that?*

It was probably thousands of feet high.

*Amazing. And after the storm passed did it leave a lot of dust?*

Yes, the house, everything, was covered with dust.



*After a dust storm –*

*Your poor mother! Having to clean all that up. That must have been awful.*



An awful lot of Oklahoma soil was re-deposited in Kansas and Nebraska and disappeared from Oklahoma.

*Did a lot of dust get in the house even with the doors and windows closed?*

Oh, I think so. There wasn't a lot of wind, as I remember. It wasn't a strong wind. But obviously it was strong enough to blow it in. The strong wind was in Oklahoma where it picked the dust up.

I think we had a dust storm when you were young that left quite a deposit. Do you remember that?

*No. I don't.*

I think that was when we were in Kansas City.

So going back to 1936. There was another event that darkened the sky that summer. Can you guess what it was?

*Uhhh.... no.*

# Grasshoppers!!!!



*Grasshopper plague*  
*Pictures from the internet*



Corn withered by heat and chewed by grasshoppers. Terry, Montana, July 1936. Photo by Arthur Rothstein, FSA.

*Grasshoppers! What month were grasshoppers?*

I imagine it was July. They came in by swarms and I think maybe they were right at the end of the wheat harvest because the story goes that people came in from the fields to eat dinner, and left their pitchforks outside. When they went back out, the pitch fork handles had been seriously chewed on. They were rough whereas before they were smooth. The grasshoppers ate anything and everything.

*I am amazed that people would come into the house and calmly eat dinner if there were grasshoppers everywhere!*

We had an alfalfa field and they were devastating the alfalfa field, so Dad made an interesting contraption. He got a tank, some kind of a trough, and fastened it to the front bumper of the car. Then he put a screen up, about six or eight feet above the trough, and filled up the trough with kerosene. Then he drove through the alfalfa

field. The grasshoppers flew up as the car approached, hit the screen, and dropped into the kerosene. It didn't



take very long to fill up the trough. We ended up with a long tall, pile of dead, rotting, stinking grasshoppers for several months. Hundred's of pounds of grasshoppers.

*That was VERY ingenious of your father! That's incredibly ingenious!*

I'm not sure he had a significant kill but he got a lot of them!

*Did anyone else do that? Or was that your father's original thought?*

I don't know that anyone else did.

*Did it save the alfalfa?*

Some of it anyway. They ate a lot of it. It was definitely a plague.

Okay, moving on. August

My folks were losing their farm. Dad was going into

being a repairman and blacksmith. On August, I think it was August the 18<sup>th</sup>, he took the whole family – for some silly reason – to Omaha to get welding equipment.

August 18, 1936 set an all time heat record for Nebraska. So there we were....

*What was the all time heat record?*

118° F.

**118!!!**

So, here we were in an old car, in Omaha, starting to drive back about 5 o'clock or so, in a car that had... in those days you had inner tubes in your tires - and our inner tubes had been patched many times. It was so hot that the adhesive for the patches on the inner tubes melted. We had one flat tire after another.

*Oh, my gosh!*

At one time we pulled over with a flat tire, pulled the tire off, and while Dad was fixing that tire another tire went Bzzzzzzzzuuu and went flat.

We drove out a little bit and had another two flat tires. Finally we pulled into a field and spent the night there. The next morning it had cooled off enough that we could drive home.

*And your whole family was there.*

Yes.

*118°! Did you have water with you?*

I assume so. I don't remember that we didn't.

*Well, THAT was an adventure.*



*1936 Chevrolet  
sedan dashboard*

Then we moved into town...in August, I think. Possibly September, but I think August.

On the move, there was an accident and I was killed and this story ends right there.

*I guess it didn't!!!*

Okay...not quite... but it could have.

We were moving a piano in a wagon with a pair of very mild horses, going along into town, along the pavement, and there was a drop off on the edge of the pavement. The wheel of the wagon dropped into this drop off. The piano tipped over and I was between it and the side of the wagon. I tried to jump but it caught my leg. The piano went completely over and came down on my hand and here I was, my leg caught and my hand underneath the piano. They moved the piano and got me out.

They had another team moving other things with a pair of mules who would have panicked at the sound of the piano falling. Fortunately, our horses stopped. Otherwise, the wheel of the wagon would have run over me, the piano fallen on me, and you would have never seen me again.

*Let me see if I understand this. The piano was in the back of a wagon being pulled by two very mild horses and you were sitting beside the piano?*

No I was standing beside the piano, between the piano and the side of the wagon which was probably about 18 inches high. When the piano started to move I tried to jump. I got one leg out, but the other leg got pinned. The piano tipped over the edge and fell down with the top of the piano on the top of my hand. I can still barely see the scars on my hand and definitely there is a scar on my leg. It apparently chipped the bone just a little bit.



*So you were bleeding profusely?*

No. It didn't break any skin.

*It didn't? But it chipped the bone?*

I think so. There is a rough spot there.

*Amazing. Well, that sounds pretty scary!*

*Gaylord and his father, Max, in front of the new house – (Gaylord is high school age in this picture.)*

So we moved into town.

We rented a house for a year and then we bought the house that you know about.

I think we bought it about a year later in the late summer. The house had an outhouse and no running water. I was assigned the job of digging a ditch for a long block up to our house from the east to lay a water line. So every morning before school I dug on the ditch.

**That was when I was about 12 years old.**

*How deep a ditch did you need to dig?*

The water line had to be below the frost line which was at 30 inches. So the ditch was almost three feet deep.

*Three feet deep and how long again?*

Probably 350 yards. A block and a half.

*Wow!*

But then we had water. I think, a year or two later we dug a ditch for a sewer line. It was 150 feet long. I don't know that I was involved terribly much digging that one.

*Then it must have been a big thing when you got a water line and a sewer line and actually had a real bathroom. I bet that was quite an event for your family. Right? Did it work properly?*

Yes, I think so, yes. We were good diggers, good plumbers.

*That must have been amazing, not to have to haul water into the house for bathing, washing, etc. When did you get electricity?*

Electricity was there from the start. We had electricity in that house.



*How long would it have been before you had a clothes washing machine?*

I think we had a clothes washing machine.... I don't know... the house had a cistern.

*What's a cistern?*

Underground storage for rain water coming off the roof.

*How would you get that water into the house to use it?*

Remember the little porch to the southwest of the house?

*Yes, I do. It was where Grandma had all of her plants.*

There was a pump there going down into the cistern to get cistern water. A hand pump to draw water out of the cistern.

## Life in 1936

*Alas! Bad research! I failed to note where I found this on the internet. Dhyan*



Franklin D. Roosevelt

It was 1936 and the Great Depression was 7 years old. The incumbent United States President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, had taken bold steps including his “New Deal.” The “New Deal” included many programs designed to assist Americans struggling under the depression, arguably at the expense of those who were doing better financially.

*(continued...)*

Meanwhile, the Literary Digest, an influential weekly magazine of the time, had begun political polling and had correctly predicted the outcome of the previous five presidential elections. For this cycle, they had polled a sample of over 2 million people based upon telephone and car registrations. The results they obtained predicted Landon would win in a landslide with over 57% of the popular vote.



Alf Landon

However, there was a problem with the sample frame. During the Depression, not everyone could afford a car or a telephone. Those who did were usually wealthier, and therefore less likely to be directly helped by “New Deal” programs. As a result, that group was more likely to disapprove of Roosevelt than the general population.



*Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of the President, was a powerful advocate for the poor and disenfranchised. She was also one of the first “strong” First Ladies who helped to shape policy and take an active role in politics.*

“The basis of world peace is the teaching that runs through almost all the great religions of the world, “Love thy neighbor as thyself.” Christ, some of the other great Jewish teachers, Buddha, all preached it. Their followers forgot it. What is the trouble between capital and labor, what is the trouble in many of our communities, but rather a universal forgetting that this teaching is one of our first obligations. When we center on our own home, our own family, our own business, we are neglecting this fundamental obligation of every human being and until it is acknowledged and fulfilled we cannot have world peace.”

Eleanor Roosevelt



*FDR, steaded on the arm of his son because he never allowed himself to be photographed in his wheelchair.*



*Walt Disney, 1936*

*Helen Keller's  
Christmas Card  
Picture - 1936*



*Was that water really clean enough for drinking?*

No. That water was used for washing clothes and for washing hands and face etc.

*Where did you get your drinking water?*

I don't remember where we got drinking water when we moved into that house.

*Uncle Dan told me that the water in that well out at the farm, although it didn't run dry during the drought, didn't taste very good. But he said you were able to have a garden and water the garden with that well water.*

It was loaded with iron and other minerals.

*So it was fine for watering plants and giving to the livestock but I forget what he said about drinking water. Either from another well farther away....*

Yes, generally, as I remember, we got water from our grandparent's house which was half a mile away. We also had a well down in the pasture that we occasionally used.

*Do you remember this? In the house that I remember, if you went down into the basement, at the very foot of the stairs, there was a big heavy door, an iron door, a slab, that was flat on the ground and it was counter-weighted with a chain that went up over a pulley and then it had a big weight on it. So it was actually rather easy to open it, even for a child. Grandpa showed me. He opened it up one time and there were stairs that went down, down, down into the pitch darkness. Was that the cistern?*

I have no idea what you are talking about.

*Well, if you went down the stairs into the basement... from that little room where Grandma had all the*



*plants... and you went down to the basement... to the left was the room with the linoleum on the dirt floor... (yes, yes) ... and it had all the shelves where she kept her jars of canned food and the trunks were pushed under the stairs. There was that room. But when you came right down the stairs, just to the right, Grandpa had his milk separator. I remember that after he milked the cows, he would come down and he would pour the milk in and turn the separator on. The milk would come out one spout and the cream would come out the other... as a child, I thought this was totally amazing. But on the other side of the separator, the far side, there was a metal slab on the floor with a counter weight, and if you raised that slab there were stairs that went down even further from there. Do you not remember that?*

I do not remember that.

*I do because that was such a scary thing! Grandpa never let us go down there so I don't know what was all*

*the way down there. But since you are saying that the cistern must have been be right there, I just wondering....*

The cistern was just south of the house.

*Well, there was some other sub-basement down there, Dad. We should ask Uncle Dan or Aunt Wilma if either of them remembers it. I sure remember it, because it was like a dungeon in Grandpa and Grandma's house!*

I thought that whole room was a concrete slab, that whole room had a concrete floor.

*Nope! If you came straight down the stairs and went straight forward you would go into the garage. And it had a dirt floor and Grandpa's work bench was off to the right.*

When we moved in, all of that was dirt. We dug all of that out.

## Life in 1936



### **Berlin Olympics 1936**

The 1936 Olympics caused Hitler humiliation when his Aryan Supermen were dominated by the great Jesse Owens.



*Honoring of the victors  
in the 100 metre  
event, 1936*

*Left to right: Mercalfe,  
Owens and Osendarp*

## Life in 1936



Lange's 1936, *Migrant Mother*, (Florence Owens Thompson)

### Dust Bowl Migrant Workers

Iconic photos taken by Dorothea Lange



*So I am curious about that. How could you dig out under a house without compromising the stability of the house?*

They tore out what was the foundation to the southeast to make a garage door, we supported the house there on either side, and then dug out from there.

*I remember there were poles in the garage. Was it a double garage? (No) It was a double room. I remember there were several poles in the middle so I am sure you supported the house some with that. (Yes) So you dug all that out. That was quite something too! And you made that stone wall on either side of the driveway to hold back the hillside. Is that right? (Yes) Do you remember where you got the stone? Was that because you were on the edge of the glacier from the ice age so there were plenty of stones.*

No. I think that was limestone.

*So after you got water into the house did you just shut off the cistern? Just not let any more water go into it? Or did you keep it for emergencies?*

I think eventually we filled it up with dirt and the upper walls were broken down. I don't remember doing that, but I think that was done. So I don't think the cistern existed by the time you were around.

And I'm pretty sure I remember correctly, that they paid \$1,800 for the house. The monthly payment was \$37 per month - which was a fair amount of money in 1937 or '38.

***That is totally amazing. I wish I could buy a nice house like that for \$1,800!***

*So did Grandpa build his workshop?*

No, that was a barn. He refurnished a barn. He tore the top part of it off and put a tar-paper roof on it.

*How did his business go? Did his business take off pretty well, when he started going that?*

Yeah, pretty well. He was the most conscientious blacksmith in the area so he had about as much business as he could handle.

*He was lucky! (says Dhyan who has struggled with her own business.)*

*And did you have a garden in the rental house as well as at the house they bought?*

Yes. I don't remember it specifically, but yes, I know we did.

*Did you always have a cow, even at that rental house?*

Yes.

*I remember when I was little, there was that pasture out to the west, that grandpa kept a cow in. And what in*

*the world did they do with all the milk when it was just the two of them? And how come they never kept chickens?*

I don't know. They had lots of chickens out on the farm.

*So anything else you want to talk about?*

You said you wanted to know about the flood in Kansas City in 1951.

*Yes, I would like to know about that.*



*Kansas City Flood - 1951*



*Kansas City Flood - 1951*



*Kansas City Flood –  
1951 (at the  
confluence of the  
Kansas and  
Missouri Rivers)*



Okay, Erma worked in the procurement office of the ... can't remember what government department. They had a warehouse just across the river with office furniture, desks and the like. The flood was on a Saturday or Sunday. Anyway, we went downtown, and up to her office, which overlooked the river. I remember we could see the desks floating out of that warehouse and down the river.

It was a major flood. It flooded the stockyards with a lot of livestock there. Pigs and cows were washed away and drowned.

And there was a refinery. It floated some of the tanks and spilled the gasoline. There was a major fire with gasoline on the water. It burned a lot of things on Southwest Boulevard. It was quite the flood.

*Was that from rain up river?*

Yes, Rain up river.

*Did they have some warning that the flood was coming?*

Oh, definitely. They knew for days that it was coming.

*Why didn't they move the cattle and things out then?*

They thought the dikes would hold it. The Kaw river goes west of Manhattan, Kansas and then three rivers flow into it, the Solomon and I can't remember the other two. But after the flood they built the Tuttle Creek Dam just west of Manhattan, to form the big Tuttle Creek reservoir, to prevent future floods.

I can't remember the name of it. It was a large lake, just northwest of Lawrence. I think we went over and sailed on it twice.

*The biggest flood of my memory was the one that flooded the Plaza. I remember that. That must have been in the 1960s.*

No that was 1977.

*I remember I had been on the Plaza a weekend or so earlier with my friend Nancy Martin. We used to go into Halls which had beautiful, beautiful things. It was a store but it looked like a museum. (You know I don't think it could have been 1977 because I would have been in college then.) In any case, I remembered some beautiful, hand-painted, lacquered Russian boxes I had seen in Halls. Of all the things that must have been destroyed on the Plaza by those flood waters, I thought most about those beautiful boxes from Russian that must have been washed away.*

I think that flood was in September of 1977. I spent the night bailing water in the Kohler's basement.



*Two pictures of the  
Plaza Flood of 1977*





*Plaza flood – the building in the background is Halls*

*I remember an evening spent bailing water in the Kohler's house with you and Mrs. Kohler standing on the stairs, afraid to come into the water, for fear of,*

*being electrocuted. And you and I bailing, and bailing and bailing! (she laughs) But in 1977, I wouldn't have been at home.*

Well, the Kohler's place flooded more than once. (A Note: Their house was at the lowest point between two hills on our street, 54<sup>th</sup> Terrace) I am almost certain the major flood was 1977. In September. On a Monday night.

*Wow! You remember that it was a Monday?*

Because I was bowling. I came home and there was an alarm from MRI but no way I could get to MRI. There were several people still working at MRI. Cars with people in it came floating by. They went out and cut the rope from the flagpole and used that to rescue some people. Next morning there was a stack of cars in Brush Creek just across from MRI.

*(A pause.) Is there anything else you want to say about the 1930s? Were you and your family happy in that*

*house? That was a nice house, wasn't it? Grandpa probably felt relieved that he didn't have to fight off grasshoppers and other natural farm disasters, and that he had enough business?*

You mean the house across from the cemetery?

*Yes, the one that I remember. That seemed like a nice house. Were you all happy there?*

Yes, I think so.

That reminds me of one last story... My room was upstairs, on the west side of the house. In the summer, obviously, the windows were open. At one thirty a.m., a passenger train went west and they blew a whistle at every crossing. I use to lay there anticipating when the next whistle would sound. I knew the roads and I knew where the crossings were so I tried to anticipate exactly when the whistle was going to be heard. Some nights, I could hear the train whistle for almost 10 miles.



*Really! How many crossings in 10 miles?*

I don't remember now, but I knew then. At every whistle, I knew which crossing it was making.

*Well, Dad, this was a great interview. Good job! Such interesting stories and such a different life than now! So we will do this again sometime?*

Okay.

*Thank you and we will shut off the recording now.*



*Gaylord Robert Atkinson 2001*

## Life in 1936



*General Stores  
1936*



# Life in 1936





*Hoover Dam completed  
March 1936*



*Garment Factory Workers 1936,  
Photo: Russell Lee  
Public Domain*



*Farm Community School Children - 1936*

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*❧ December 2012 ❧*  
*Merry Christmas*  
*From*  
*Dhyan and Gaylord*

