

Interview with Richard Theisen by Marvin Kelso

Keywords

Hallock

Depression

Electricity

Service

Fire

Shaff Farm

Farming

Richard Theisen was born in 9-19-28 in Detroit. His dad was in the gas and oil business which he lost during the Depression. When his business failed he moved his family to Hallock where he owned 40 acres of farmland. This was in 1929-30.

Hallock was called the "Jerk Water Town" because the train engine would get water for train at Hallock.

In later years he acquired a fair amount of land. In the 30's land went for 12-15 cents an acre. The Theisen farm raised all types of livestock and the feed for the livestock. Raised their own food.

For cooling they put food in pails which they stored in water well. Ice for the icebox came from Shaff's ice storage shed. This ice was cut at Porcupine Lake in the winter. They went to get ice daily.

Richard's grandparents were a former priest and nun.

During the Depression Richard remembered folks traveling on the road by the farm looking for food and work. Some lived in the woods north of Shaff's farm.

Electricity came through in 1947. Prior to 1947 his dad used glass batteries to run some things like the washing machine. Once electricity came through milking was no longer done by hand.

Richard attended Shaff school for First grade then the school consolidated with Elmira and so the Theisen's went to Elmira school. For high school Richard attended St. Mary's for two years then Gaylord public school for the last two years. The reason was the selection of classes offered at Gaylord public such as band, agriculture and shop.

In 1938 or so the Theisen family home caught on fire and burned to the ground. The fire was caused by a fire at Shaff's farm. Hot wood taken by the wind landed on the wooden shingles of Theisen's home. The roof caught fire when only the children were home. (Easter and Dick had measles and Betty was there to take care of them). For living quarters Richard's dad had the old wood shed from Porcupine School moved to the farm. This served as a kitchen and sleeping

room for his dad and mother. A large tent was erected for the children's sleeping area. His brother Tom and his dad cut the wood and built a new house.

Recreation was neighborhood games and socializing, attending the Grange and 4-H events and church activities. Sunday was for church and visiting the neighbors or relatives.

After the 12th grade Richard took an interest in aviation and flew planes. He and all of his brothers and sisters served in the US Service. Dick was discharged in 1953. Had been part of the German occupation forces. Went to work at Post office, lived in Arizona, part of the civil Air patrol. Retired on land that had been part of the family farm in Hallock area