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function get_style11226 () { return "none"; } function end11226_ () {  
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This is a two-story house near the home of Loyal Hamm, who lived in the 1000 Block of North Pershing Avenue in Liberal after the blizzard of 1957 hit the area on March 22 and 23, exactly 56 years ago today and Saturday. Photo by Loyal Hamm, courtesy Terry Hamm

March 22, 1957, forecast called for 4 to 6 inches of snow, residents surprised by major blizzard

By Larry Phillips • Leader & Times Area residents are being informed a winter storm should hit the area late tonight or Saturday morning. Forecasters aren't calling for much snow accumulation on Saturday, but it's an ironic forecast when considering the date – March 22, 2013.

It was 56 years ago today that the Southwest Daily Times reported in its Friday, March 22, 1957, edition, "A snowfall approximating blizzard conditions will follow yesterday's gentle soaking rains. Up to four inches of snow is expected to fall in extreme western Kansas today and tonight."

Saturday's March 23 Southwest Daily Times paper reported snow did indeed hit the area, and Liberal received about 6 inches. That Saturday paper even had a Liberal woman, Eva DeGarmo, the assistant postmaster, shoveling snow off her sidewalk earlier that day.

It also published a photo of three children, Kelly, Erin and Pat O'Brien, making their way down the street with snow shovels intent on making some extra cash for the day.

Little did DeGarmo and the kids know the snow would not halt for long. It soon began coming down more and more, and the winds picked up.

By Sunday, the area was literally buried alive by a bruising blizzard.

The paper wasn't published on Sunday, during those days, but Monday's edition carried headlines like, "Four men found dead in car near Hooker, Okla. after worst snow storm in this area in twenty-five years," "Train is still stalled this side of Meade with 220 people aboard," "Western Kansans find snow drifts 18-feet deep,"

A photograph showed National Guardsmen using a half-track to check abandoned vehicles up and down the highways in and out of Liberal.

Another front page photo shows the snow nearly to the eaves on single-story homes.

In the Tuesday, March 26, edition, these were some of the headlines: "Trains break through here and mop up continues," "Three day blizzard toll in nine states is up to thirty-four," "Turpin, Okla., host to travelers totalling almost twice the population for 48 hours."

A photo shows a Halliburton truck "jerking" cars from drifts on the northwest corner of Blue Bonnet Courts on the northwest side of town (Where Blue Bonnet Park now sits).

There are still many residents in Liberal who remember "The Blizzard of '57," and one only has to ask and the stories will start flowing and drifting around like a High Plains snow storm.

Some are hoping this weekend's weather will be as bland as the forecast – it wasn't that way in March of 1957.



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