

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 the 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 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 like 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 traveled in an open truck even in below zero weather. 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. & 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 of the Mail Route Road.

Jackie Kari