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# **RED DUST 1984**

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# RED DUST 1984

Maxine Honkala, Principal  
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Ishpeming MI 49849

Sharon  
Richardson



A typical post office during the 1930's. Illustrated by Leeann Baird  
COVER PHOTO: Section 21 Mine, National Mine Michigan



## DEDICATION



*Mr. & Mrs. Walter T. Bath*

The Depression year, 1931, was eventful for Mr. Walter T. Bath. For it was during this year that he married Edith Trudgeon and became superintendent of the National Mine School. Mr. Bath served as superintendent for 33 years.

We wanted to know Mr. & Mrs. Bath as those who worked with them did. Former teachers comment: "Superintendent Walter T. Bath is fondly remembered as a caring administrator who always showed deep concern for the welfare of his staff, and the students under his tutelage, while he was at the helm of the National Mine School."

"Everyone who knew him recognized him as a gentle man of great integrity who diligently strove to keep peace and harmony among his constituents."

"Mr. Bath was an understanding administrator and friend. We were grateful to him for his patience and helpfulness."

"Mrs. Edith Bath was an asset to the school as well as the community."

"His charming wife Edith graciously and faithfully encouraged him in all his endeavors."

"Mrs. Bath's pleasant personality, generosity and compassion won many friends. She always showed an interest in others and was faithful to school activities."

"They were both highly respected by all."

It is with great admiration, respect and appreciation that we dedicate Red Dust 1984 to Mr. & Mrs. Walter T. Bath.



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Pako Liehtinen



## PULLING YOUR OWN WEIGHT

"When everybody is in the same boat, you don't know any better; you're all alike," was Aili's reply when asked what her opinion was of the Depression. Although her family didn't have it as bad as others, she still felt some of the economic hardships.

My grandmother, Aili Benvenue, was born in the small town of Ishpeming on May 19, 1919. She lived there for her first five years, and then moved to Palmer. At age eight, she and her family moved to National Mine, where she still resides.

She grew up on a small farm nestled in a location called Finn Farm. They raised cows and chickens and also had a garden. "My mother used to can, because naturally we didn't have a refrigerator or freezer. We did have a root cellar though, and we stored our vegetables there. Also, having livestock, we had animals to butcher. My mother would boil the meat and then can it. It tasted delicious," my grandmother informed me.

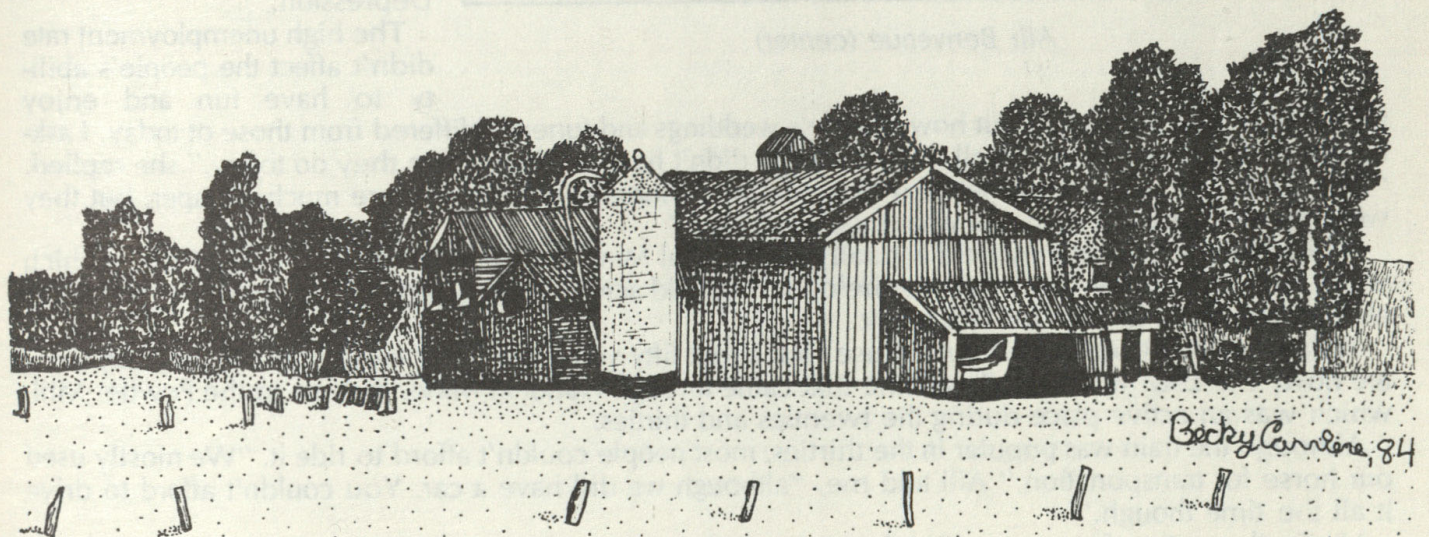
During the thirties, Aili's father worked one day a week in the mine. Her mother walked to work in Ishpeming every day. She cleaned at the Lowenstein's store. I asked my grandma how this affected her home life. "Well," she replied laughing, "I sure had a lot of extra work. I had to take care of the younger children, do the housework, learn to cook, everything. We all had to pull our own weight."

Nowadays, many children have a lot of leisure time to do what they want, but Aili didn't, as she had work to do. The little leisure time she did have was spent playing tag or jumping rope with her friends.

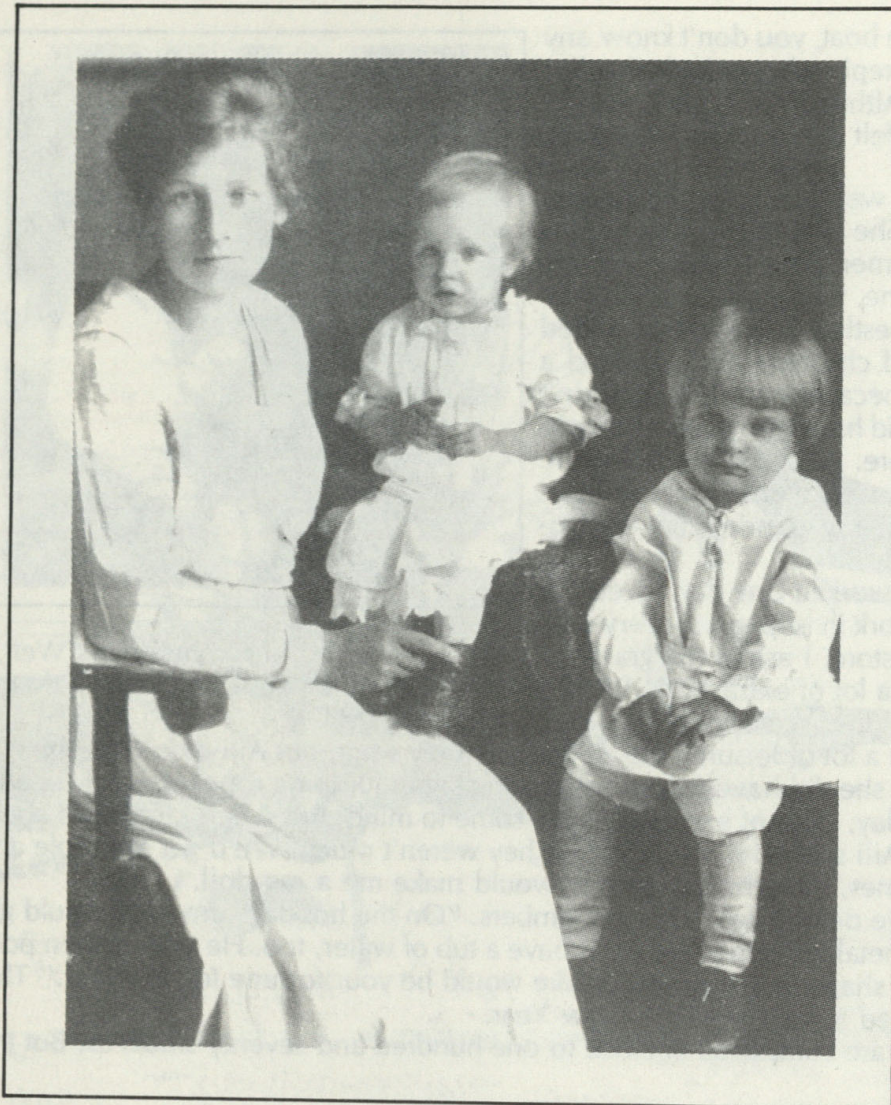
When you think of holidays today, piles of expensive gifts come to mind. But when I inquired about holidays during the Depression, Aili said with a chuckle, "They weren't much. We'd get an apple and an orange for Christmas. Sometimes, though, my mother would make me a rag doll."

"There was one special thing we did though," Aili remembers. "On the holidays, my dad would get some lead and melt it in a little metal container and he'd have a tub of water, too. He would then pour the melted lead into the tub. The shape the lead would take would be your fortune for the year." This is a Finnish tradition which is used to celebrate the New Year.

Today, most graduating classes are composed of close to one-hundred and seventy students. But the







*Aili Benvenue (center)*

graduating classes of the National Mine School during the Depression were made up of two to four students. The students' former classmates, with whom they attended grammar school, were now out in the working world. Aili got to stay in school during the Great Depression because she was too young to go out and find a job.

Aili's parents weren't the only ones in her family who were working during the thirties. Her brother, Art, was involved with the CCC program, a program set up by FDR to make work for the young people. Another program that Roosevelt set up was the WPA. The road that goes by Aili's present day house was built by the workers of the WPA.

Many people in National Mine were employed by the mines in the area. After the Stock Market Crash, nearly all of the area mines closed or partially closed. One mine that did not close entirely was the Barnum Mine. It ran on a one-day-a-week schedule. Aili's father worked there during the Depression.

The high unemployment rate didn't affect the people's ability to have fun and enjoy

themselves. Curious to find out how people's weddings and funerals differed from those of today, I asked Aili that very question. "Well, they certainly didn't have weddings like they do today," she replied. "They just went and got married and that was that. Funerals, of course, were much cheaper, but they were more or less the same as what they are today."

A big celebration that they held annually in National Mine was the Midsummer's Day Picnic, which was a Finnish tradition. The event was held in a big field across from the present day Hercules Inc. They always had a big turnout for this picnic.

Today, we don't see many trains in use. But about fifty years ago, they were used the way airplanes are now. The LS&I was the railroad line that came through National Mine. It came to the Powder Mill, which was an active place during the twenties and thirties.

Although the train was popular in the thirties, most people couldn't afford to ride it. "We mostly used our horse for transportation," Aili told me, "although we did have a car. You couldn't afford to drive it all the time though."

My final question for my grandmother was, "What do you think of kids today?"

"I think kids are kids all the time, but they have too much. Parents are being too lenient with them

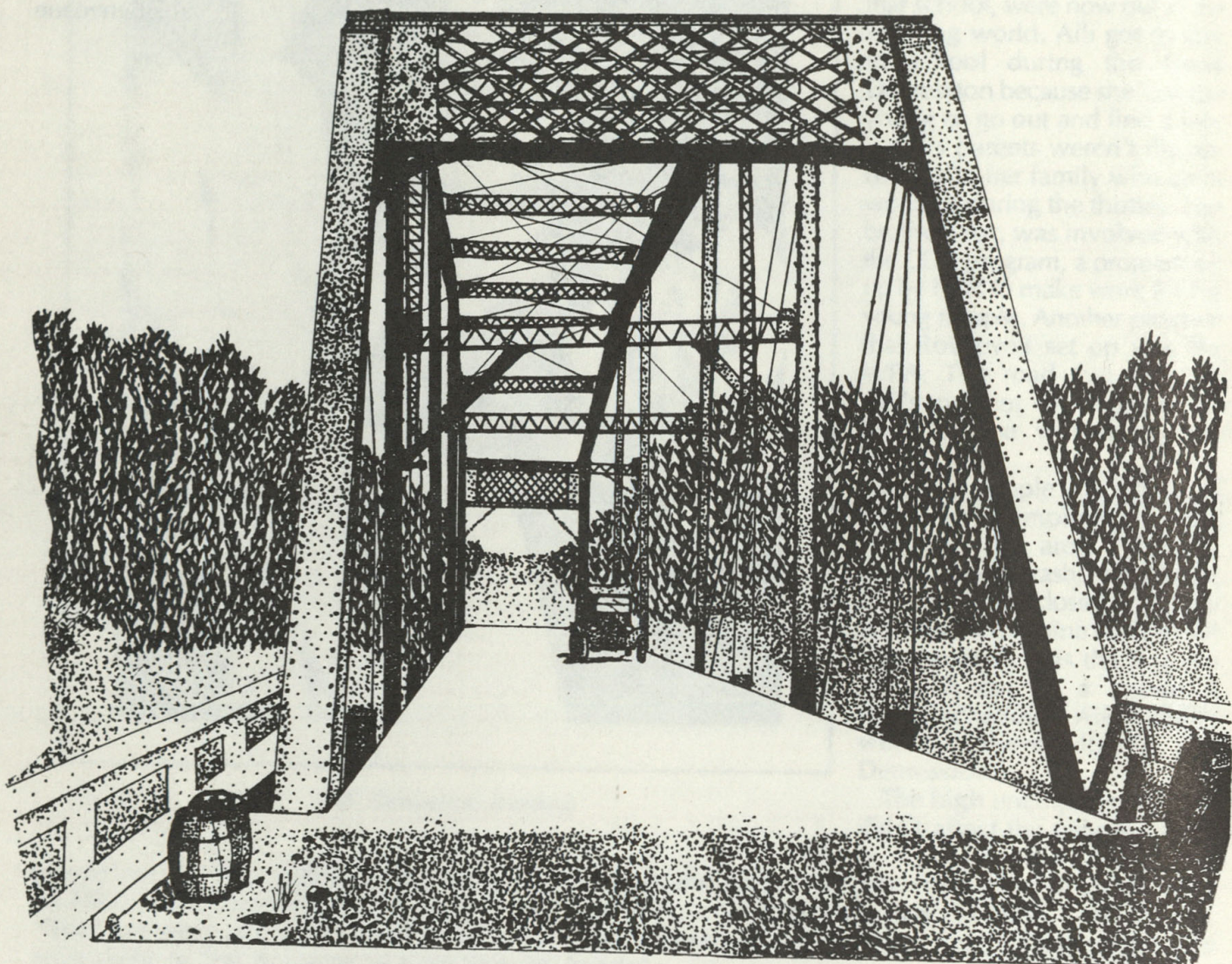


today. They're not corrected enough. They don't have enough chores. We always had to work, and children today don't want to take any responsibility toward a home. When you're born during the Depression and you've lived through it, it seems kind of strange that mothers and fathers don't make their children assume a little responsibility, more than they do."

After completing this interview, I suddenly realized why my grandmother often tells me to eat everything at mealtime and not to waste my money on foolish things. She appreciates everything she has and wants to help me do that also. I want to thank her very much for sharing part of her life story with me.

Staci Benvenue



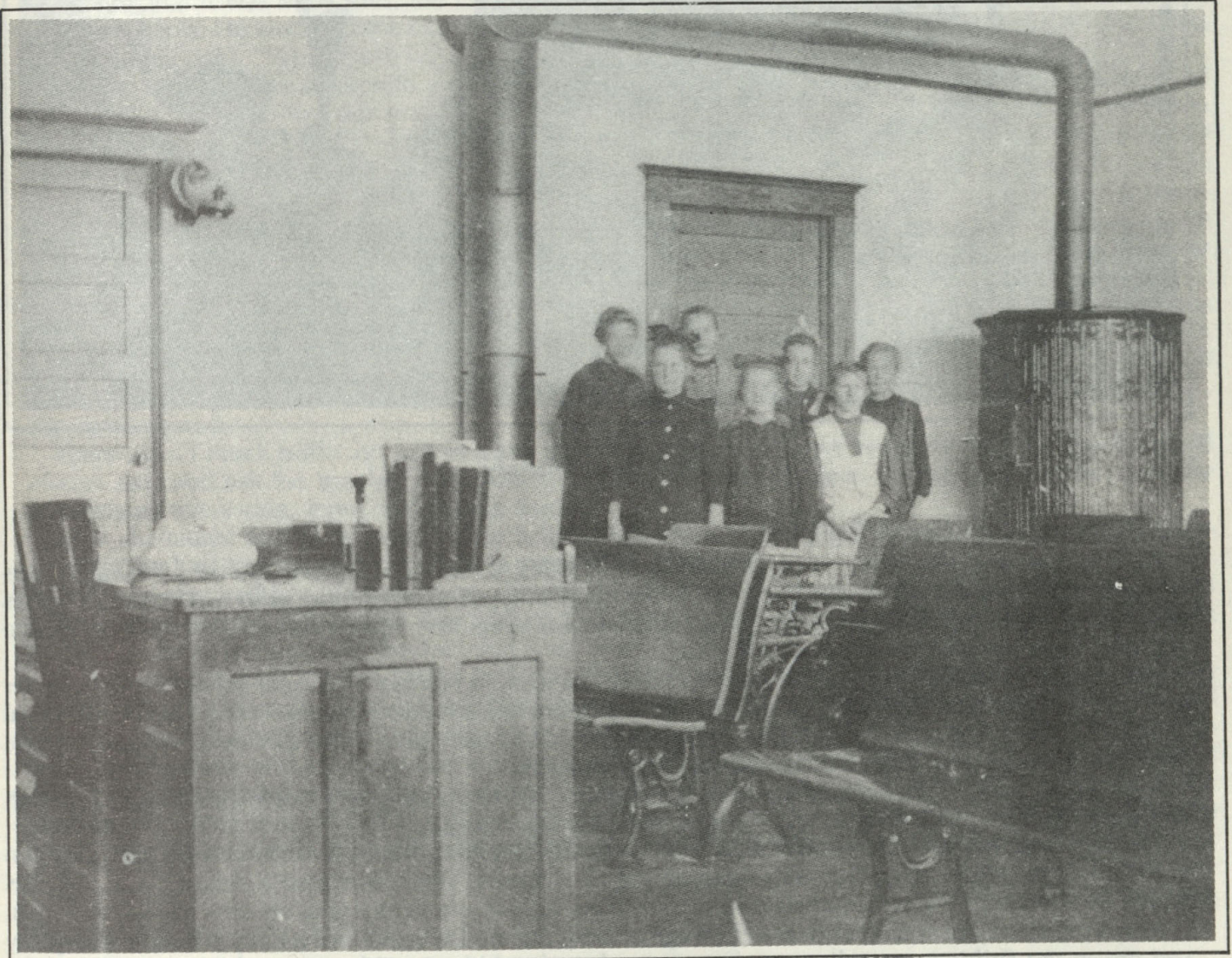


*Dead River: The McClure Basin Bridge assembled by the W.P.A.*



## MEMORIES AT PLEASANT PRAIRIE

Ruth Stolen, a lady who has spent most of her life involved with education, was born, grew up and raised her family in the same house that she lives in now in the Green Creek location. There were nine children in her family and she was the youngest. Mrs. Stolen went to grade school at the Green Creek School. Her father, Mr. Larson, donated a corner of the family land for the school to be built on. One of Mrs. Stolen's memories of the Green Creek School was that there was not a hot lunch program like there is today. The children that lived far away from school carried their lunches. Mrs. Stolen usually went home for lunch because she lived so close to the school. She carried her lunch when she wanted to because, "A lot of time I wanted to play with the other children. The only chance I had to play with some of them was at lunch time and recess, so I carried my lunch just for that reason," recalls Mrs. Stolen. Mr. Oliver Fuller was superintendent when she attended the Green Creek School. Mrs. Stolen then went



The "New" room in the Green Creek School





*The Larson Family*

to High School at National Mine.

For the first year, Mrs. Stolen had to walk the four miles to and from school. Dorothy Trewartha was a frequent walking partner during that year. In the remaining years, Mr. Wood, who had a team of horses and a sleigh or buggy, drove them to school. In National Mine, Mrs. Stolen remembers that Mr. Schutte and Mr. Pangborn were the superintendents.

Mrs. Stolen graduated from high school in 1925. She went to Northern Normal School in the summer and received her teaching certificate which allowed her to teach for three years. Today Northern Normal School is known as Northern Michigan University. This certificate was a limited certificate in those years. She was 18 years old when she started teaching in 1926.

Mrs. Stolen said, "I started out teaching at Pleasant Prairie School in Ely Township, that's just south of where the 581 store is now, and I taught there for three years.

The one-room school house had classes from first grade to eighth grade, if there were enough children to fill all those grades. Usually there were only 9-12 students. There was also a "chart class" that was for the five year olds that were just starting school. This class was similar to what we now call kindergarten.

They started school at 9:00 and were through at 3:30. She had to make out a daily schedule every day and group the children according to what grades they should be in. When one class was reciting, the others were doing their seat work. They had a recess period in the morning and afternoon and a noon hour.



Mrs. Stolen taught geography, math, hygiene, spelling, reading, language and regular lessons of the Palmer penmanship method, and they also had art when she could crowd it in.

The eighth grade students were required to take a state test on all subjects at the end of the year. If they passed, they could go on to high school. This was a requirement for rural school students.

The Pleasant Prairie School was a portable building, which means the walls were all put together with bolts so it could be taken apart and moved. There was no well so the janitor would carry water from his home in pails. There was a bench in the hall where children hung up their coats. On the benches were the pails of water with a tin dipper for drinking and also a wash basin and soap and paper towels to wash their hands. "There was no plumbing, just the little house out back" she said, smiling.

Mrs. Stolen said she and the children had so much fun. There were usually so few children, only 9 or 10, and they always wanted her to play with them at recess time, which she always did. The game they most enjoyed was hide and seek, and, of course, she had to hide too. If the weather wasn't nice, they used to play in the school building at recess, and again, their favorite game was hide and seek. Someone would blind their eyes and the rest would hide in different places, or under someone's desk and cover themselves with a coat or crawl into some corner. "Then one day," Mrs. Stolen recalls, "While playing hide and seek, someone happened to peek out the window and he said, 'There's a car coming,'" and sure enough, there was a car driving into the yard; so I peeked out from my hiding place and looked too. I saw that it was Mr. Gries, the County Commissioner of Schools!" He was the person in charge of rural schools. He would come out to the school and observe every now and then to make sure things were running right. "Well, there we all were, all the children were either under the desks or in corners, and I, too, was under a desk with a coat over my head," she said, laughing. So we all got excited and I said, "You better go to your seats," so they scrambled around and hung up the coats and sat down quickly in their seats. Mr. Gries came in and sat down at Mrs. Stolen's desk. He stayed for the rest of the day! She said that was the longest period she had ever gone through, because he was sitting there listening to her. "Also," she said, "I was supposed to have a plan written out for every day in a book, and I hadn't written one for the day. Wouldn't you know, that would be the day I didn't have one written! The book was lying on my desk and he could have just opened it to see if I had written a plan for that day, but he didn't, thank goodness," said Mrs. Stolen. That was quite a day," she recalls.

The children and Mrs. Stolen, along with her niece, Ruth Brotten, who was living with the Larsons had to walk to school every day. The Larsons did not have a car. "I have no fear of animals, but often saw bear tracks, yet thankfully no "bears", said Mrs. Stolen. In the spring, the "red dust" on the road was terrible. When it rained, the puddles looked like tomato soup, red and thick with red, iron ore dust", she remembered.

There wasn't much traffic on 581 in those days like there is now, but everyone who went out, would always stop and ask the teacher if she wanted a ride. The people were always very friendly, and she appreciated every ride, even in the pulp trucks!

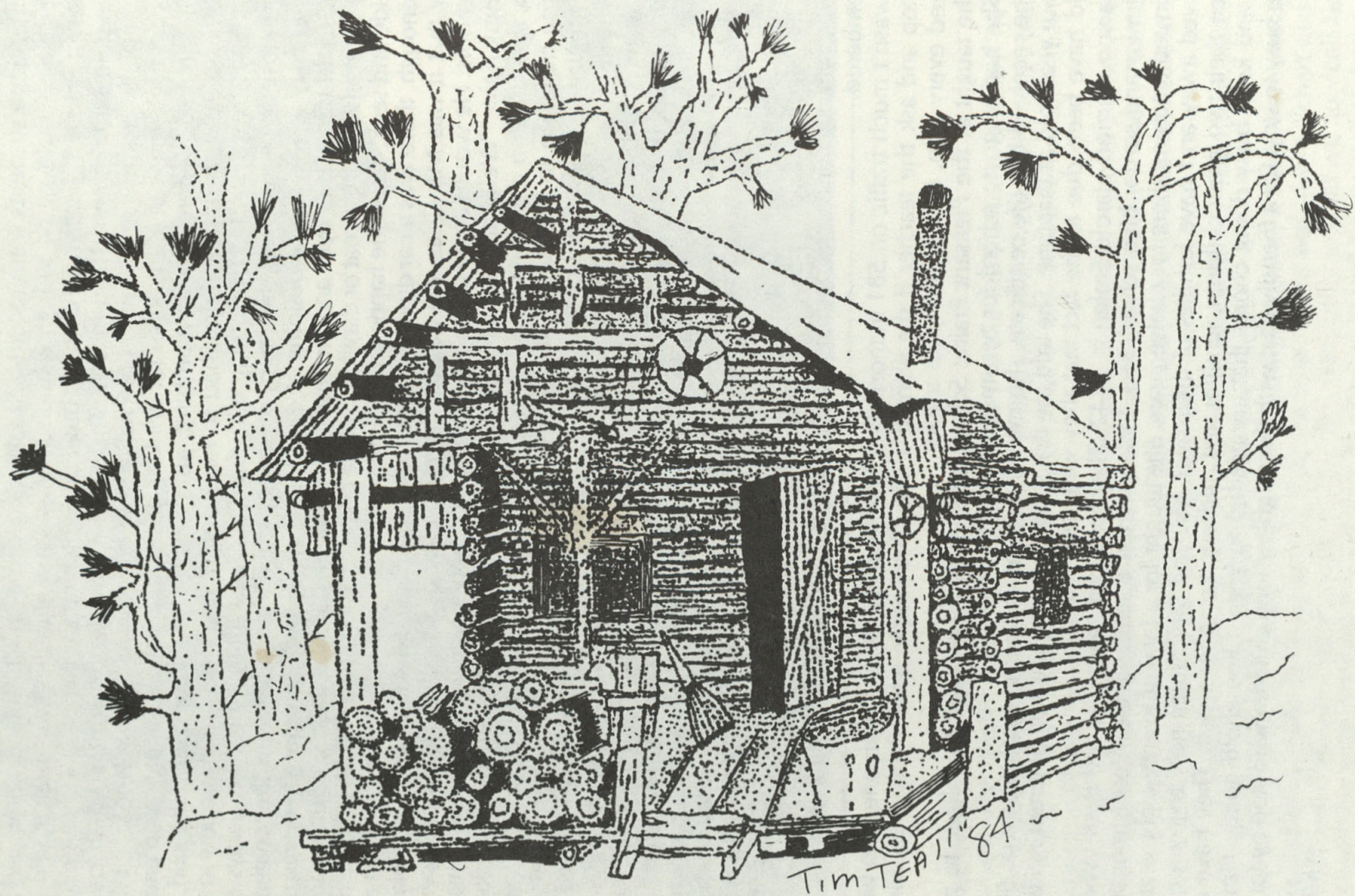
After she taught at the Pleasant Prairie School, Mrs. Stolen went back to college to get her life certificate. She had to go to school for two more years after that.

After she received her life certificate, she moved to Flint and began teaching there. She was around twenty-four years old at that time. She told me that schools were quite a bit different in Flint, but thought that could have been due to the fact that they were city schools.

Ruth Larson married Harold Stolen in 1942. They have two sons, Olaf and Basil. When her children were in junior and senior high school, Mrs. Stolen started teaching at the West Ishpeming School, and she continued teaching there for twelve years. She taught for a total of twenty-eight years. Her children have moved away and have families of their own. Mr. and Mrs. Stolen now enjoy a quiet of life and love when their two grandchildren, Jennifer and Andrew, come for a visit. They have a garden in the summer and keep busy doing chores that are needed to keep a household going. However, they are never too busy to stop for a friendly chat with the neighborhood children who stop by for frequent visits.

Michele Richards





TIM TEAL '84



## SAVING FOR A BUTTERFLY SKIRT



*Anna Heikkinen (Third from left)*

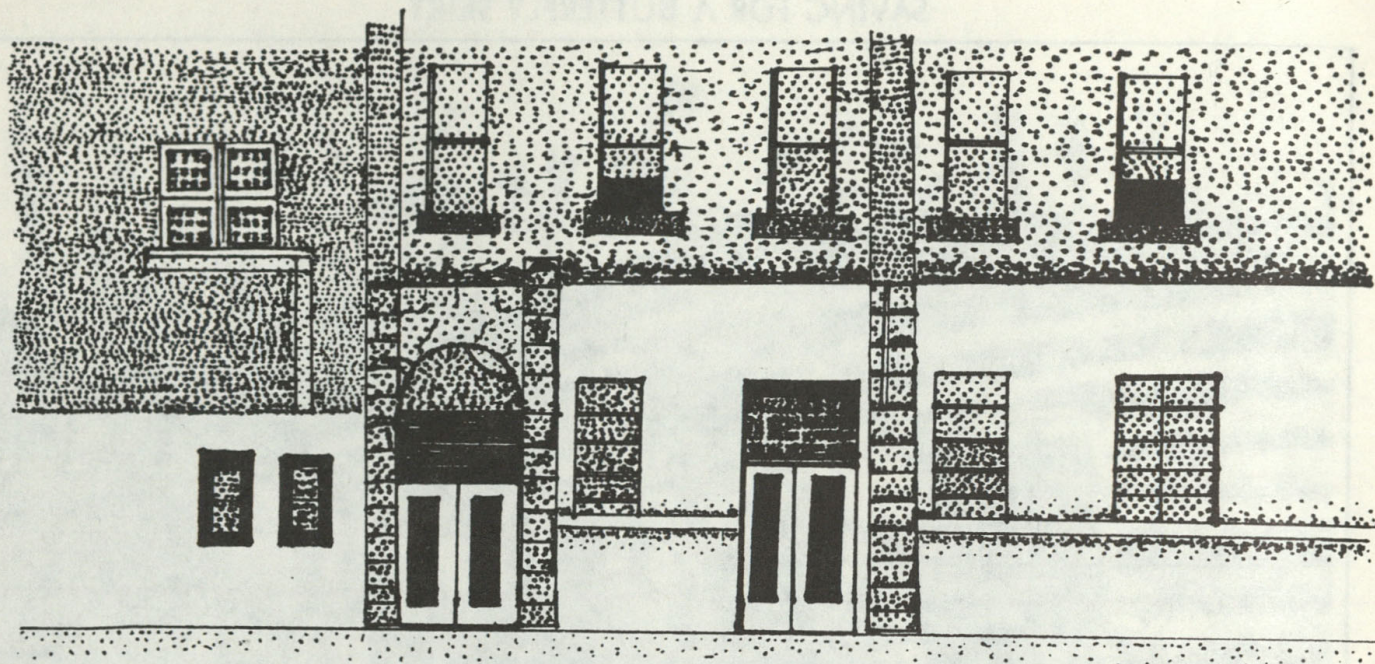
Mrs. Anna Heikkinen was left with a great responsibility after her mother died during the birth of a twelfth child. Anna earned most of the money for her family...seven dollars a week! "Well, there were twelve children, and in that summer I was the only one working. I earned seven dollars a week and out of the seven, five dollars went for groceries, a dollar and a quarter for electricity, and seventy-five cents went for our baby's cod liver oil," recalls Mrs. Heikkinen who was sixteen at this time.

Anna's father, Alfred Koski, had worked part time in the Barnum Mine, but gradually the mine closed down. He eventually only worked occasionally as a pump man keeping the pumps going. Anna, therefore, became responsible for earning much of the money for her family. To do this, she worked as a machine operator at the H.W. Gossard Company which was located in downtown Ishpeming, Anna was paid ten cents an hour at first, but when the National Recovery Act came in 1933, her wages went up to thirty-five cents an hour. Anna told me she was just delighted by this change in wages!

Not many families at this time owned an automobile. For fourteen years, Anna walked the two miles to work and back. Regularly, she had to place cardboard in the bottom of her shoes because the rocks used to go in through the holes, making walking very uncomfortable.

One of the business establishments Mrs. Heikkinen walked past on her way to work every day was called the "Oriental Parlors." During this time, many people made and sold moonshine illegally. "I was afraid of that business because I had to walk by it every day and it looked so threatening; you could walk down the street and acutally smell moonshine cooking." Just imagine trying to patrol that street! Anna's brother often teased the cop who patrolled there, saying "What do you do, walk down the street with a clothespin on your nose?"





Chris Goldsworthy '84

Mrs. Heikkinen didn't really understand the cause of the Great Depression, but she experienced the results first hand and knew how her family had to handle them.

The Koski family's diet was limited because they had to stretch the five dollars that went for groceries each week. The diet consisted of homemade bread, milk, butter, potatoes, and oatmeal. Anna had to eat this every day, as she explained, "Every day, every day, very monotonous." She also related to me how she always wished if only she could have an orange, an apple, or a banana, but they just couldn't afford it.

Myers Mercantile, Leningers, Lewitt's groceries and Lester's groceries were located in Ishpeming. The few groceries that were bought by the Koski's were bought at the Finnish stores-the Koski and Rosberg grocery stores. During the Depression many people relied on credit to buy groceries. When Anna's mother died, the Koski family owed about one thousand dollars-five hundred in each grocery store. Anna said it was a terrific struggle to pay these bills, but they made it. Many families didn't make it, and unable to pay their bills, they lost their homes to the grocery stores where they owed this money. Mrs. Heikkinen thought that these families were able to still live in their homes, but they would then have to pay rent, which put them deeper into debt.

A few families did turn to Communism because of the hardships of the Depression. One family went to Russia and lost the little money they had there. They had to wire somebody for money to come back across the ocean. This family was very appreciate of being back in the United States.

Anna remembers going to visit the "railroad bums." These were two men who stayed by Cooper Lake Road. She felt really sorry for one of them because he was quite old, had grey hair, and also had a wooden leg. He used to go around selling willow baskets that he made himself. Although the Koski family was just making ends meet with the little money they had, they still displayed charity toward other people. One day they bought one of those homemade willow baskets from this unfortunate man for seventy-five



cents, even though this was a lot of money to the Koski's at that time.

Mrs. Heikkinen did very simple things for recreation. During the summer when she finished working, she went swimming or she and her friends would all chip in a couple of cents to buy either weiners or marshmallows to roast around a campfire.

Another form of entertainment was to gather together and listen to the radio. At this time people listened to F.D.R.'s "fireside chats." Anna said that once she was very indignant to President Roosevelt because he said, "Our boys will never see foreign soil!" Anna went on to explain, "At that very moment, my brother and a whole lot of, thousands of boys were being shipped overseas."

As we talked about F.D.R., I asked Mrs. Heikkinen if she thought his New Deal had helped America prosper. "It seemed to me people's opinion was it would have gone on and on excepting the war. Then everything just became accelerated as far as work, and people were trying to work at two jobs at once trying to make up for the war."

Since Anna was the main "money-earner" for her family, she usually didn't get anything for Christmas. She helped her older sister order things from the catalog for the younger children. One thing Mrs. Heikkinen remembers very clearly was saving up for a very long time and buying herself a butterfly skirt which was a skirt with small tight pleats. "I was just thrilled because that was my first thing that was new since...I could remember," she reminisced laughingly.

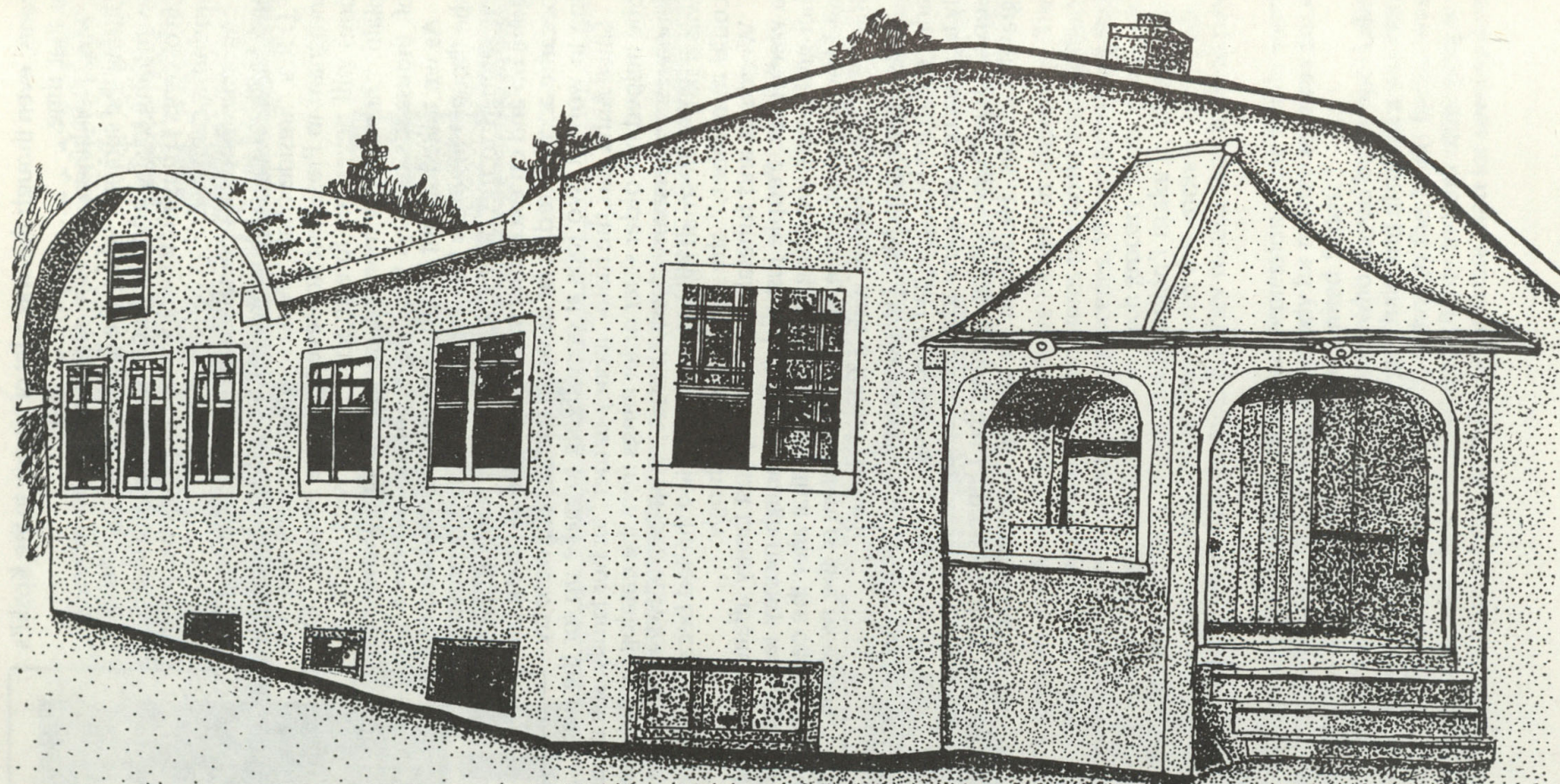
Weddings and funerals were usually just family affairs. Weddings were often kept secret until about a week later. People just didn't have enough money for big weddings or funerals. Anna remembered her girlfriend's wedding, and explained that after the ceremony, they went to a camp out by Flat Rock and had a cup of coffee, that was the extent of the reception. Contrast that to the common practice of having a big reception with a formal dinner!

After listening to Mrs. Heikkinen's story of her life during the Depression, I felt a very strong, glowing admiration for her. She had lived through a very rough period of history and had struggled with her family to overcome so many adversities. I now know why my grandmother and other elderly people are conservative with everything. During the Depression they had very little of anything to waste. I am very grateful to Mrs. Heikkinen for sharing a personal part of her life with me.



Becky Larson





Laura Matz '84

The "Rendezvous"



## A LA RENDEZVOUS

During my interview with my grandmother, Mrs. Lillian Rock, I found out some interesting facts I didn't know.

My great-grandma, Delma Rick, built, owned, and ran the Rendezvous nightclub. It was constructed in 1930-31 and is located on what is now the Diorite Road, in Greenwood Location.

When an appeal was made for workers to help build the Rendezvous, my great-grandma was swamped with replies from men willing to be hired. The pay was a dollar per day and men were delighted to have a job.

After the building was completed in the late summer of 1933 or 1934, a grand opening was held, and it was a major event. They had a band playing for entertainment and the place was packed!

My grandma described the interior of the Rendezvous proudly exclaiming, "There was a small bar in front. They used to be ten deep to get drinks. Beers were only a nickel, a shot cost fifteen cents, and a glass of wine could be bought for ten cents. There were hands waving like crazy to get the bartender's attention."



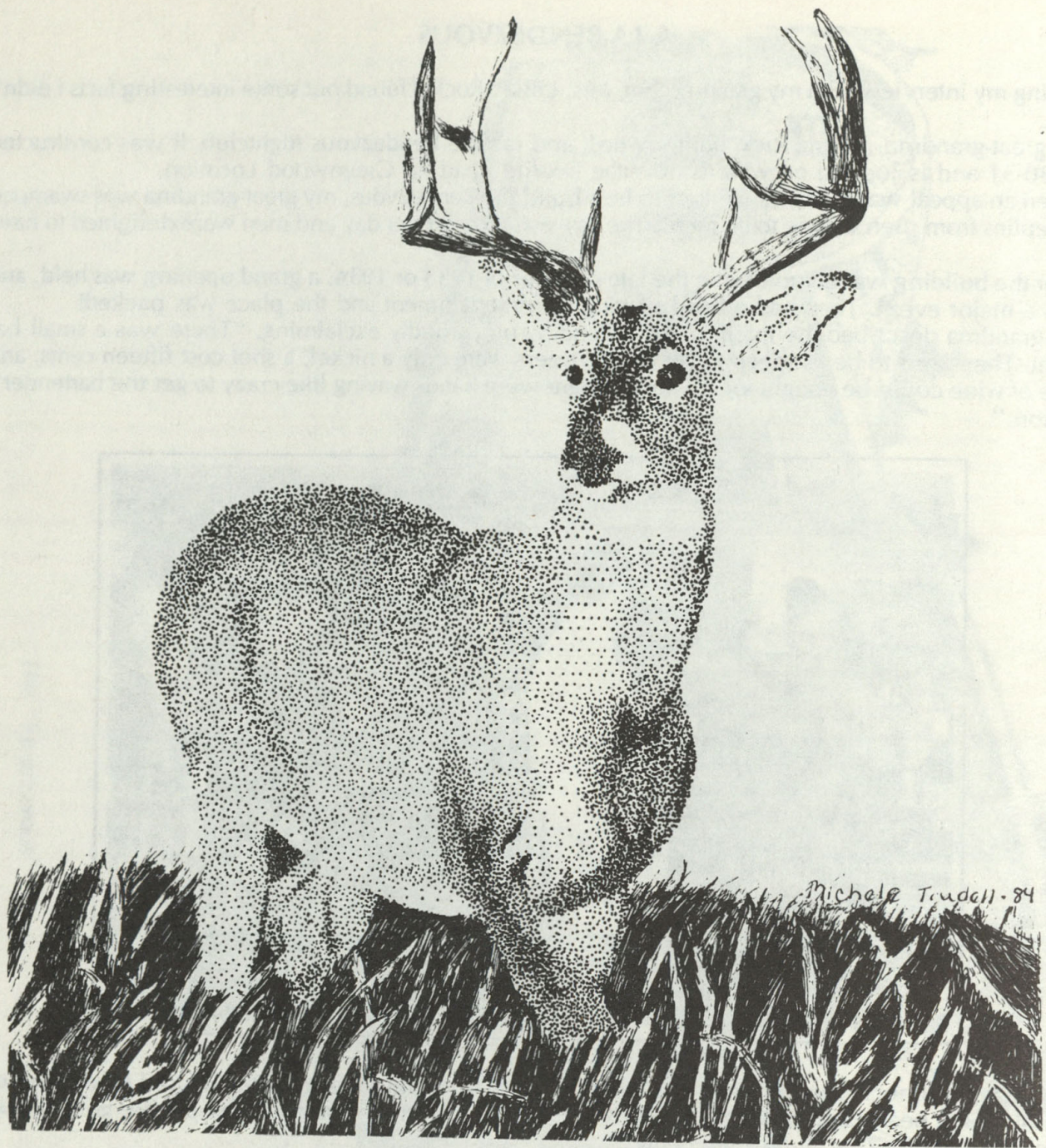
There was a checkroom for people to put their coats and other articles. They would take their coats and fold them neatly and put them in a box. The boxes were numbered and the people got a tag with the number on it. This all cost ten cents.

Dances were held at the Rendezvous and my grandma quickly pointed out the fine accommodations by saying, "There was a huge dance floor. It was hardwood. Along the dance floor, on three sides, were tables and chairs. At the far end there was a stage, right in the center. It was the bandstand. There were three rows of tables on one side and two rows on the other side. On the south end there were two rows. They could seat about 400 to 500 people."

A big arch was between the front part and the ballroom. On each side of the big arch was a wall and then two smaller arches. In front of one of the walls, between the arches, was the jukebox. "There were huge thick, thick, velvet drapes on the arches. It was deep, deep, dark, maroon. It was beautiful!" exclaimed my grandma. They drew the drapes shut when there weren't any dances, to shut off the area.

This was the Big Band Era. One of the most well known band leaders was Frankie Yankovich. "We always had a huge crowd when he played," she explained. Another one was a Swedish band with Ollie Scrodholts. "The place used to be just loaded," she emphatically added. It was a big job to clean up





after a dance. They first used to take up all the chairs and tables and sweep. Next they put them back. After that they'd do the dance floor. They never swept the dance floors. They would use a special type of broom. It had a big bar on the bottom and it was covered with thick flannel. They would go over it a few times. Just before a dance, they would toss around a special waxing powder. This would be rubbed into the floor. "It made the floor just beautiful!" my grandma pointed out with pride.

The Rendezvous is still standing today and is located near U.S. Highway 41. Even though the outside looks different and there is a different owner, it is still in business.

My grandma has lived all of her life in the Upper Peninsula. She and her family used to live in the town of Ishpeming. She has since moved to Greenwood Location, a block away from the Rendezvous.

Laura Matz



## REMEMBRANCE

It was a small, but modern house occupied by a soft spoken, gentle woman named Ruth Hill. On a cold, December day she shared with me her thoughts on the Great Depression.

Ruth was about nine years old at the time of the stock market crash. She lived in National Mine with ten brothers and sisters along with her mother and father. Ruth felt the Depression made families and neighbors closer because they all helped each other more.

When I asked if many children went to school during the Depression she quietly replied, "Quite a few would drop out to look for work you know, or something."

Any money earned by family members would be of help. People only worked about two days a week which did not amount to much, but Ruth does not recall any of the mines totally closing down during those hard times.

Because mining was the main industry, the mining company often built homes for employees to live in. There still are mining company houses, which all look alike, that are located by the present day National Mine School.

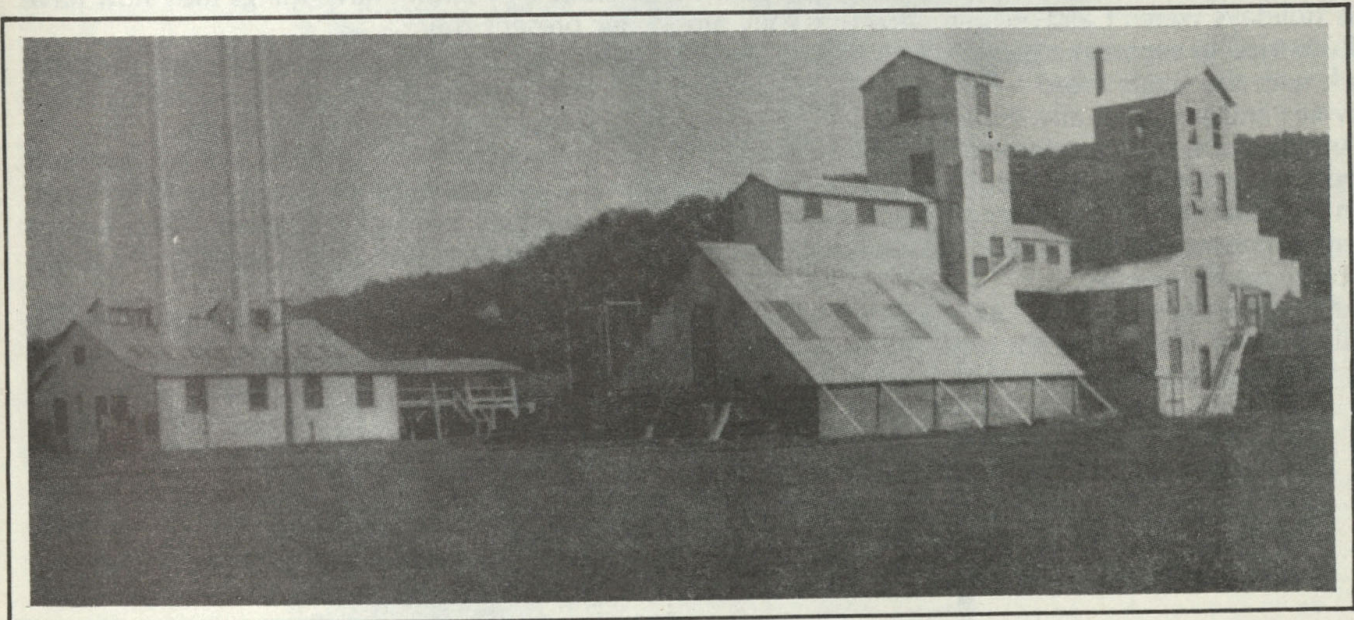
When Ruth was questioned about railways, she merely stated, "There were mines all around here and they hauled ore from the Tilden."

Ruth did not have the experience of her own bank "folding", but her mother-in-law did. She told Ruth the tragic story of how people went to banks only to find they couldn't get the money they were entitled to.

Many Americans were given jobs on the WPA and Ruth recalled some of her brothers working for this government program. They helped many people get jobs by working on the roads and different kinds of things. After he graduated from high school, one of Ruth's brothers joined the Civilian Conservation Corps. She feels it really helped him because it gave him free room and board. All members of the Corps were required to send a certain amount of their pay check to their homes. This helped to supplement the family income. She has deep convictions that it was a good experience for young men.

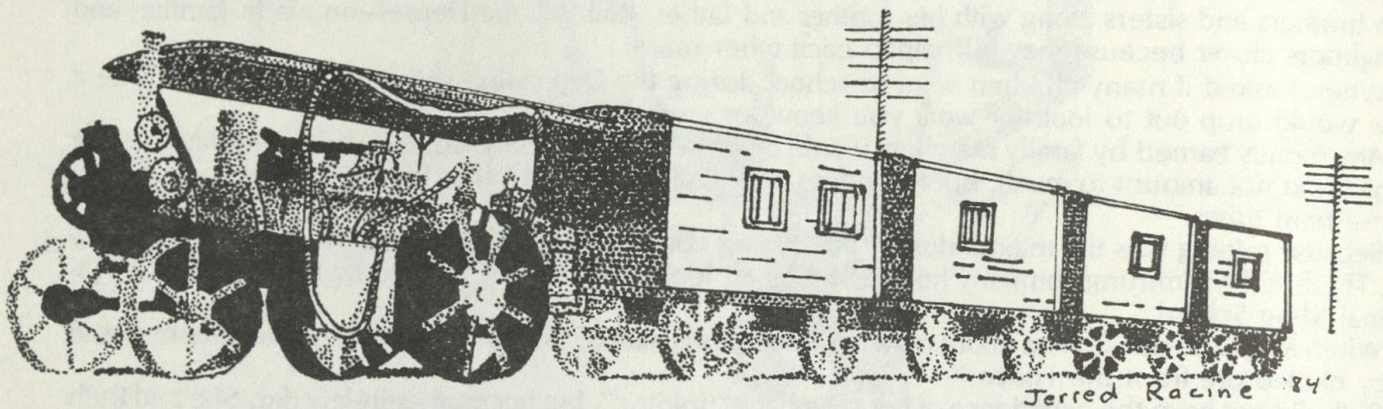
The biggest source of entertainment in Ruth's life at this time was the family radio. She reminisced of little stories and boxing matches she once listened to so often. She also told me of the fireside chats President Roosevelt conducted. Ruth stated, "It was quite interesting because everyone could hear. First time a President had done that you know."

When Ruth was growing up she said everyone had a garden. Her own family's garden contained cabbage, carrots, beets, rutabaga, and other vegetables. Even though people didn't have money to buy many items from the store they didn't go hungry because of their gardens. Ruth remembers her mother preserving



*The Hercules Powder Plant*





berries and a few other vegetables, too.

While everyone's financial times were bad, the church was no exception. The church had suffered a little according to Ruth, because people could not pay the offering to finance the church and those who did pay, could afford very little.

People in good financial position may have had a big wedding, Ruth thought. She remembered the poorer people had a shower before the wedding and this shower was where they received most of their gifts. Many people got married with just their attendants. "Now they have a big production. It was very simple," states Ruth rather thoughtfully, perhaps recalling her own wedding.

Most likely because of the peoples' financial situations, the funerals were also simple affairs as Ruth remembered them. When she was very young, families viewed the body at home. Otherwise, the affair was not much different from today's funerals as far as she is concerned.

The holidays were also very simple. When Ruth was a child they didn't have things they now have and holidays weren't as commercialized as they are in our present day.

Ruth tried to suppress a giggle when I asked her what they used for transportation. She quickly came back with the single word — walking! People walked to school and back because there were no bus services and people really did walk quite a bit. Not many people owned cars at this time.

Another form of entertainment Ruth was interested in was going to the movies. Ruth and some friends used to go every weekend. Some big stars at that time were: Clark Gable, Betty Davis and Cary Grant.

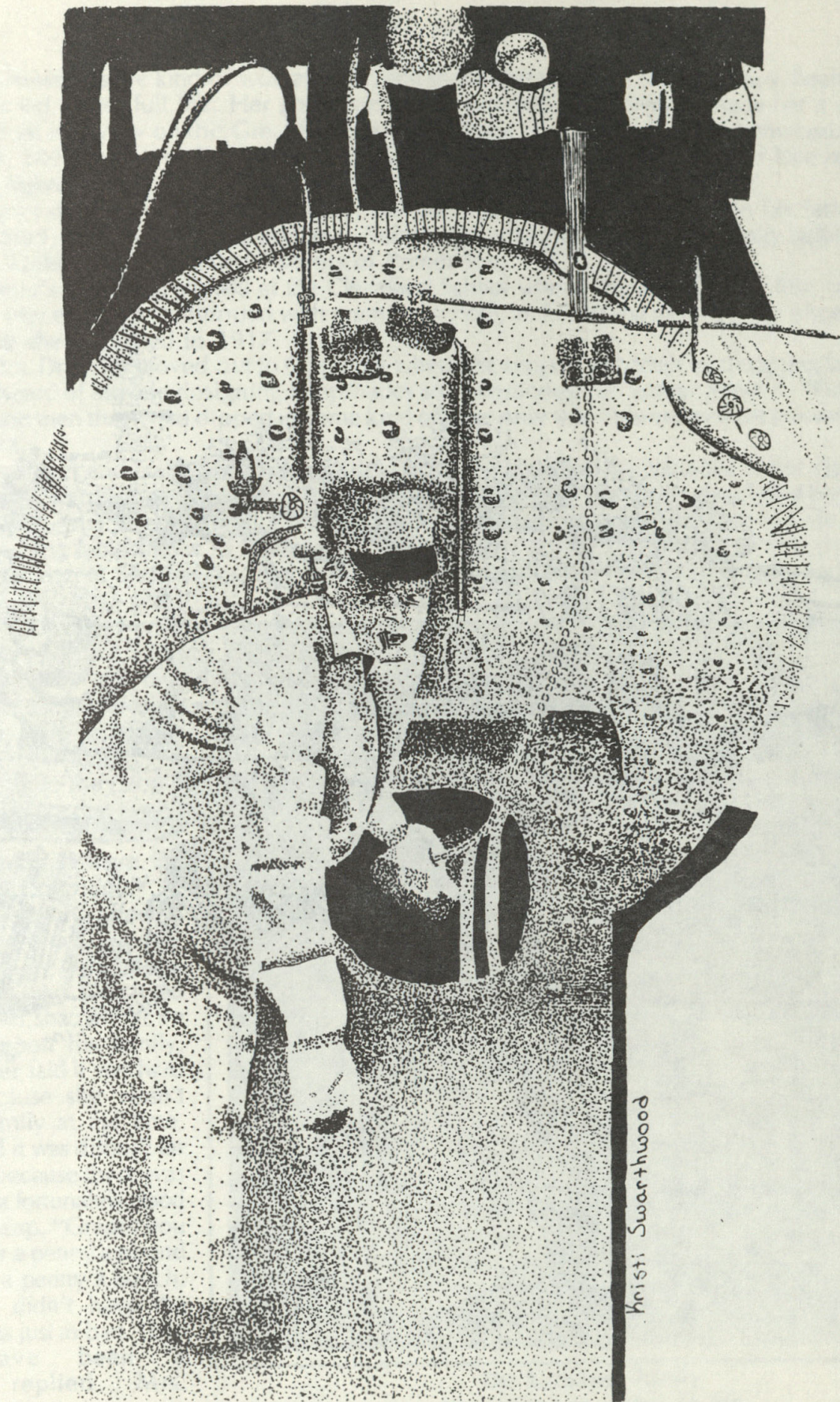
In the summer, Ruth can remember the Hercules Power Company having a big picnic. This was an event which was looked forward to with anticipation. A few times Ruth and friends went to the beach or camping for awhile.

After spending some time conversing with Ruth and hearing her feelings and opinions, I left her home feeling happy because of the new bond of friendship between us.

It was such a good experience for me, and I look forward to visiting my friend, Ruth, again.

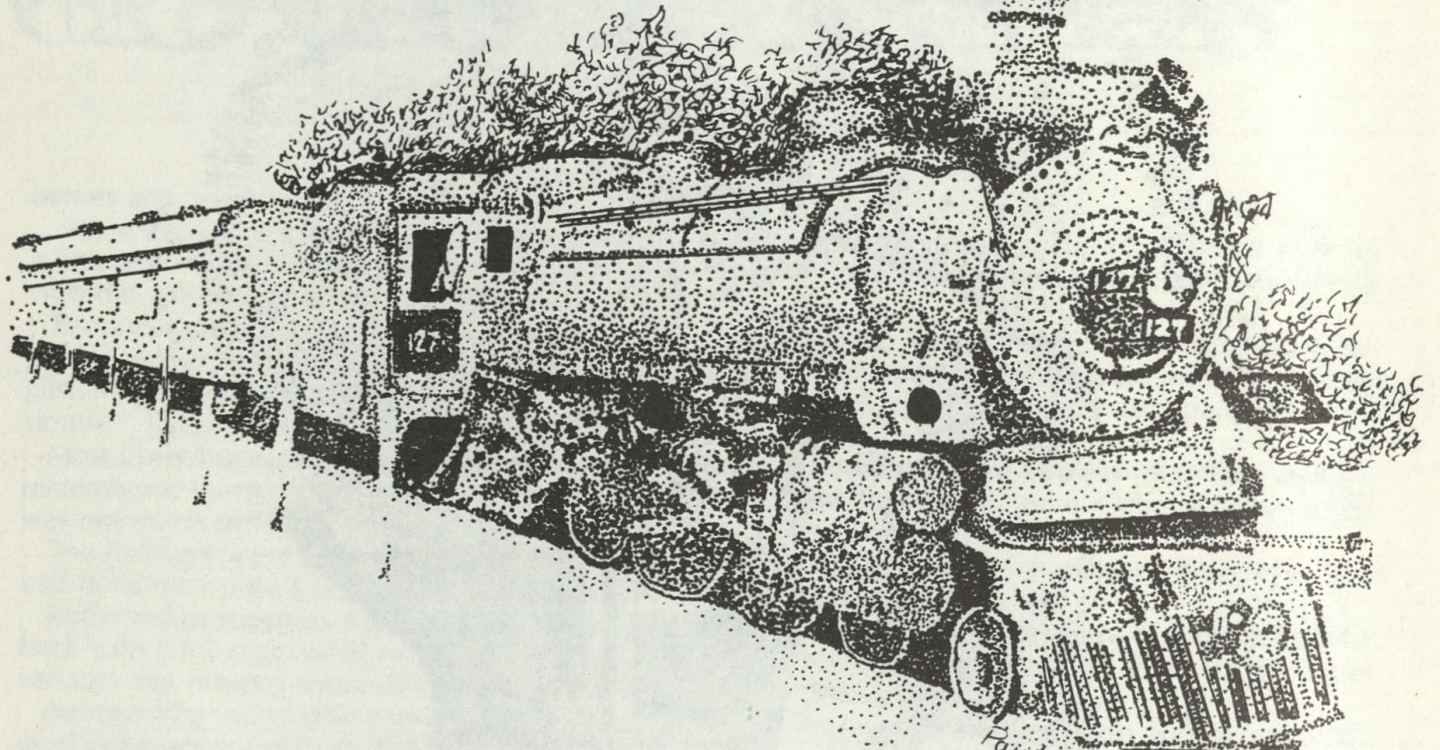
Michelle Haglund





Kristi Swarthwood





Faut Racine '84



## LIVING, LAUGHING, AND LAMPSHADES

Mrs. Lilja Dressner is the kind of woman everyone should get to know. She's a happy, healthy person, one who has led a very full life. Her good nature and extraordinary memory made her a spectacular candidate for an interview on the Great Depression. She was born in the town of Ironwood, Michigan, on January 3, 1899, which makes her 85 years young. Her vivid memories and her love of life made her a joy to interview.

Mrs. Dressner did not remain in Ironwood, but later moved to Ishpeming when her father became secretary of the Finnish National Temperance Society. So naturally she and her family belonged to the Temperance Union and were firm believers of Prohibition.

Mrs. Dressner's education started at the Cleveland School where she attended the first, second, and third grades. Her education continued with grammar school, and then she moved on to Ishpeming High School where she graduated in 1917.

In 1928, Mrs. Dressner moved out to California where she supported herself by designing lampshades. I had never heard of anyone designing lampshades so I questioned her further about it. "First I painted the designs and then they were dipped in some kind of glue. After that little beads were thrown on them," she described.

Her interest in art and crafts began in high school. She was one of the favorites in her class and was allowed to go on Saturdays to work at the school. Her ability in art and music eventually led her to develop her acting talents. Mrs. Dressner was even in a musical comedy that played on Broadway in New York!

While designing lampshades in Hollywood, Mrs. Dressner worked under a man who designed and made lapel ornaments. She was his sample maker. Many of the jewelry pieces Mrs. Dressner made were modeled by the late, great movie actress, Rita Hayworth.

Even with her busy, exciting life Mrs. Dressner still had time to listen to the fireside chats. "They were more like the modern talks now. The President's talk to the people too. But ah, before that everything had been so formal, it was really nice to have the President talking to you."

The Depression affected family life in a variety of ways. The man of the house was usually out of work which led to a feeling of shame that he couldn't support his family. Mrs. Dressner said it was hard on her because she wasn't with her family at the time. She also said it was difficult for everybody because there was no work, but fortunately, food was very cheap. "Grapes you could get for a penny a pound and carrots a penny a bunch. But if you didn't have the money it was just as bad. They could have been a million," replied Mrs. Dressner.



*The Kaminen Family  
Mrs. Dressner seated on lap*



Although Mrs. Dressner wasn't with her family then, she told me about holidays when she was a child. "Well, holidays were wonderful when we were kids because we always had a big Christmas tree and we had real candles. I can still smell the candles," she said with a smile.

I then asked her about any hobbies she had and learned of her doll collection. She started collecting dolls in the 1940's in Chicago. Not only does she collect them but she also repairs and makes her own dolls. She has some German, Italian, and French dolls. She says she has had almost every kind of doll. She had given quite a few away but still has many. When asked about a favorite she replied, "Well my favorite doll was a French fashion doll and ah, she was beautiful porcelain with a kid body. She had handmade lingerie and a full organza skirt and a taffeta coat. If I would have kept her, she would today have sold for thousands of dollars."

The afternoon I visited Mrs. Dressner we went into her work room and looked at some old pictures. I remember the beautiful wedding pictures and I decided to ask her what weddings were like then and she replied, "Weddings, I imagine were just like they are now, they're very gay affairs. They'd have outdoor weddings in the summer and beautiful gowns. I still remember the rustle of the taffeta dresses and they were lovely affairs."

Mrs. Dressner said she walked to a lot of places but she did mention the railroads. She talked about the L.S. & I. Railroad and also, the train that ran to Chicago. The L.S. & I. went to Presque Isle and she often went on Sunday school picnics along with all her friends and siblings.

Although Mrs. Dressner never had any children of her own she says she's always enjoyed them. Now she has nieces, grand nieces, and great-grand nieces to help fill her need.

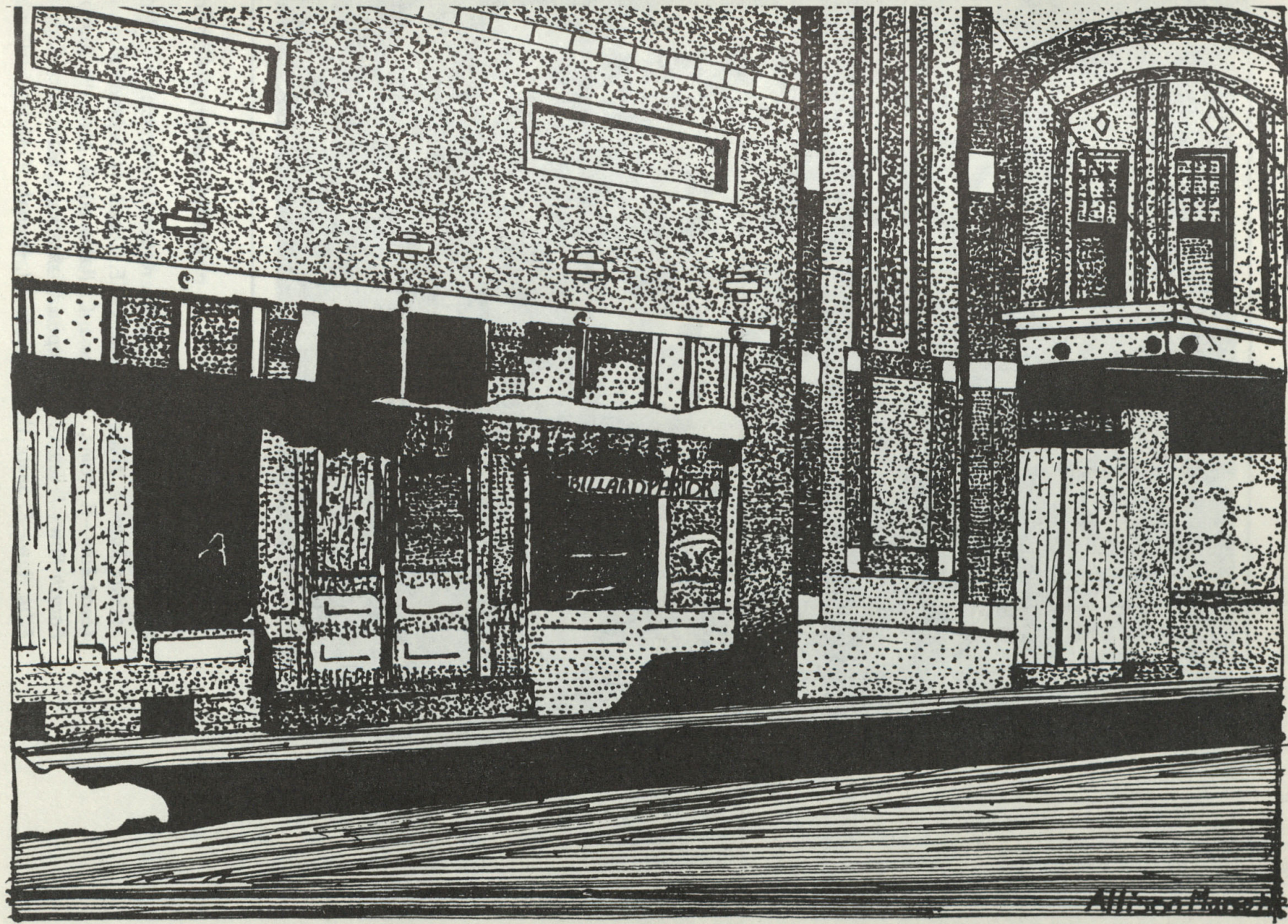
Mrs. Dressner is a very healthy lady for her age. I thought of asking her about any sicknesses or epidemics back then. "Yes, diphtheria was a pretty bad thing in those days. I remember going to see my friends when they were 'gone'," she replied solemnly.

I asked Mrs. Dressner if she had to walk a lot of places. She said her family had a car and she replied, "Well, I'm sure they had a car. I remember my kid brother writing to me telling me of an accident he'd had with a car and he said it used to have a top now it doesn't," she replied laughing heartily.

I'd like to thank Mrs. Dressner for sharing a part of her life with me. Her vivid memories, love of life, and enjoyment of people, young and old, made her a joy to interview. With a twinkle in her eye and a laugh in her voice, she looks ahead as well as back with a smile. She's a great example of what more people should be like.

JoAnn Anderson





Allison Bush





***Bethel Lutheran Confirmation Class of 1934, Ishpeming, Michigan***

***Front Row*** (left to right)—O. Aho, W. Kangas, B. Hanhimaki, L. Bergstrom, C. Valimaki, Rev. Hillila, L. Schmeltz, B. Hillila, A. Kari, R. Kulju and E. Peterson.

***Second Row***—F. Nuorala, G. Kesky, E. Ostola, H. Schroderus, A. Aalto, S. Luoma, H. Keto, E. Helsten, M. Repola, S. Katajamaki and M. Hannuksela.

***Third Row***—R. Roine, G. Ruona, C. Palomaki, R. Maki, W. Kumpu, S. Palomaki, L. Ritari, W. Saari, A. Potila and J. Garceau.

***Fourth Row***—F. Jaaski, V. Lampi, L. Talbacka, I. Mannikko, C. Syrjala, E. Warila, N. Rundman, I. Rajakangas, W. Ruohomaki and V. Kakkuri.

***Fifth Row***—R. Saari, W. Haukkala, M. Pennala, I. Maki, T. Wuorisalo, F. Kulie, E. Swanson, S. Elo and S. Siltanen.



## AUNTIE - AUNTIE - I - OVER

"But they have so much more than we did. They don't realize, you know, how lucky they are, and how much more they have than we ever had." These were the thoughts of Sigrid Rinne when I asked her opinion of youth today.

Sigrid lives in the Humboldt location, located near Highway U.S. 41, west of Ishpeming. She has vivid memories of the Depression and how she lived back then. She lives in a house that was built in 1900 by her grandfather. Her home has a cozy, warm atmosphere although the kitchen is not equipped with all the modern conveniences. The stove is old, but shiny, and looked like it has been well cared for. I do think Sigrid is right. We are very fortunate to have all the things we have, but many of us young kids are used to having more.

Although other people may have reproached him, Sigrid didn't blame Hoover for the Depression. She felt that regardless of who would have been President, the Depression would have occurred. Their family lost some money in the bank failures. However, they got some of it back after about a year. There were people they knew who lost quite a bit of money when the banks closed in Ishpeming. "There was a lot of anger when the banks closed, but I guess that they realized later on that it had to be done," Sigrid remembered when I asked her about her view on it. Her husband thought that Roosevelt was a great guy, and they listened to him every time they knew he was going to be on the radio, listening to many of his fireside chats.

Since her babies were small and she was busy, Sigrid never really paid attention to businesses closing. She remembers that she could go in a grocery store and for a couple of dollars buy plenty of meat, milk, butter, and eggs. On Saturdays she could get three pounds of hamburger for a quarter! She commented that grocery stores extended credit to their customers. They allowed many people hundreds of dollars in grocery bills. The customers that received extended credit eventually paid them back as soon as they "got back on their feet." One of the grocery stores was Rosbergs which was right across from where Joseph's grocery is now located.

Sigrid recalled her dad having a job at the Michigamme Mine where he made about \$6.00 per day. Sigrid's husband worked for the WPA program; he also had moved away, and worked in Cleveland and Kentucky and for Western Electric.

Reflecting back to her years in school, Sigrid told me about her two room school houses and she explained that they went from first to fourth grades and from fifth grade to eighth grade. The schools got money from taxes and the states had to give money to schools. The teachers' salaries were not very high, and she thought they were about sixty to seventy dollars a month. To cut living expenses, teachers often lived with families in the area. Her family had two teachers boarding with them when she was in the seventh grade.

Sigrid remembered the railroads having quite a bit of business then. She went to school by train and the township paid her fare. Sometimes she saved her money and walked, although she usually got a ride from someone along the way. She even bought a coat with the money she saved in train fares. During her freshman and sophomore years she went to school by train.

As a young girl, Sigrid had lots of fun. She mentioned that she went ice skating, played hardball, and horseshoes. She said that they played games that kids nowadays have not even heard of. For example, pom-pom-pullaway and auntie-auntie-I-over were played like this: you chose sides with one team on one side of the house and the other on the other side. A ball was thrown over the roof and the person who caught it would try to hit the other people. The person you "hit" had to join your side so pretty soon there was not anybody left on the other side. Sigrid also recalled skiing at Suicide, but not until after she was married and her kids were bigger. She went cross country skiing too.

There were a couple of good bands in this area. The men who were good musicians organized bands. They had movies too. "When the voice came into movies that must have been about in '24 or '25, so that up until then the movies were silent. When the voice came in they called them talkies," Sigrid recalled.

Some people may have the idea that people would be concerned only with their own needs during the trying times of the Depression. Sigrid felt that the Depression seemed to bring people together, and they helped each other when they had to fix a barn or build some other project.



Sigrid does not think that young people are selfish, but she said that they have a lot more than she ever had. As I left Sigrid's home, I thought how lucky kids are today. We have so much and we do not have to work very hard to get it.

Sara Hill





## WE'VE NEVER HAD IT SO GOOD

Mrs. Lempi Aho would never think of complaining about her childhood even though she did not have many toys. She and her brothers and sisters were happy even though they didn't go rollerskating or to the arcade like the kids do in these days, instead they made their own fun. Her family always had plenty to eat and a warm house.

When recalling her childhood, Mrs. Aho does not remember having many toys. In fact, the only toy she had was a doll made out of rags. A matchbox was its bed and it had colored pins for eyes and a nose. She is annoyed when she thinks back to her granddaughter having many dolls that she did not take care of. She recalled that they did have skis though. Her father made them for her and her brothers and sisters. He made them out of lumber from the barrels that breads and grains came in.

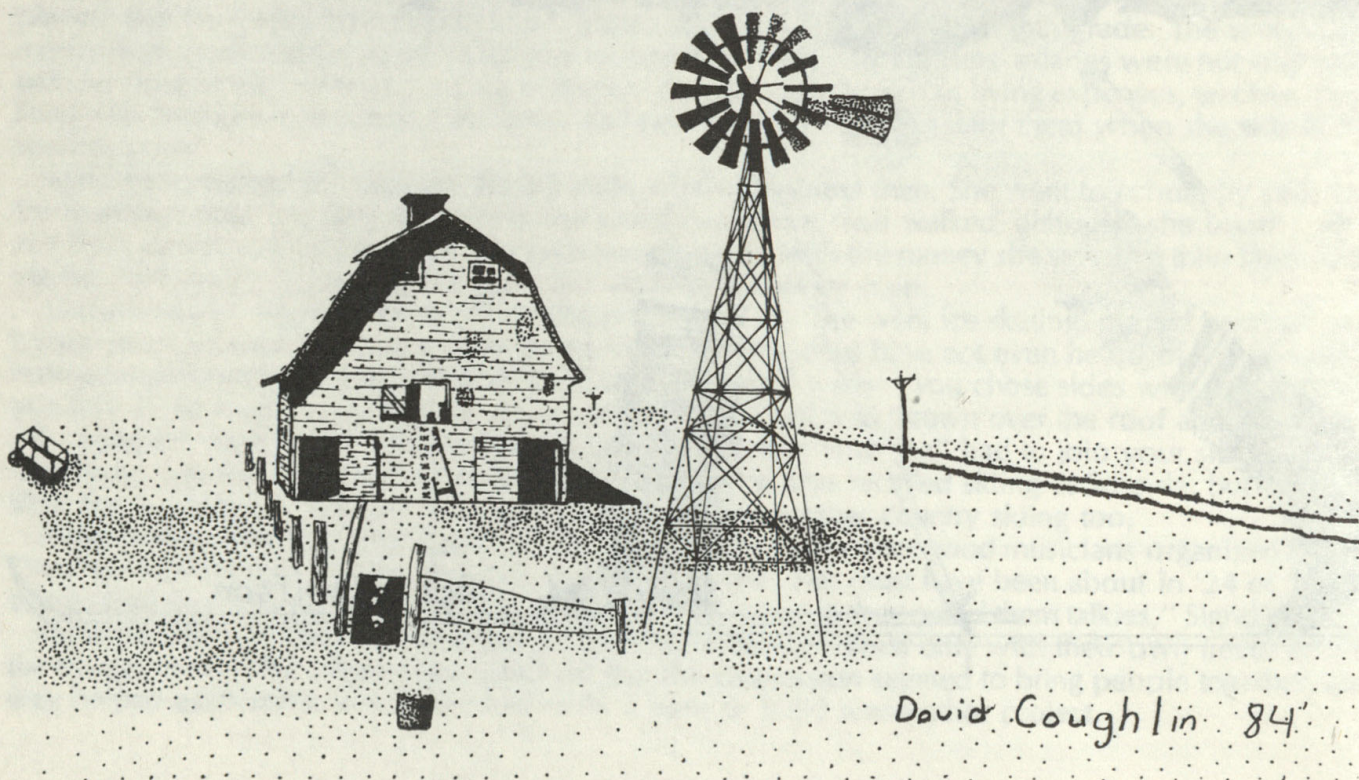
Mrs. Aho and her brothers and sisters went to school, but they had to walk miles to get there. Her family lived on a farm in the middle of what is now Kroon Platt, and they had to walk the long distance to West Ishpeming. Even when the weather was below zero and stormy, they had to walk. She never missed a day of school. In the eighth grade she had to quit school and take care of the house because her mother was very sick. When her mother died, Mrs. Aho was left with her father to care for, as well as her seven brothers and sisters.

Mrs. Aho and her brothers and sisters did not receive allowances for doing their chores like the kids do nowadays. She remembered when her father would go to town, he sometimes decided to bring a bag of candy home for the children.

Mrs. Aho thinks kids were a lot happier during the Depression than the young generation of today even though they had much less.

When Mrs. Aho went to school, she wore one dress for months at a time. She vividly recalls it was a dark color and had green embroidery on it. One of her neighbors made it for her. Every day after school she would hang it up on a hanger and put it in a closet. The children during the Depression took good care of their clothes and other belongings because their parents did not have enough money to buy them new clothes every time they went to the store.

When Mrs. Aho was 19 years old she met her husband, Mr. Urho Aho. The couple met on a blind date in 1932 and exchanged their wedding vows in 1933. They had a nice wedding but nothing like the







*Mr. and Mrs. Urho Aho*

weddings today. There was no alcohol and there was only a small party afterwards. The wedding rings were not expensive and they were plain silver. Mr. and Mrs. Aho did not go on a honeymoon because they just could not afford it.

During the Depression, Mr. and Mrs. Aho went to the movies, to church, invited friends to their home to play cards, and listened to the radio for entertainment. Mrs. Aho listened to the radio a lot, although she does not remember any of F.D.R.'s fireside chats. They went on picnics and had a lot of fun playing games and running races. A movie that played for about an hour cost 10 cents compared to \$3.00 that we pay to attend a movie today.

Mrs. Aho did not think much of President Hoover, mainly because she listened to Mr. Aho's mother who did not like him. Mrs. Aho and Mrs. Aho's mother-in-law both liked President Roosevelt because he set up many organizations to help people without jobs.

One example is the W.P.A. Mr. Aho was a worker in the mines and for the W.P.A., and Mrs. Aho was a housewife. Mr. Aho worked first at the Tilden Mine, and when that closed he went to the Blueberry Mine. He recalls the W.P.A. as hard work. The W.P.A. workers built roads and dug ditches with just a shovel and a wheelbarrow for equipment. They ate their lunches near a fire

to try and warm them up because the lunches were nearly frozen. There were a few mining company houses and at one time that was about all that was in National Mine. Working in the mines, Mr. Aho made about \$3.25 a day and then it went up to \$4.00 a day. He worked at the Blueberry Mine, Jones and Laughlin, and the Ishpeming Flooring Mill.

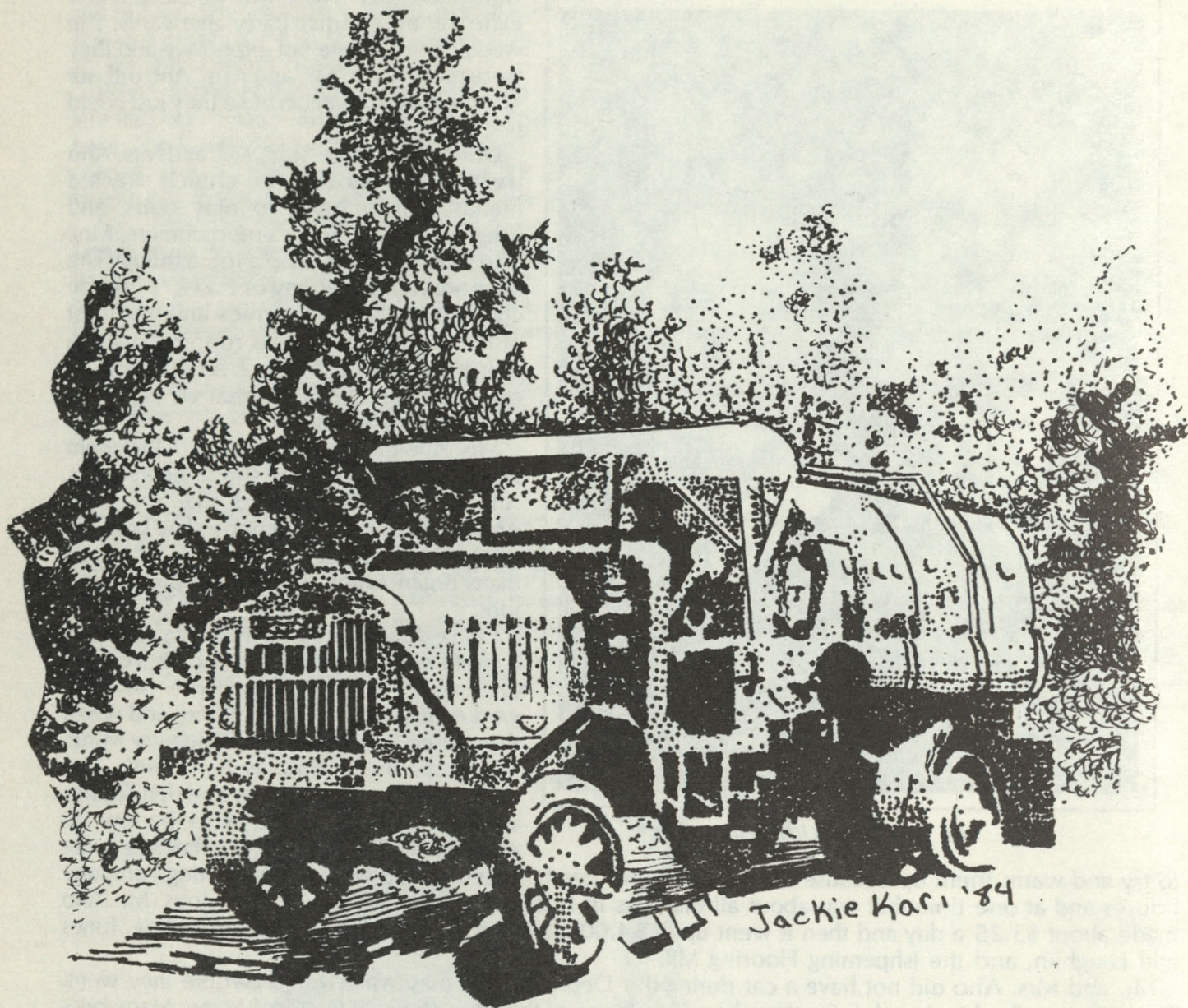
Mr. and Mrs. Aho did not have a car during the Depression so they walked everywhere they went. They often walked to Annala's Store to shop or to many of the other stores in National Mine. Many people had cars but Mr. and Mrs. Aho didn't have enough money to buy one. Gasoline was five gallons for one dollar. A lot of people wish that gas was sold at that price today!

Mr. Aho brought home \$40.00 a month but they managed because everything was a lot cheaper in the Depression days. Rent was only \$8.00 a month. They helped others when they could during the Depression. They gave clothes to many of their friends when they were worn or had become too small.

Mr. and Mrs. Aho both have an excellent sense of humor. I think part of it is because of the 50 happy years they have spent together. Mr. and Mrs. Aho had a very good life together during the Depression and are very happy together. They had some hard times, but they managed. They both hope to have many more happy years together in their cozy little house on the Mail Route Road.

Jackie Kari





Jackie Kari '84



## A DOLLAR AND A QUARTER A DAY

Just off of County Road 581, south of Ishpeming, Michigan, lives Bill Wood. Behind his house flows the Escanaba River. His property was at one time the home of many types of animals. He used to keep horses, rabbits, and even goats in his care.

He said things were much different during the Great Depression. "Prices were much less," he stated. "Hamburger was fifteen cents a pound, eggs were fifteen cents a dozen, and bread was ten cents a loaf."

There were ten children in Mr. Wood's family and he was the only one with a job. When I asked him what he did, he replied, "I worked in a bakery. A dollar and a quarter a day, twelve hours a day, six days a week."

I asked him what he did for entertainment and he answered, "Went out, ski ride, skate, go fishing in the summer and go swimming. We made our own skis out of barrel staves. The entertainment you had was what you made yourself."

Mr. Wood went to school at National Mine when the principal was George Annala and the superintendent Walter Bath. He also recalls what the buses were like. "It was just a big truck with a box on the back, covered over, benches in it to sit on. So you kids got it pretty good!"

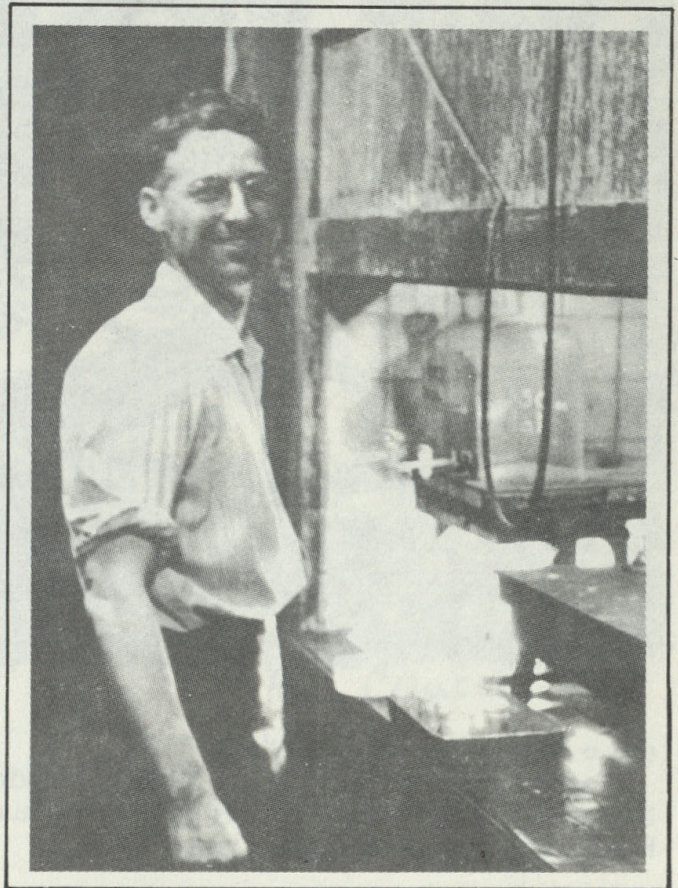
Mr. Wood told me that there were ten children in his family and they often had trouble with food. "We raised all our own vegetables, had a cow, made the hay for the cow and got the milk from the cow." But obviously, many times this wasn't enough for a family of twelve. His father also hunted, which helped them.

I learned much about the work camps. Some of the things he said were about the W.P.A. and the C.C.C. and that they were established during F.D.R.'s presidency. "F.D.R. started C.C.C. camps, W.P.A., C.W.A., N.Y.A.....they're all different work programs. When one would run out of money, they would start another one. They would allocate more money. It was all government money, just to keep you working. It paid forty-four dollars a month. You just existed on it."

Concerning the C.C.C. he said, "They planted trees. I had a brother that got into that and they sent him to Wisconsin. He stayed there. It was just like an army camp. Every once in a while he'd get a ride home on the weekend. There was a good many with him. It was just like being in the army. You had rules to go by. There was quite a bit of discipline. You had to go to bed at a certain time at night. You had to behave, you know."

Mr. Wood also told me some other things about the C.C.C. "They would give you a plot of land so you could go and cut your own wood on it. If you had a car, you were not allowed to drive it. If you had a telephone, you had to take your telephone out. They didn't allow anything like that. It was just like I said, it was just existing. That lasted quite a few years and then it started to pick up when Franklin Roosevelt got in and it boomed then for a long time after."

"Was the automobile important to your family?" I asked him. "Well, if we had an automobile we wouldn't have to walk. We used to walk from National Mine to Ishpeming to do our shopping. We would carry a bag of groceries for three and a half miles. If we wanted to go anywhere we'd walk. We just had to walk. Unless you were on the road walking and somebody came along with a car that maybe had a little money. Nobody had a lot of money, but







some were better off than others."

I learned many things from Mr. Wood. I couldn't possibly imagine what it was like living during the Depression. I don't think I've ever gone to bed hungry. Imagine going to bed hungry almost every night! I feel lucky to have enough to eat.

Paul Casimir

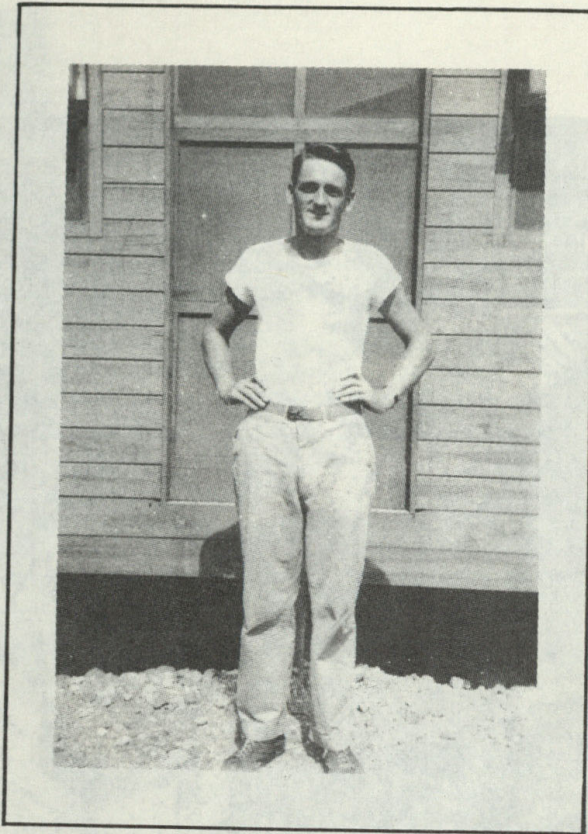




Ann Coluccio '84



## HOME OF THE FINNS AND PORCUPINES



"National Mine, National Mine, the home of Finns and porcupines," is how my grandpa, Oscar Aho, described National Mine for me. He tells me National Mine isn't very different now than it was during the Depression except all of the hiking trails are gone.

He started school in 1924, the first year they opened National Mine after the original school burned down. Before the school opened they went to school in churches. He quit school in the 8th grade to work on the farm and around the house.

After school, he enjoyed playing football and baseball like we do, but his equipment was quite different. He had to wind rags to make a football or baseball.

When playing basketball a  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch wire rim was used and the ball wasn't very big, not as big as now. It wouldn't bounce and it was heavier.

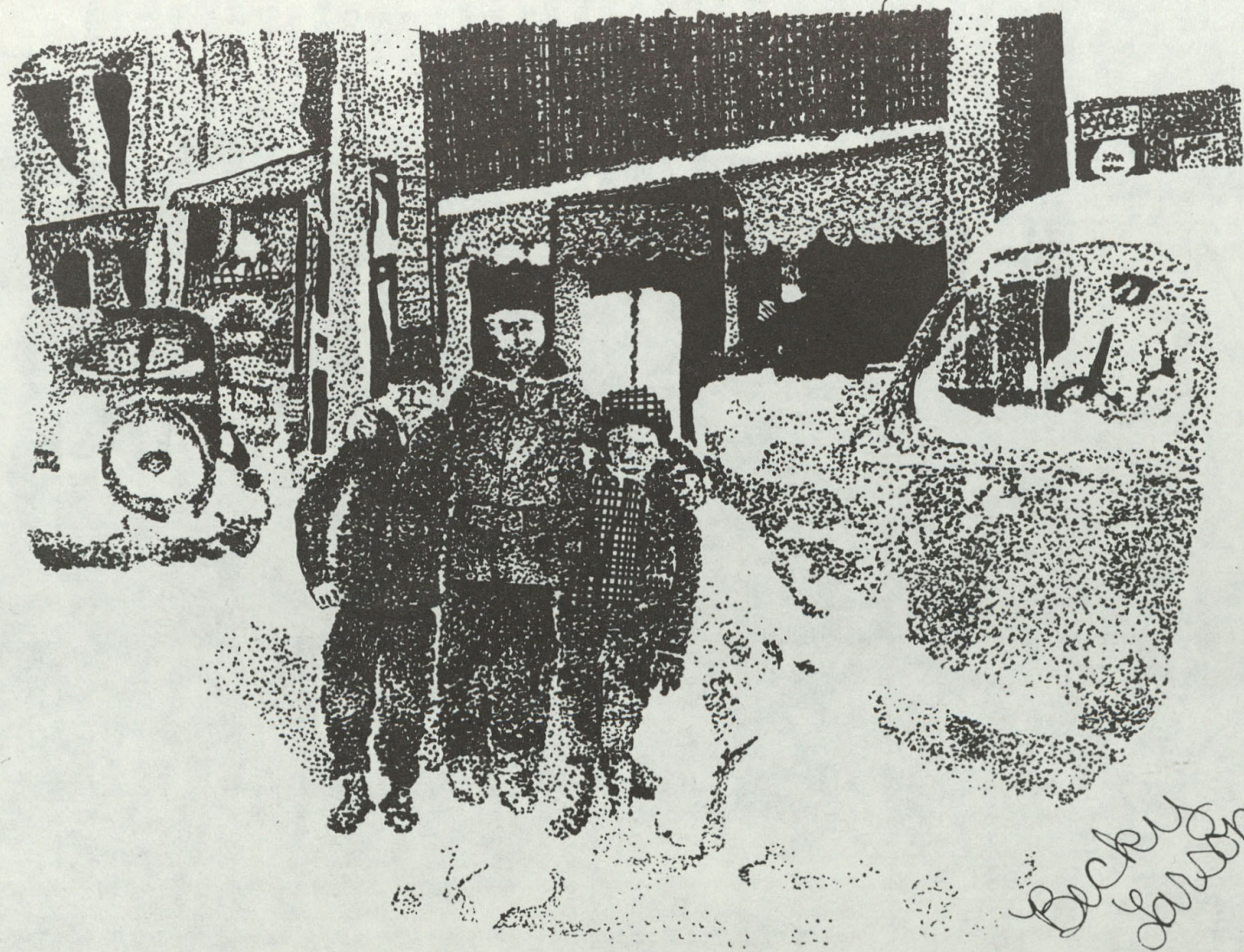
He received one pair of shoes for the summer and one pair of boots for the winter. If he wore them out he wore wool socks and rags. He even took the rags off the footballs or baseballs and wrapped them around his shoes.

My grandpa doesn't quite remember all of the Depression. He said the Depression didn't affect National Mine as much as many other cities. But it was in effect longer here.

After visiting with my grandpa about the days of the Great Depression, I learned why he appreciates all of the things that he has now. I cannot imagine playing with a ball made out of rags and I think kids today are really lucky to have so much.

Jeremy Maynard





Bucky  
Larson '84'





*WPA Road Crew working in the National Mine Area*



## TOUGH JOBS

The opportunity to interview Mr. Tom Champion about the Great Depression was a most interesting learning experience for me.

Tom Champion, by his nature is a very modest man. He was born on December 8, 1903 in the small village of National Mine where he was raised and spent most of his life. During the early years of the Depression, Tom was 31 years of age and supported a family of five children.

"The worst part of it was the winter of 1933. We had to dig ditches over in Negaunee by the Old Maas Mine for ten hours a day. The entire months of January, February, and March were anywhere from 30 to 40 below," was Tom's response when I questioned him about the worst part of the Depression. He was referring to his time in the W.P.A. His job was to dig ditches and widen the roads with shovels and wheelbarrows. Tom was a very hard-working man. That's how he got his two days of work and five dollars a week. "We had to walk from National Mine to Negaunee rockcut to get our day's work in most of the time, and walk home after that — a ten hour job."

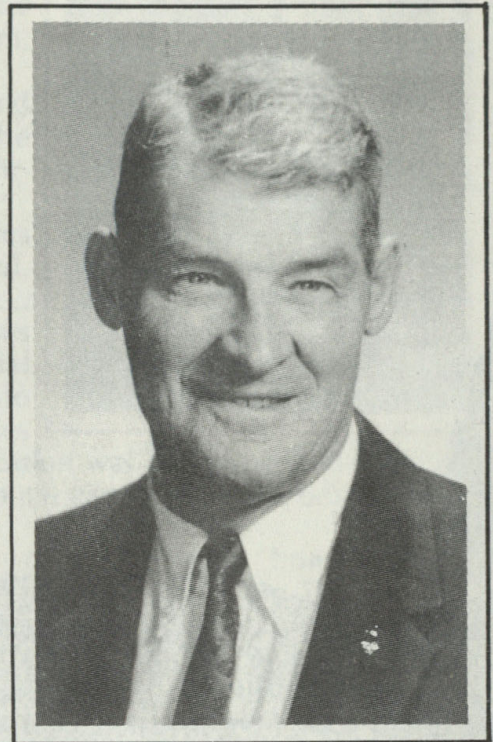
Tom said he never felt poor compared to others. "Everybody was out of work and we didn't judge what the other fella had because he didn't have much in them days anyhow." He also felt that he had a sufficient amount of food and money because he remembers doing odd jobs on the farm, such as cutting wood. By doing those jobs the farmer would give Tom vegetables and money. With this money he could purchase the necessities of life. During the Depression most people had gardens. "Everybody had a garden. Those that could work on the farm did it to help the farmer and the farmer would give them a lot of help with the teams of horses to be able to bring in your wood for the winter and stuff like that. They would give you a lot of garden stuff too. The farmers were a real help to the people."

Tom said meat wasn't too hard to get because the forests were densely populated with deer and rabbits, and fish could be found in the lakes and streams. The Salvation Army would also help by giving out bread and clothes. With those big, heavy clothes Tom's family would make shoes and mittens. His family never had anything new.

During the Depression Tom had a Model A car. "The Model A was the best car they could have made for the working man. The car was real important because it helped you to get your groceries home when you went to town with your twenty dollar check for the month."

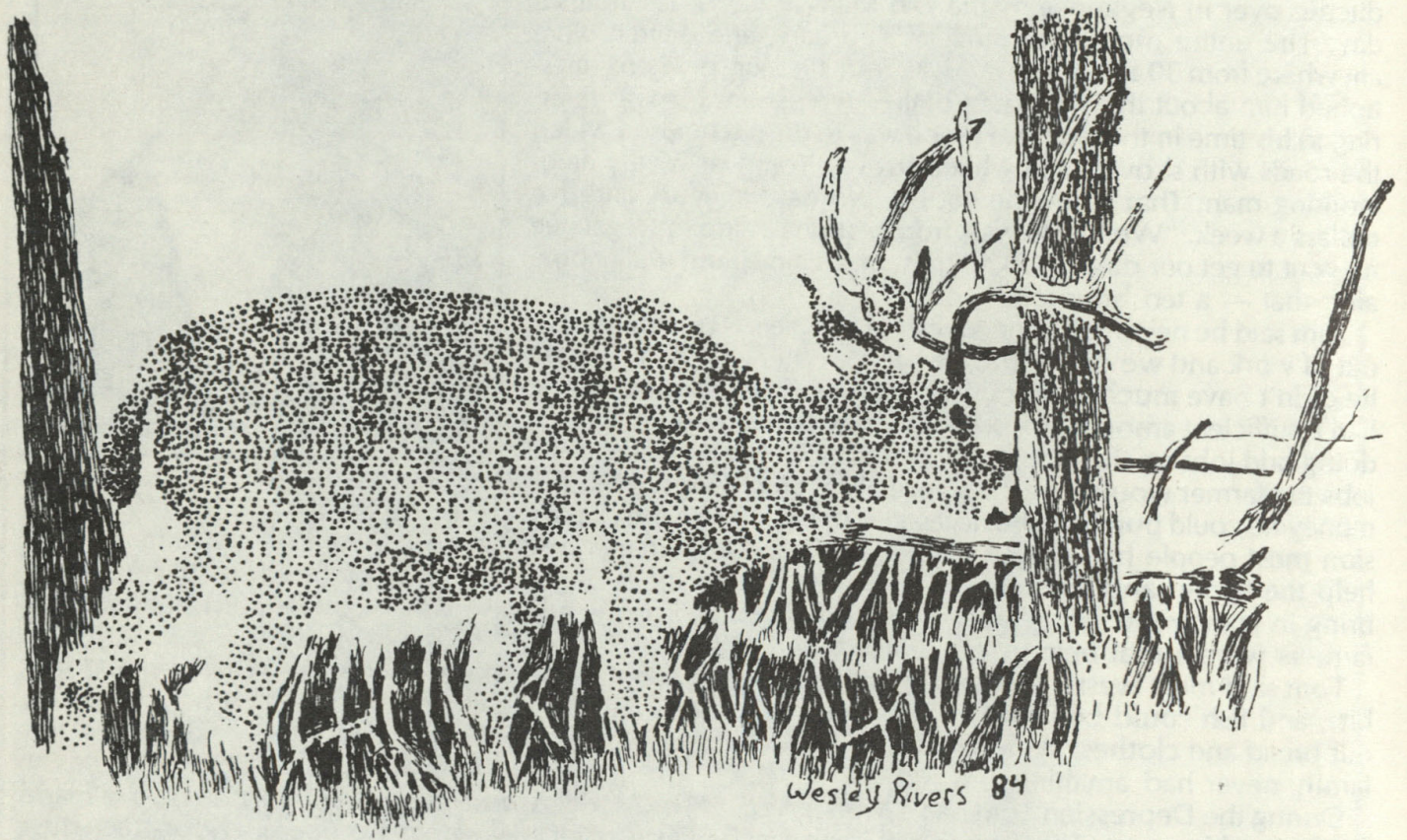
To sum up his thoughts about the Depression, Tom replied, "Well it was hard times. The minute you could find anything to do for a dollar you would do it."

The Depression was a time of despair. It forced countless numbers of people into poverty. Fortunately for Tom, he was able to live through these hardships to relive and share his past experiences with us.



Jerred Racine







## IT AFFECTED MILLIONS

The opportunity to interview Mr. Emil Hill was an interesting learning experience. He has made the hardships and difficulties of the Depression years appear real for me.

Emil Hill was born on November 5, 1915, in the little town of National Mine where he spent his boyhood years.

Emil's father, William Hill, worked in the mines and later became a mining inspector. William was born in Kuortane Vaasa Laani, Finland.

Emil's mother, Elizabeth Ahola, was a devoted housewife and mother. She was born and raised in Iron Cliffs, Michigan, where the Tilden Mine is today. William and Elizabeth had four children, Arnold, Emil, Norman, and Helen.

In Emil's later years his family moved to Ishpeming, a few miles from National Mine. There he attended Ishpeming High School. Ishpeming's principal and superintendent were Ogden Johnson, C.L. Phelps and William Peterson. He mentioned that the four basic courses offered at that time were College Prep, Manual Arts, Commercial Course, and Social Sciences. Everyday after school, Emil would do his daily chores, which were hauling wood, taking the ashes out of the stove, shoveling the path, and cutting the grass. "Education was important in that you plan for your own future. Not everyone who goes to school succeeds, but it gives you the opportunity to succeed," relates Mr. Hill.

Epidemics frequently swept through the schools often forcing homes to be quarantined. The major epidemics of that time were the flu, diphtheria, and the measles. The city health officers would put a big "Do Not Enter" sign on your house, which would prevent the disease from spreading. Students were not allowed to go to school without a permit from the city health officer.

As America began to experience hard times, many people blamed President Hoover. Emil and his family thought the Congress had caused the Depression, not President Hoover. Although FDR did a very good job of getting the nation out of the Depression with the WPA, CCC and other programs, there were people who objected to the New Deal. Mr. Hill felt the New Deal helped most Americans in need. FDR's fireside chats inspired and raised the hopes of the poor and needy. When people heard Roosevelt's speeches, their hope and faith in America were aroused.

Along with the hard times, Mr. Hill remembered some fun times too. He explained that social gatherings were held every Christmas at the Hill's farm. There were 45 to 50 people in the little five room house. The people would take turns eating and then would clean up the kitchen for the next six people to serve themselves, as it was an all day affair.

Weddings during the Depression were about the same as today, but not as elaborate. Mr. Hill explained that a dime was the fee to a wedding dance and people would also get a little meal at intermission.

There were many gathering places in Ishpeming such as the Odd Fellows Lodge, KC Lodge, Coming Nation Hall, the Elks, Masonic Lodge, Danish Hall, Vasa Hall, and Liberty Hall. The Temperance Halls were against drinking and smoking. They were just the opposite of the Labor Temple Group. In addition, there were many illegal clubs called "blind pigs" in the area. They often had a candy store in the front while the clubs were located in back.

Almost everyone had to have a car in order to get to work or go places, because streetcars were discontinued. People either walked or bought a good used car or maybe a bad used car.

The Hill's grew a garden full of potatoes, carrots, beets, corn and green beans. The garden helped them with any food difficulties and because of all the vegetables, their usual meal was stew.

The Depression seemed to affect everyone, as most were out of work except those who were policemen, doctors, and nurses. The main industry, mining, however, was shut down or ran only sporadically.

After the Depression, the economy didn't pick up quickly and there wasn't many job openings. For every job opening, there were 100 people looking for it. In search of work, Mrs. Hill, Helen and Arnold moved to Detroit, where things were booming quicker than here. Many people throughout the world were moving to "richer places" to begin a new life. Norman went into the Army and Emil went to work





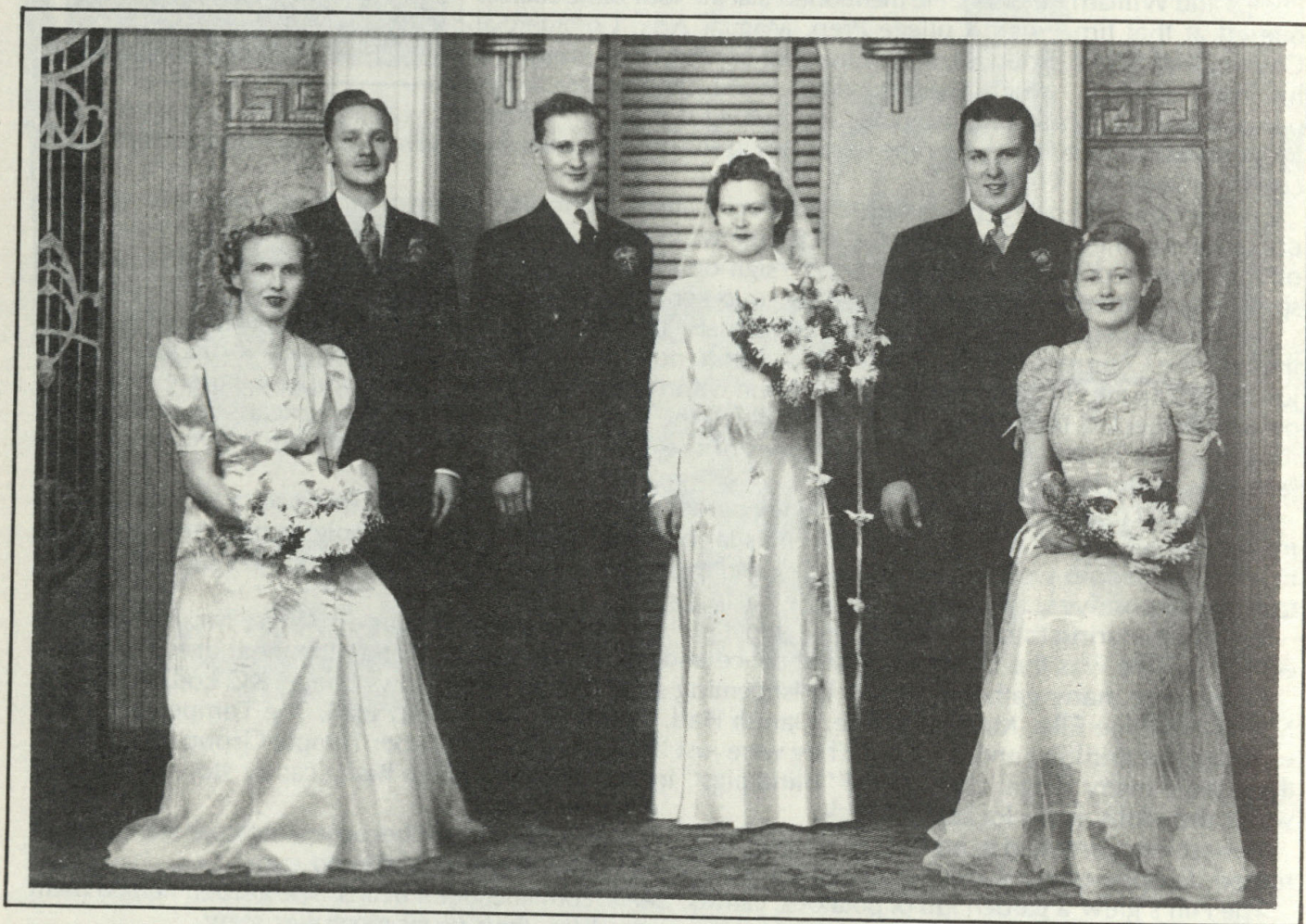
in an Ishpeming grocery store.

Emil's father was killed in a mining accident, leaving his widowed wife with four children. The family received workmen's compensation from the mines from 1926 to 1931. Then from 1931 the family was unemployed temporarily, until all three boys went into CCC, WPA, PWA and other programs to support their family. Twenty-five of their \$30 went home to their mother and sister.

The Blueberry Mine, the Morris Mine, the Loude, Salisbury, the Barnum, Holmes, Sectin Mine, Greenwood Mine, Tilden Pit, Aldun Pit and Jackson Pit were most of the mines in this area which were closed at one time or another during the Depression, but around 1936 the mines started to open up. They started with two days a week, three days a week and went on to five days a week.

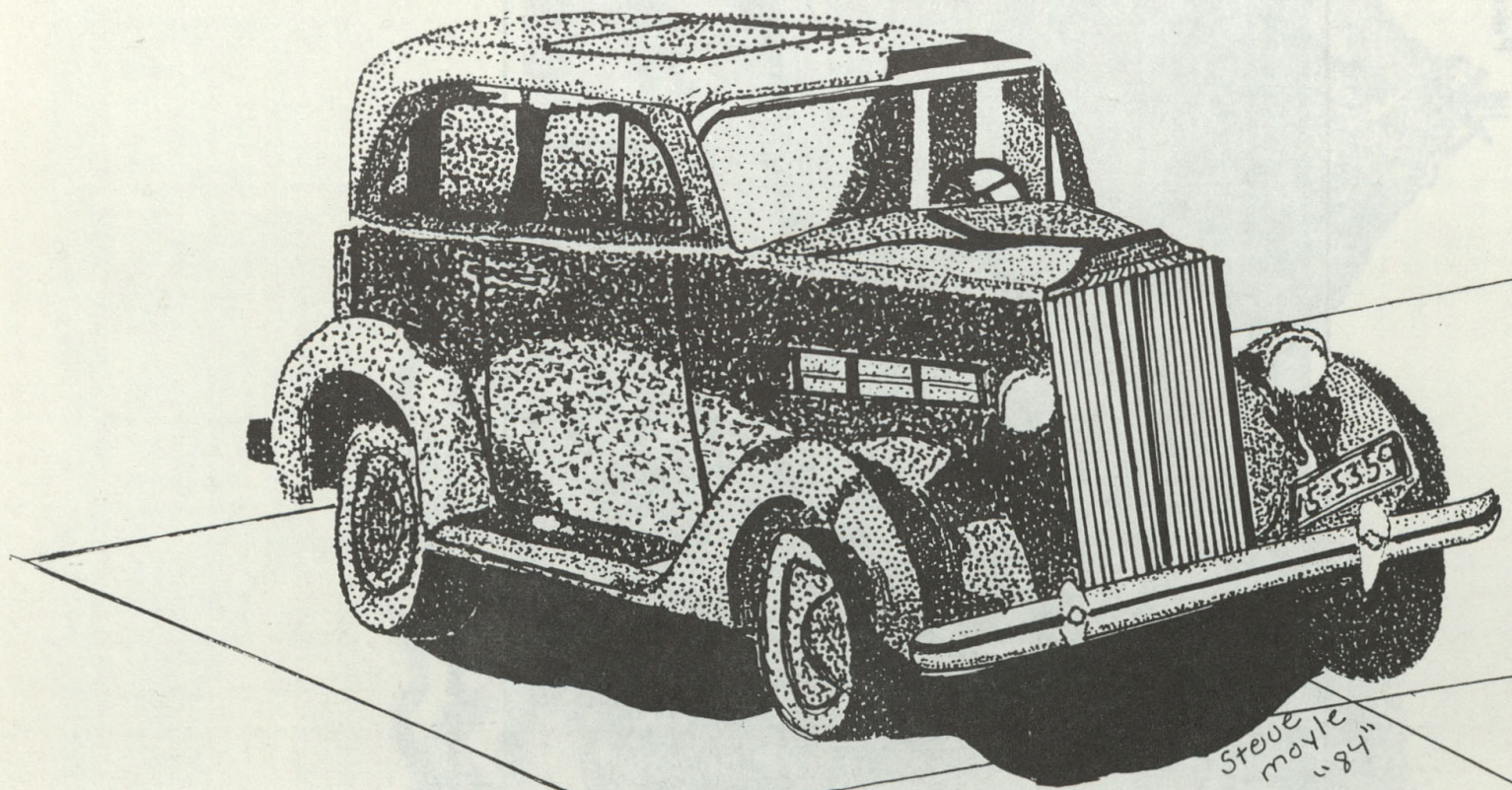
Each mine was surrounded primarily by people of different ethnic groups. The Barnum location and Cleveland location were the homes of the Finns. Ishpeming was where most of the Italians dwelled. North Lake was the residence of numerous English, Italian, and Swedish groups. The Salisbury area was also the home of English immigrants and the Junction Locations was a Frenchtown.

The three main railroads in the area were the Duluth South Shore, Chicago and Northwestern, and



*The Emil Hill wedding party.*





Steve  
Moyle  
"84"

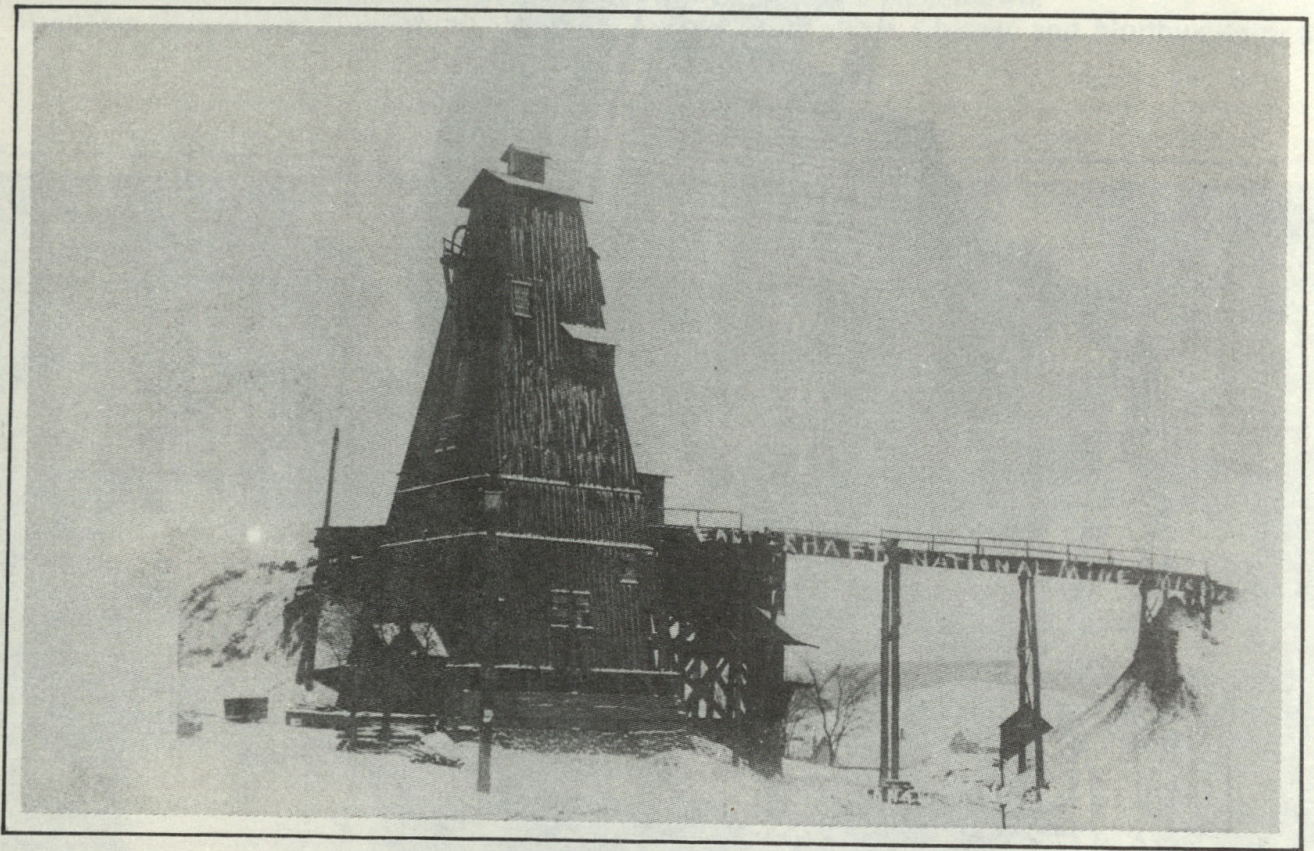
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the Lake Superior & Ishpeming Railroad which carried mainly iron ore, logs and freight. Sometimes the new cars came in by box car and were unloaded by the depot. It was a big event to see the new Model T's arrive.

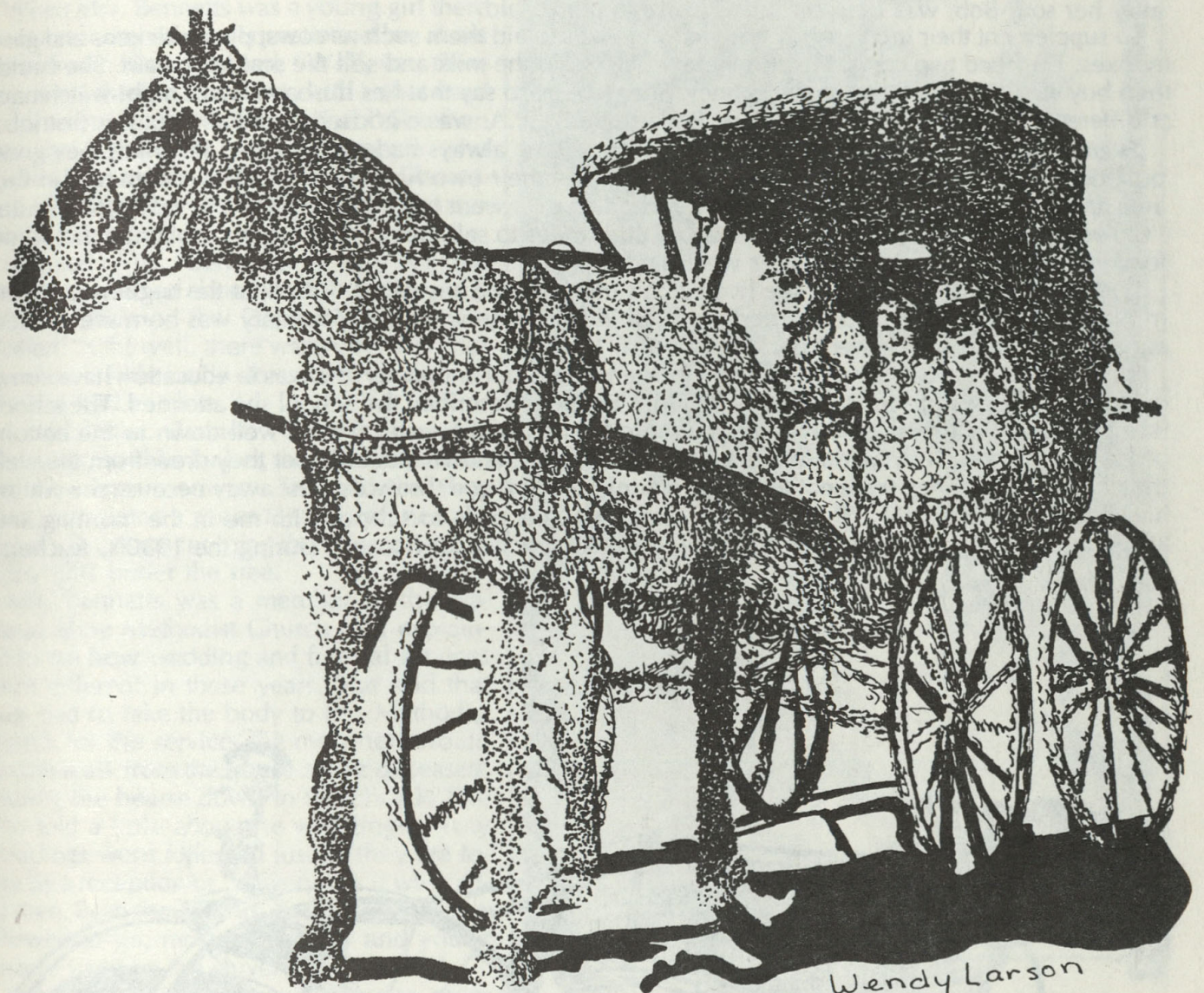
More than fifty years have passed since the Great Depression began. Mr. Hill, like many others, struggled through the hard times. Before I left his home, I asked him if he had any records or diaries about the Great Depression and he quickly responded, "Heavens no! Who wants to remember that???"

Pako Lehtinen



*East Shaft, National Mine, Michigan*





Wendy Larson



## LEARNING TO CONSERVE

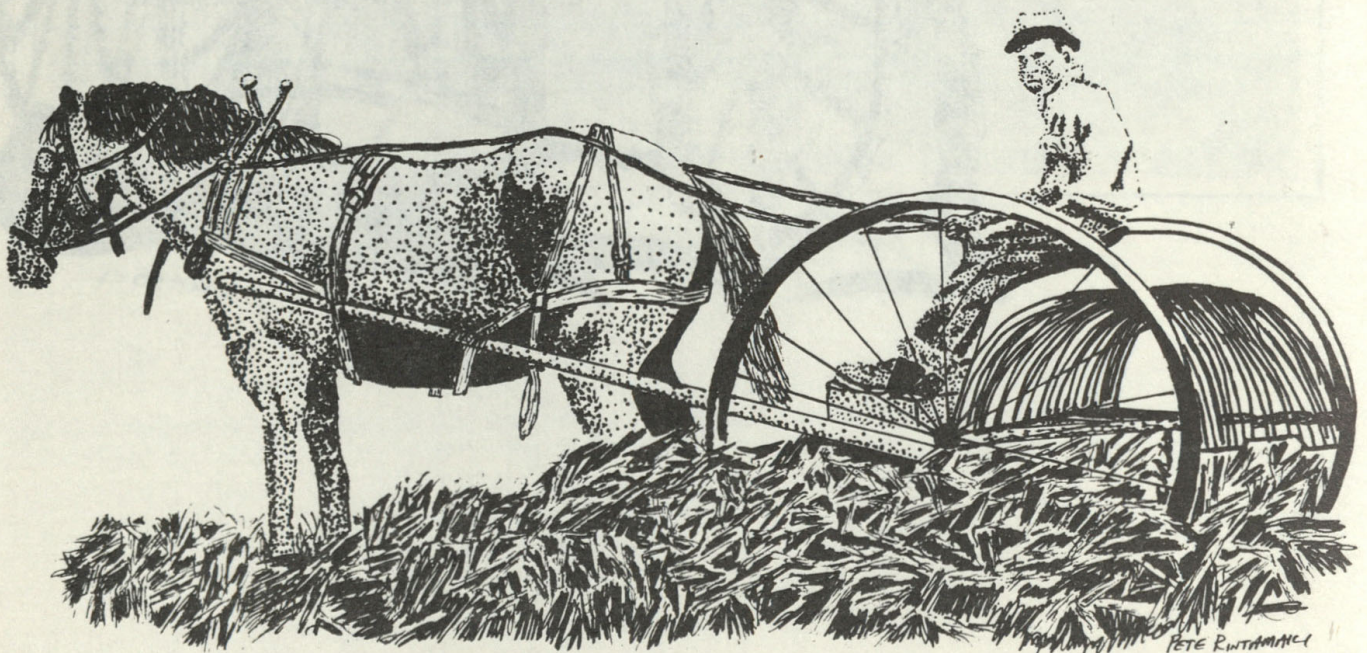
Today it is a common practice to have two incomes in a household. Although this was not as common during the Great Depression, it did occur. Many families needed two or even more incomes just to survive. This was the case for Mrs. Grace Bennetts. Following her marriage, she became employed at the Gossard, but as soon as she received her first paycheck, her husband was laid off from the W.P.A. When she had her first daughter, Rosemary, she had to take time off. After awhile, she went back to work and after her son, Bob, was born she hired a live-in nursemaid.

To supplement their income they had many animals to aid them such as cows, pigs, chickens and ginyfoxes. They had two cows. Mrs. Bennetts would scald the milk and sell the scalded cream. She could then buy needed groceries with the money. She went on to say that her husband was a night watchman at different locations. According to Mrs. Bennetts, the W.P.A. was a godsend until she got her first job.

Even though her husband was not really a farmer, they always had a big garden in which they grew potatoes, beans, peas and pumpkins. They also made their own hay. Berry picking is common in this area and I asked Mrs. Bennetts if she and her children ever went berry picking and she said with a smile, "Oh yes, we used to pick berries and walked three miles to sell them." She further explained that some food items such as sugar and butter were hard to get.

I questioned her about where she lived at this time and she answered, "Well, at the beginning I lived in National Mine. After I was married we lived in Salisbury, and after Rosemary was born we needed another bedroom, so we went back to National Mine."

It has been many years since Mrs. Bennetts attended school and many changes in education have come over the years. I was quite astounded when Mrs. Bennetts described the school she attended. The school had no indoor plumbing, and the janitor had to haul all of the water from a well down in the bottom of the school yard. They all drank out of the same dipper, and whatever water they drew from the well they had to drink. They were not allowed to drink part of it and throw the rest away because the janitor had a hard job to haul it. "I used to take two ten quarts pails to school with me in the morning and at night, I would haul water from the well — drinking water for home." During the 1930's, teachers'





training and salaries were different than they are today. According to Mrs. Bennetts, "a teacher at that time could teach with three months training from the Normal School, but wages were very low." She then went on to tell me, that one of her sisters, who was a teacher at the National Mine School, had to walk five or six miles to school, haul her own wood and light her own fire so the room would be warm for the kids. There were eight grades in that one room school.

When Mrs. Bennetts was a young girl there were not many cars, so I questioned her about the railroad. She explained, "Well, yes, there was the, I think it was the L.S. & I. that used to come out to the National Mine." She then said that there were very few people who could afford to ride on the train. The Depression affected other industries and businesses too.

I asked Mrs. Bennetts if any of the businesses had to close because of the stock market crash or the Depression and she replied, "Oh! well, there were very few, but there was a little candy store down on the corner that had to close."

I asked Mrs. Bennetts to describe what Christmas was like for her, their holiday meals and Christmas mornings. She said that they always prepared a goose for their dinner and that on Christmas morning there were not too many gifts under the tree.

Mrs. Bennetts was a member of the National Mine Methodist Church and explained to me how wedding and funeral services were different in those years. She said that they had to take the body to the Methodist church for the service, the mourners would always walk from the house of the deceased, leading the hearse down to the church. She also told a little about the weddings. Many weddings were followed just as they are today by a reception or "shivery" as it was called then. Even though Mrs. Bennetts was never allowed to go, most of the kids and young people went to the shivery and danced.

When I asked her if people were more helpful to each other during the Depression, she replied, "yes, but they were also envious of one another, and they thought one would get more privileges than they had." I also asked her if she learned anything from the Depression and she said, "well we had to conserve a lot."

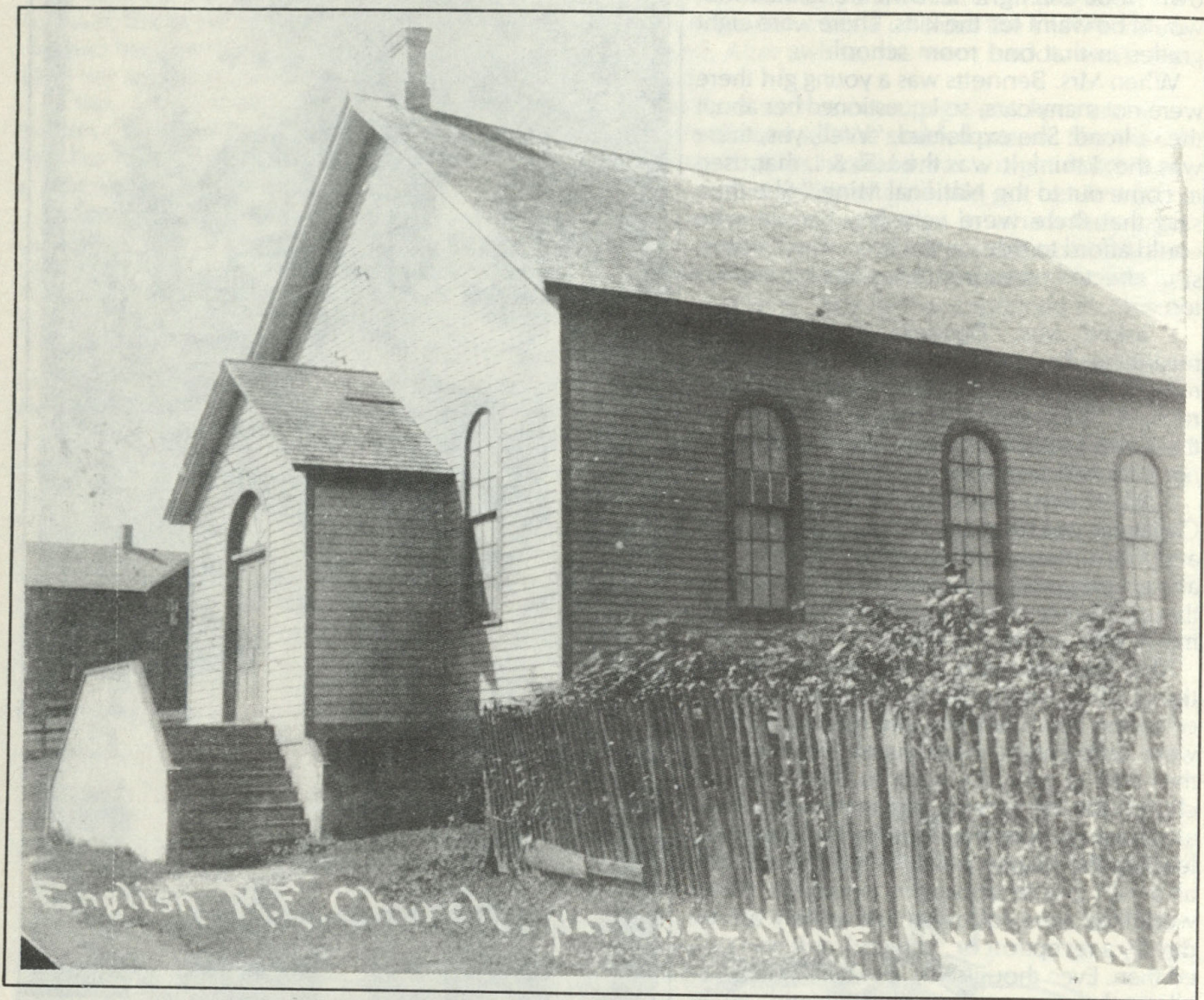
After completing the interview with Grace Bennetts, I realized how much harder life was during the Depression than it is today.



*Grace Hart Bennetts and her sister  
Alice Goldsworthy Olson.*

Cindy Bystrom





*English Methodist Church, National Mine*



## THE NEW DEAL ??

Carl A. Koski, I., my grandpa and one of a family of 12 children, was born and has lived his entire life in the West Ishpeming location. He was born on March 30, 1918.

Although President Hoover is often used by many people and even historians as a scapegoat for the Depression, Mr. Koski stated strongly that, in his opinion, Hoover had nothing to do with the start of the Depression.

Although the Koskis had 12 children in the family, they had 2 gardens as well as cows during the Depression to give them food. They also got all of their own firewood. Flour and sugar had to be bought but that was about all. Mr. Koski's father also worked right through the Depression, first at the Cliffs Shaft Mine and later at the Greenwood Mine. Because some members of the family were employed, the Koskis managed during the Depression years. Mr. Koski stated it quite simply, "We were not rich by all means." The same could not be said for all families in the area. At one time the mines, a main source of employment in the area, were only working one day a week and many people were out of jobs. There was not even any unemployment in that time, although the county had a program in which they helped the poor and those in tough "straits".

Obviously there were problems in the Upper Peninsula in the thirties. Many Americans were without work for the first time in their lives. In 1929, 3.2% of the labor force was unemployed. By 1933, 24.9% of the labor force was unemployed. Fears grew that the bad times might destroy the country. Then the New Deal came along, supposedly to save the nation. My grandpa was not impressed by the New Deal and he explained, "It was a sorry mistake. It started a gigantic welfare that's still going on today." He also said that he wasn't very confident that Roosevelt could end the Depression. This all makes me wonder if the history books are correct in proclaiming President Roosevelt and the New Deal as the savior of our country.

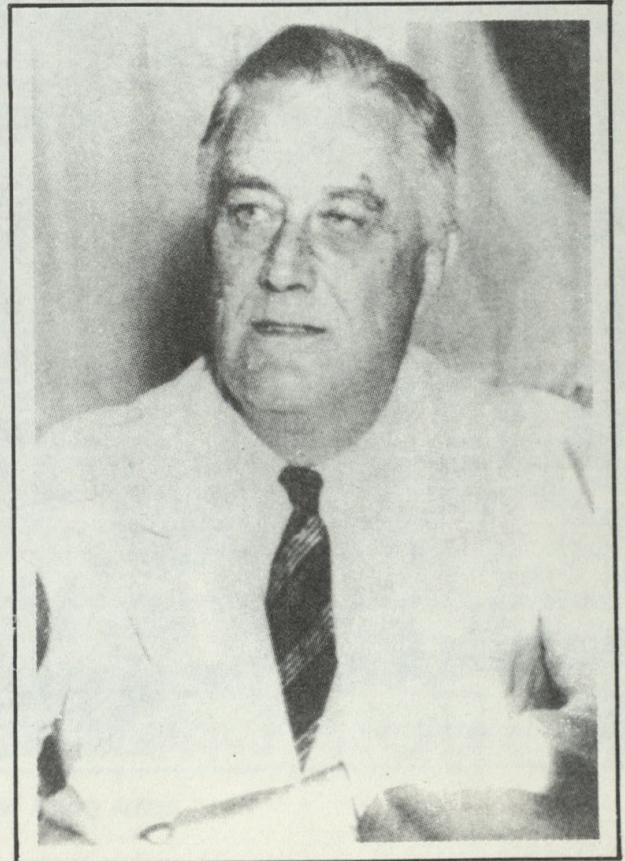
My grandpa described the times while the New Deal was in action and one would think that nothing was being done to end the Depression. Some of the mines partially closed down and jobs were hard to find. My grandpa said a man could usually get a job cutting pulp, but in 1938 you couldn't even find work in the woods.

One thing that Mr. Koski felt hurt the area was the fact that the Gardner-Mackinac Mine in Gwinn closed down. A lot of the men that worked there transferred to this area and became employed at the Cliffs Shaft and at the Negaunee mines. As a result workers from this locality were kept from these jobs, and this hurt the area further.

Evidently some of the people who were out of work were using their time for home enterprises during the times of prohibition. To my surprise, I learned that some local people were arrested and my grandpa mentioned that several neighbors were "hauled down to Marquette (prison) for their little chemical works."

Help was needed. This help came in the form of such New Deal organizations as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). It put young men to work in the field of conservation. He mentioned that there was a C.C. Camp at Sagola and there was also one south of Gwinn that was called Camp 1620. Camps were also located at Big Bay and Au Train so there were a number of camps within a 50 mile radius.

One other organization that Mr. Koski mentioned was the N.Y.A. which dealt with the nation's youth. This organization gave the bigger high school kids jobs working on the playgrounds and doing various other work of

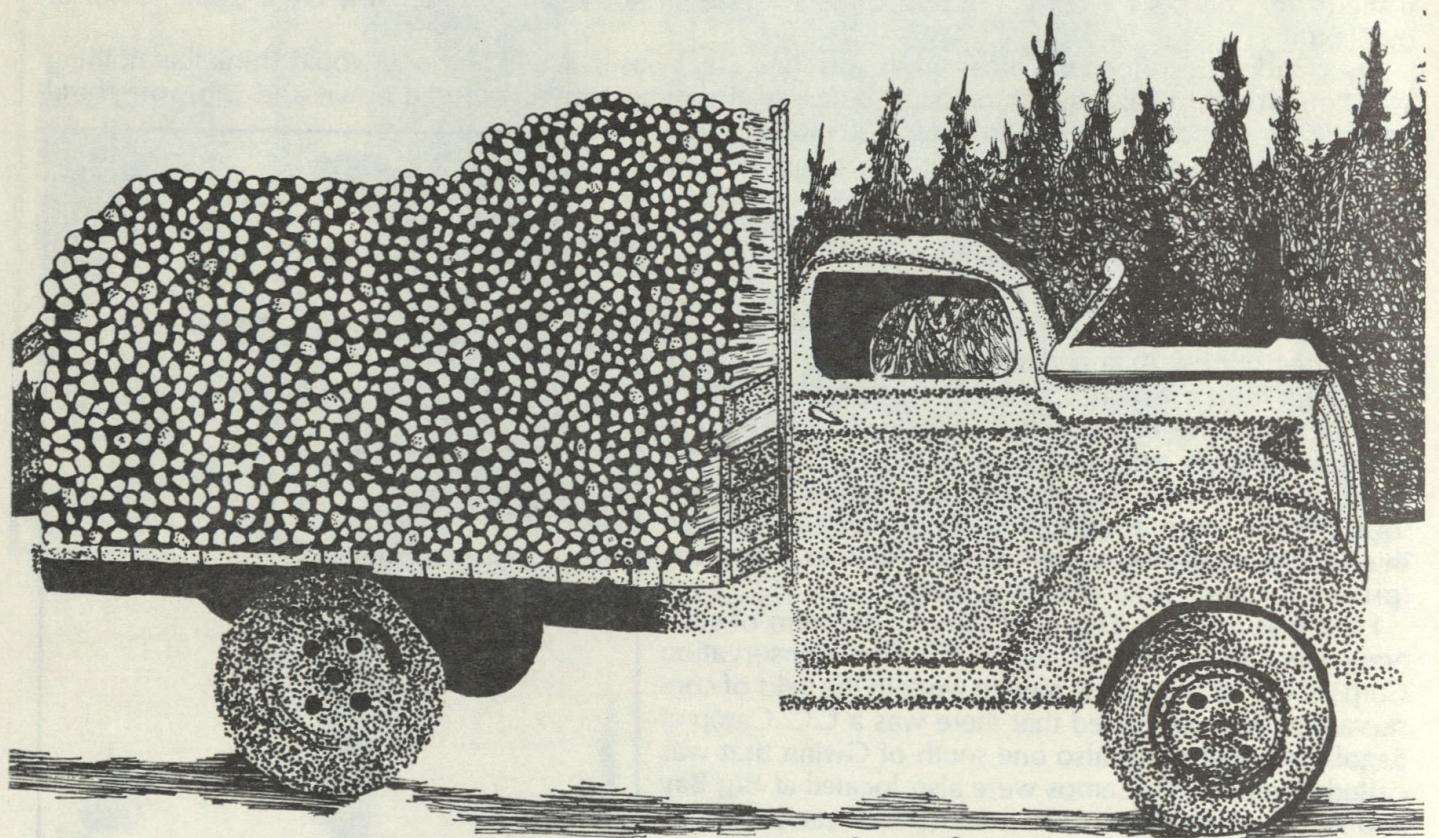




that nature.

Mr. Koski is a proud man who doesn't complain about the Depression and he doesn't ask for sympathy. However, you can still sum up many families' situations in one quote by Mr. Koski, "We didn't have any money to lose!"

Carl Koski



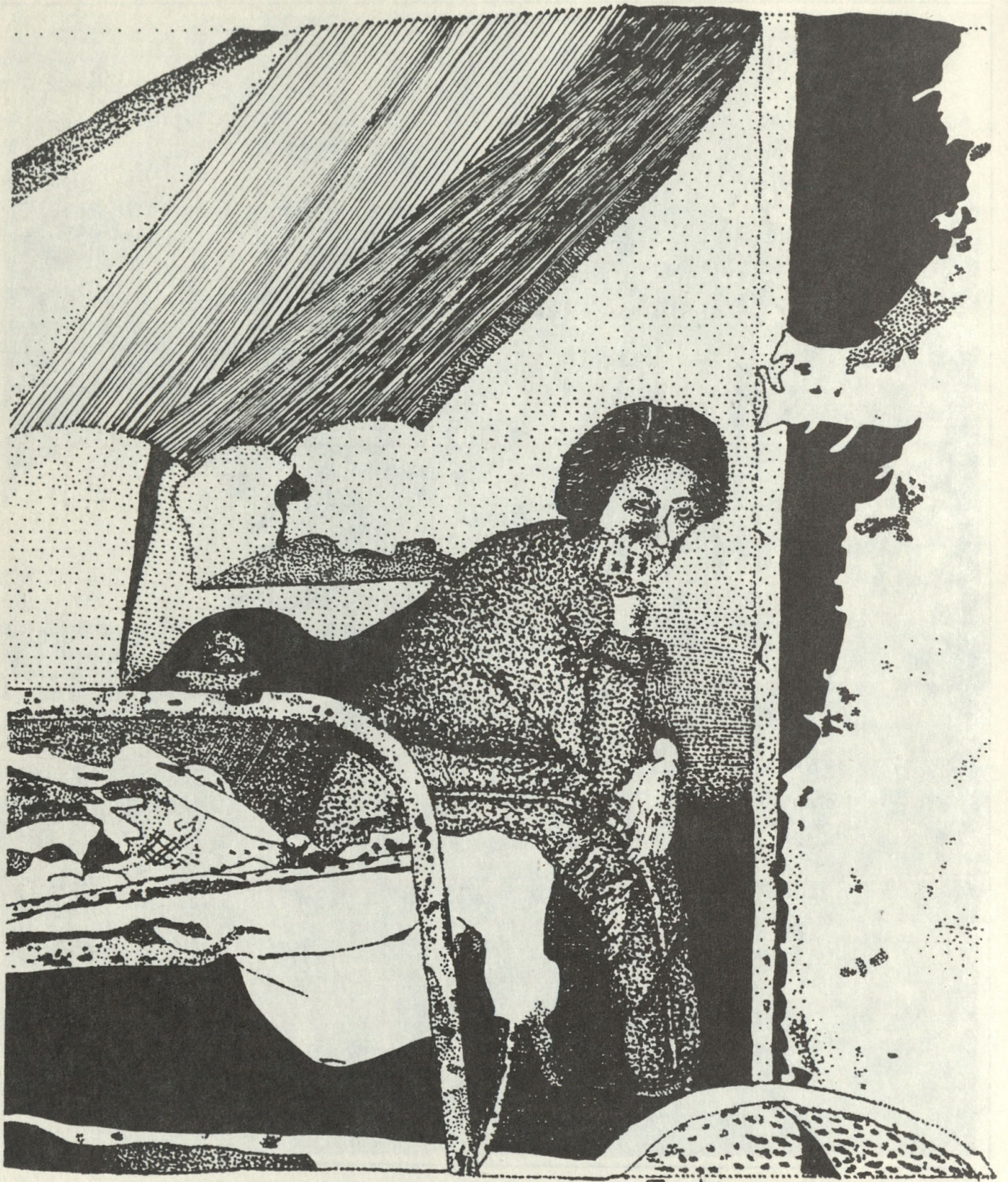
Dawn Raisanen '84





*A still in the National Mine Area*





"84" MISHIN '58



## FUN TIMES IN GREEN CREEK

Green Creek, a location south of Ishpeming, has been the home of my grandma, Aline Rintamaki, for most of her life.

The school she attended when she was a little girl was a farm house that belonged to Jay Smoker, and the school room was in the living room. "You don't see schools that look like farmhouses anymore," she related chuckling.

Later, Aline went to a school which was located in Green Creek. It was a little country school with all the grades in one room and one teacher taught all grades. This school, "Pleasant Prairie", was located where the Oja family now lives.

Mrs. Rintamaki recalled that her fifth grade teacher was Norman Fredrickson, and her sixth grade teacher was Rushton Strongman, her seventh grade teacher was Russell Oles, and in eighth grade she went to the Tilden Township School which was located on a hill by the Hankanen residence. The teacher there was Anna Lawrence. The eighth grade teacher in Green Creek was Andrea Anderson. In ninth grade she went to Ishpeming. She stayed at her grandmother's house during the week and came home for the weekends. She doesn't remember any of the teachers because she did not even finish a year at that school.

She remembers when they used to buy flour that came in big bags, and out of those bags she made all the kids' clothes, because they couldn't buy any material. A lot of people made their clothes from old clothes. She used to sew for the neighborhood, making jackets and coats out of the old coats the parents had and couldn't use any more. My grandmother pointed out that people were very resourceful at that time.

She recalls when a can of good grain coffee was 35¢ a pound, eggs were 10¢ a dozen, and hamburger was 25¢ for two or three pounds.

Her brother, Adolph, belonged to the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The Corps kept the young people occupied and earning, but they didn't get big pay. They made roads, planted trees, etc. They also had the FERA (Federal Emergency Relief Association). The FERA used to hand out rice, flour or beans to big families almost like they do now with butter and cheese. She remembers when they went to certain designated places to pick up their government food. People were able to get a pound of butter, fruit, dried foods, or flour.

Although they lived in a rural area, her family didn't have cows, so they had to get milk from their neighbors, Otto and Andrea Anderson. Either one of the Anderson boys would bring the milk over or her son would go and get it. "It was a good thing the Anderson's had cows, because there was no milk delivery out here at the time."

Before we finished our conversation, my grandmother told me an amusing story about the neighbor's cow. She said, "Andrea and Otto Anderson had a cow that used to go into peoples' yards as she knew how to open a gate. You had to have a gate, because there were more cows in the neighborhood than people," she chuckles. "We had a wooden gate and there was a sling around the post to hold it, and that cow knew how to stick her head under that sling, lift it up, and the gate would fly open and the cow would come into our yard. Otto's chickens even used to come into our garden, and even though the garden was inside a fence, those chickens found their way up there."

"Those were the fun times just to get the monotony out."

Walking down the road and looking at all of the houses, it is difficult for me to imagine cows and chickens wandering around the neighborhood. I was grateful to my grandmother for revealing to me what the area was like during the Depression.

Several months have passed since I had this interview with my grandma. This conversation has become

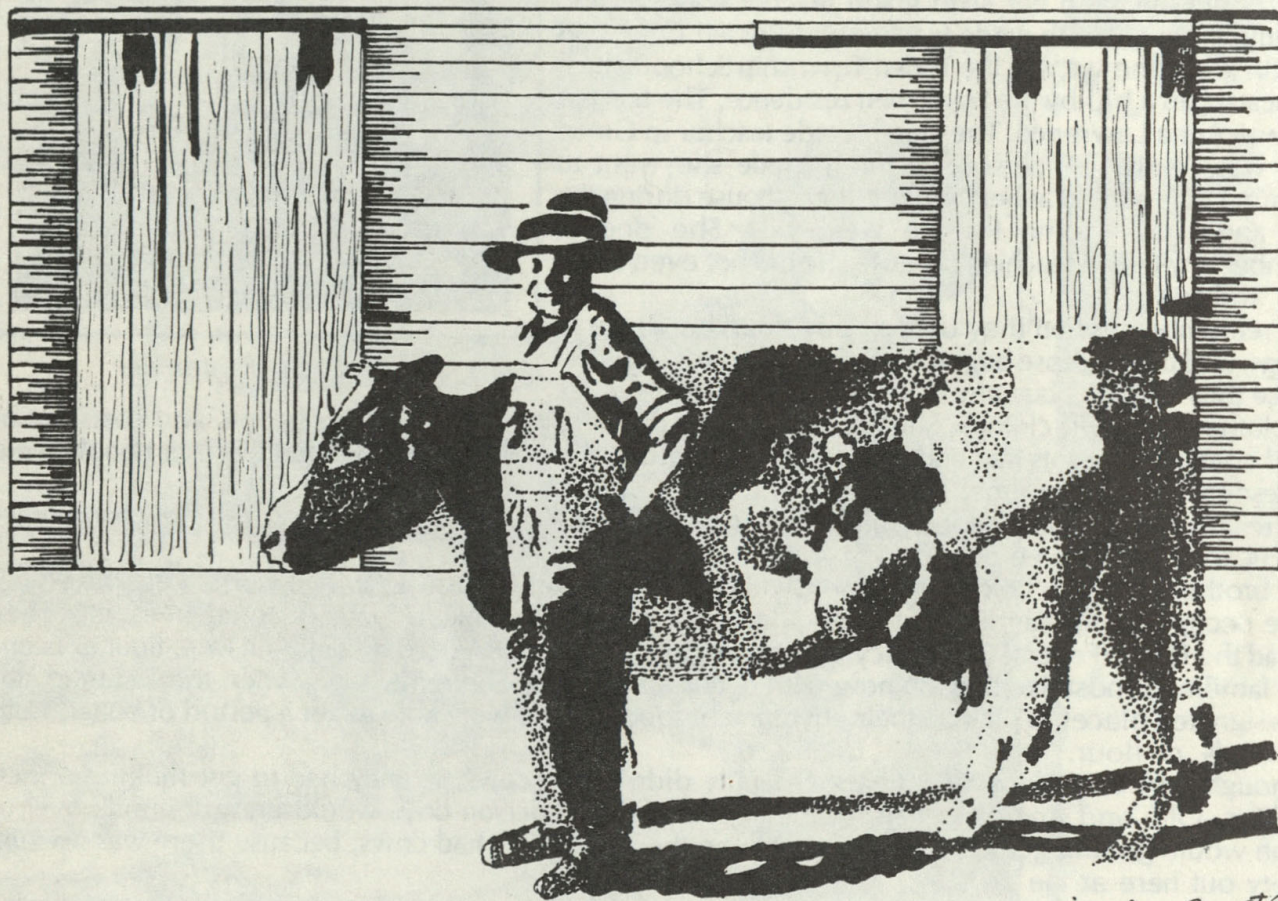


*Mr. and Mrs. Rintamaki*



even more meaningful to me as my grandma passed away on March 26, 1984. However, it makes me happy because her thoughts have been recorded and preserved.

Peter Rintamaki



*Cindy Byström*





*The current fashions of the 1930's  
(Left to Right) Helen Solka, Mary McCarthy, Cora Hanson, Elsie Annala*