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Next to Word of Hope Church

**Life in the Depression**

By Dorothy Anna Birkholz of Fruitport  
(Also printed in the May 2000 "Good Old Days" magazine)  
Young people today feel they need a lot of clothes, their own TV, radio, stereo, their own room and bath, a bicycle, and their own car. I wonder how they would have survived during the 1950s?

When I graduated from the eighth grade in 1932, things were already bad. My dad and sister had been laid off. It was nearly impossible for anyone to find a job.

I felt fortunate that my parents could manage to get me my class picture, which cost 50 cents, and a class pin, which cost \$1. They also gave me a nice little wristwatch; I think it cost about \$15. I had no graduation party, but Mom baked me a layer cake.

The girls in my class made their white cotton graduation dresses in sewing class. The dresses were all made the same, and the fabric cost about \$2. We felt lucky to have that, as everyone was having hard times. The boys in the class wore dark trousers and white shirts.

I went to high school for only two years. I had to quit because my parents could not afford to pay for the books, supplies and carfare.

When I was 16, I got a job cleaning a six-room house and doing the ironing for a family of four. I took care of two little boys, 6 and 4 years old. I had to be there at 6:30 a.m. and stayed until 5 p.m. I worked five days a week and received \$4 per week.

If the woman had to work on a Saturday, I got 25 cents for working from 6:30 a.m. until noon.

The woman I worked for worked in a factory and earned \$10 a week. She was lucky that she lived nearby so she could walk to work and save the 7 cents' carfare.

If she and her husband went out on a Saturday night, I baby-sat the two boys. I had to be there at 7 p.m. and they usually got home about 2 or 3 a.m. I received 50 cents for the whole night. I gave everything I earned to my parents.

My father worked in a butcher shop every Saturday from 7 a.m.-11 p.m. He received \$5 and our meat for Sunday dinner.

During the week he worked two hours a day, while the boss went home for lunch. For doing that, my dad got our meat each day.

My sister got a job in a neighborhood candy store. She worked every day from 6 p.m. until midnight. She earned 25 cents an hour, and she gave all her pay to our parents.

My mother and I walked down the alley and picked up wooden boxes and tree branches to burn in our heating stove to save on coal. I also picked up cans, bottles and paper that I sold to the ragman when he came down the alley. Sometimes I got 50 cents, which helped buy food.

When my dad ordered coal for our heating stove, he asked the coal man to dump it at the curb. It cost 50 cents to have it carried in, and we could not afford it. The coal man left some bags that the four of us used to carry the coal to the shed in the basement. The next day, the man picked up his bags.

A cousin gave me clothes and I cut them down and sewed them to fit. She was much bigger than I was and was about 15 years older, so the styles were not very appropriate.

When our shoe soles got thin, Dad bought a pair of rubber soles for 10 cents and glued them on. When the rubber heels wore down, Dad bought replacements in the dime store for 15 cents. He tore off the old ones and nailed on the new ones. Each of us had only one pair of shoes.

When our sheets wore thin, Mother cut them in half down the center. She hemmed the part that was in the middle, then sewed the outer edges together. That made a seam down the middle of the sheet, but the sheet was stronger and lasted a long time. Sometimes she made pillowcases from the sides of worn sheets. When the satin binding on blankets frayed, she removed it and hemmed the blankets on each end.



**Pine Rest to offer anger management classes for teens**

(Submitted by Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services)  
Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services will offer anger management classes for teens in June, July, and September. The four-week classes will be led by Ryan LaRue, MSW, LMSW, ACSW, clinic manager of Pine Rest's Caledonia, Hastings, and Lake Odessa clinics. He has over 10 years' social work/counseling experience working with adolescents and children and has taught the anger management course for three years, serving over 400 teenagers.

Classes will be held on Tuesdays from 4:15 to 5:30 p.m. at the Van Andel Center on Pine Rest's main campus, 300 68th Street SE in Cutlerville. Classes will be geared toward males and females ages 12 to 17.

The classes will focus on an assortment of topics, including:

- Learning to control anger and prevent angry outbursts
- Identifying the signs of anger
- Practicing how to express your feelings
- Finding alternative ways to express your anger
- Understanding the differences between anger, aggression, assertiveness, and hostility

The dates for the sessions are June 2, 9, 16, and 23; July 7, 14, 21, and 28; September 8, 15, 22, and 29. The cost to attend is \$75 per person. To register, call (616) 222-4584 or email ryan.larue@pinerest.org.



My parents and I are pictured in a winter scene from the 1930s.

Mother bought flour in cloth bags. She washed and bleached the bags, then hemmed them to make dishtowels. She also bought salt in little bags that she cut open and hemmed. We used them for handkerchiefs.

We had to darn our rayon stockings and my dad's socks using Mother's wooden darning egg. We put the egg in the sock and pulled it tight, then wove over the hole with darning thread.

When the collars on Dad's shirts started to fray, Mom took them off, turned them wrong side up and sewed them back onto the shirts with the frayed part underneath. If the elbows wore through, she cut the sleeves short and hemmed them. Dad wore these in the summer.

When the armholes in our dresses wore out, we took the sleeves out and bound the armholes to make summer dresses. When the top of my dress wore thin, I cut it off at the waist, hemmed the top and pulled elastic through to make a skirt.

We had a little radio but TVs were unheard of. We also had a Victrola and a few records. That was our entertainment. We had no car and had to walk wherever we went.

Once in a while, perhaps once a month, we got to go to a show. We got there before 6 p.m., while the tickets were still 10 cents. In those days, we saw two pictures, a newsreel, a comedy and a cartoon. One theater showed all that plus a live band and stage show for 25 cents, but we rarely saw that.

We played cards and board games. In the evenings, Dad read the newspaper, which cost 5 cents. The Sunday paper was 10 cents. Mother would do mending and darning. My sister and I would embroider, crochet or read. We had no telephone; in fact, very few people had one.

Even with all we went through, we were thankful. Some people lived on the streets and had to beg for food, or go through people's garbage. If they were lucky, they found a soup kitchen where they could get food once a day—usually soup, bread and coffee.

We lived through it with everyone helping one another. I believe people learned a lot, and later appreciated and took care of what they had.



**Brueck-Burns engagement**

Melissa Marie Brueck, daughter of Jill and Kevin Brueck of Muskegon, and Aaron David Burns, son of Julie and Dan Burns, also of Muskegon, have announced their engagement.

The bride-to-be is a 2002 graduate of Fruitport High School and a 2006 graduate of Ferris State University. Melissa is a nuclear medicine technologist at the Mercy Health Partners Hackley Campus.

The prospective groom is also a 2002 graduate of Fruitport High School. He is employed by the Muskegon County Road Commission.

The couple plan an August 22 wedding. •  
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