



10-15-1992

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Recommended Citation

Friedrich, Margaret (1992) "Black Sunday," *Westview*: Vol. 12 : Iss. 1 , Article 10.
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview/vol12/iss1/10>

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BLACK SUNDAY

by *Margaret Friedrich*

All winter and spring of 1935, dust storms were a daily occurrence in Western Oklahoma. There was no relief. After a night of fitful sleep with a wet cloth covering mouth and nose, breakfast with clear, clean, hot coffee was a high point of the day.

A shower and clean clothes prepared a person for the day's work. But the clothes were not really clean. There were no family clothes dryers in those days. The clothing, even after a vigorous shaking, still felt gritty.

Palm Sunday was an answer to prayer. Clear, clean, not a cloud in the sky, no dust blowing, the day was meant for celebrating. I had bought a new pink Easter dress but decided to wear it that day because I was going to church and out to dinner with my best boyfriend. As it happened, that was our engagement dinner.

While driving to dinner that bright Palm Sunday, Henry and I saw a black cloud reaching from ground to sky rolling in from the northwest. It did not twist and swirl as a tornado does. It simply moved toward us quietly and relentlessly. We pulled off the road not a moment too soon.

The huge black cloud was upon us. It rolled over and over us, enveloping us in dense darkness. That was April 14, 1935—Black Sunday, the worst of the Dustbowl Days.

"Is this the end of everything?" I heard my voice tremble.

"If it is," he chuckled, his chin in my hair, "we die happy."

He gave me strength, and I waited calmly in his arms until the cloud blew past. We wiped the dust from our eyes and looked at each other. We brushed the dust from our clothing as best we could. (Oh, my beautiful, pink Easter dress!)

We went to our party and found everyone else in the same condition. We had faced our first ordeal together. More than 57 years have passed since that day. Black Sunday is but a memory, a sharp and bitter-sweet memory. □

MARGARET FRIEDRICH has been submitting articles to *WESTVIEW* since its first edition. She is a former English teacher in the Clinton School system where she taught 21 years. She has been retired for 20 years.