

## 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.

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

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, <sup>that</sup> 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 tells 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 to buy many items from the store they didn't go hungry because of their gardens. Ruth remembers her mother preserving 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 a 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 of her friends used to go every weekend. Some big stars at that time were: Clark Gable, Betty David 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 a few 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