

## FARM LIFE PROVIDED THE BEST TREATS

As one of eight kids, we soon learned to appreciate anything different as a special treat. Dad was a good provider, and Mom could cook a good meal with whatever was in the house. She didn't have to go to the store for groceries before a meal. Needless to say, none of us were "picky" eaters; we learned to appreciate whatever we had to eat.

When the blackberries were ready to pick, we walked over to pick them. Milk buckets were filled with berries, along with our stomachs. Berries were canned, and we ate blackberries all year long.

The berry patch is now cleared and is planted in continuous corn and beans.

Dad would order fish, and we would pick them up at the train station in Maysville. He ordered smoked fish that were the best I have ever eaten.

The train has been gone many years, as well.

Candy bars were a special treat. A person would be amazed how many small pieces a large candy bar could be cut into to share. We would think those small candy bars we have now were huge!

Going to Grandma and Grandpa Murphy's and Grandma and Grandpa Matter's house was always a special treat. We always had to check out the cookie jar that always had a fresh supply of homemade cookies. I think they knew we were coming to visit.

Many of the best treats we didn't know we had. We were poor like most farmers of that era, but we did not know we were poor. "REAL" cream and milk were fresh every day. We had enough eggs every day to eat, and we had plenty to sell. Kids couldn't wait until the chickens were big enough to eat. We caught chickens long before they were big enough to eat, just to see how big they were. Fresh chicken is very different from the chicken we are accustomed to today. There is nothing like fresh sweet corn as well.

We ate a lot of ham and bacon, because hogs were one of our main animals produced. Butchering day was a big day, as several of our neighbors would get together and butcher several hogs. Kids helped as well, because even though we were small, we could do something. Dad cured the hams and bacon so we had cured meat most of the year. The meat was very salty—another concern for the health experts.

Most food was fried in lard! Sausage was fried, then stored in a big stone jar and covered with lard. Health experts today would shudder at the thought. Beef was almost always in the locker in Maysville and later in the home freezer. Mom canned beef in glass jars and stored the jars in the cave as well.

A big garden produced food all summer, and the extra was canned and stored in the cave for winter. We always had food in the cave. A huge potato patch produced many bushels of potatoes. A narrow box wagon was almost always filled with potatoes.

Many Sunday afternoons we went fishing. Fishing was fun, but I now know fish broke the monotony of beef and pork and provided us with different food to eat.

Looking back on my life, the most special treat of all is to have the privilege of living all of my 75 years on a farm. God has been good to me!

John Murphy, Maysville

*NOTE: Mr. Murphy shares his writings in the "Young at Heart" section of the St Joseph News-Press from time to time. An abridged version of this story was published in the October 2016 edition. John has been on the Board of Directors of the Northwest Missouri Area Agency on Aging, serves on the Silver Haired Legislature and is a strong advocate for and supporter of issues that benefit older adults. He is active in his community and enjoys spending time with his family.*