By Kathy Tandberg

At 96, Ida Hausauer Voegele has lived nearly a century. She has stories that touch upon not only area history but also North Dakota and the nation.

Ida has lived through more history than most, history most people have only studied: America’s Prohibition of 1920-1933, the Dust Bowl of the Dirty Thirties, and the Great Depression that began with the Stock Market Crash of 1929 and ended in 1939.

Born in 1919, Ida is the oldest of 15 children born to Phillip Jr. and Christina (Flemmer) Hausauer. The family was raised on the family farm 17 miles south of Beulah. It’s the farm homesteaded by Phillip’s parents, Phillip Sr. and Rosina (Huber), immigrants from South Russia.

Growing up on the plains of North Dakota in those years was a good life, but it wasn’t always easy, especially in the 1930s during the Dust Bowl, especially for those in farming.

From 1930 to 1940 portions of North Dakota reported drought during the summer months, with the most severe years 1934-1936.

Add this hardship to that of the Great Depression around the world and across the nation, anyone who lived through it has stories to share.

Ida enjoyed her farm life, though as the oldest it was a busy life.

“My mother was always pregnant you know,” Ida said with a laugh. “But it was fun. There was always something to do. Helped with the kids and chickens and pigs.”

Ida said there wasn’t much for crops in those years because of the grasshoppers and the drought, but there was hay.

“We still grew a garden because the water ran down the side hill to it from the windmill,” Ida recalled.

She remembers the grasshoppers, too, but said they didn’t land on them very much because they wanted the crops. She remembers them eating the heads out of her father’s wheat crop.

“Grasshoppers ate everything. They would fly in bug bunches. When my Dad was cutting the wheat he could get, the grasshoppers filled the rack while we cut. It would be covered,” she added.

But she remembers her brothers “having a ball with those grasshoppers when they caught them.”

Ida attended country school through the fifth grade. She was needed then to stay home and help. She didn’t mind because that was also an education, learning to sew, cook and clean.

The years grew tougher as the Depression and Dust Bowl continued, and at the age of 14 Ida went to work for others. First it was the Reelings, an aunt, where she did housework and childcare.

Ida said she got her first new pair of shoes at the age of 14 from a store in Beulah for her confirmation.

“They were white,” she said.

Then at 16 she worked for Jake Urhun for $10 a month. From that first real pay she bought her first new coat, one she ordered from the Alden’s catalogue. After a month she went to work for Dan Voegele at Bluegrass for a month, earning 80¢.

“I gave most of my pay to my parents, but I bought myself a new purse for my 19th birthday,” Ida recalled.

Ida was about 17 when her parents told her of a new government program for girls who didn’t have jobs. She signed up to see if she qualified, and she did.

“It was with the NYA, like the CCC for boys. A two-year program that would be taught in Beulah and we would get paid. I think $20 a month for going,” Ida said.

Ida described the program as one teaching domestic tasks like sewing, making button holes on a sewing machine, making beds, cooking, serving, and cleaning.

“It wasn’t that I didn’t already know how to do all they taught, because mother made everything for all of us and I learned from her. I did all of that at home because my mother was pregnant and busy with little ones. But it was a job that paid,” Ida said appreciatively.

Ida said she and the other six young women attending the program enjoyed it. Their teacher was Rags Thelaner, who was also a home economics teacher at the school.

She no longer remembers all her classmates’ names, but she remembers Lorrain Krachlau, Alvin Urhun, Clara Koenig, Martha Bietz and a Kopp girl, and one unidentifiable girl.

“Of Alvina and Lorraine were so crazy fun when they were making overalls. They both got into one pair together. Oh those were good times, fun times,” she said.

Everything the girls made was donated to charity. By the time the program ended, Ida was already being courted by a neighbor boy, Alex Voegele.

“Alex came on horseback to date me. He would take me to the movies. That’s about all the money he had then,” she said.

They were married Nov. 27, 1941. They farmed for a while and then moved to Beulah. They had three children, Judy, Peggy and Donald.

Ida is known in the area for her good cooking. She spent the majority of her married life cooking for her family but for families in Mercer and Oliver counties as well, and working at many lunch counters, including the Stockman’s Auction House and several former restaurants.

Until recent years, she also ran a chuck wagon for area auctions and became known for her popular fleischkochen.

More than 90 “She She She” camps, along with other NYA camps, were created across the state. The 8,500 women would cycle through before they were closed. Each woman represented the different cultures indigenous to their locations and depended heavily upon what was available, in terms of local resources and talent.

The ‘She She She’ Camps and National Youth Administration Eleanor Roosevelt’s answer to the CCC camps

Toward the end of The Great Depression of the 1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was created by the federal government as a public work relief program that operated from 1933-1942 in the United States for unemployed, unmarried men from relief families as part of the New Deal.

In response to the failure of the CCC, Eleanor Roosevelt asked the president of the CCC program to leave those young women from families without unemployment relief.

Young women, she theorized, who were willing to work in conservation and forestry and to sign up for the nine-month educational program.

With this in mind, I. Roosevelt looked for a sister organization. There was supposed to be a stipulation that this would consist of camps for public service and residential worker schools.

The She She She camps, dubbed by E. Roosevelt, were hosted by presidential order in 1933. 508 of the going were slow for women, with an estimated 30 percent unemployment for American youth.

To combat this problem, the Roosevelt administration created a unique federal agency dedicated to helping young people. The National Youth Administration (NYA) was launched to executive order in June 1935.

It was launched in 1937 that the NYA took over the “She She She” programs and E. Roosevelt became the NYA’s most public champion. She took such joy in the program that, when she died in 1962, her autobiography she then took the rare step of taking credit for its creation.

While the CCC and NYA were huge programs across America, employing a quarter of a million young men annually until World War II, the women’s version barely topped 5,000 women annually by 1934.

Nationwide overall, the She She She camps served only 4,500 young women as a result of Eleanor Roosevelt’s support.

The Eleanor Roosevelt Paper Project

Rites Mercier County resident Ida Hausauer Voegele is one of those young women.