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CREATIVE WRITING CLASS

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DEPRESSION DAYS

by

Leone Remington

Run in hose
no more dough.
I can't go!

Ham bone
split peas,
Pea soup!

My coat
make over.
Child's coat!

Library books
read and study.
No money!

THE BIG SEARCH

By

Edna E. Veale

Money was so scarce my father and older brother could not afford to buy cigarettes at ten to fifteen cents a pack and they switched to Bull Durham, which was a nickel a sack and included the cigarette papers to roll your own.

My brother remembers the day when they turned pockets inside out, searched dresser drawers and overturned upholstered furniture looking for a nickel to purchase a sack of Bull Durham. Suddenly he remembered that long ago he had tossed a five cent piece up in the air and it had landed behind the woodwork of the doorway.

Off came the woodwork and they found the wedged nickel - which meant another day of "smokes" for them!!

WALLPAPERED "PRIVY"

By

Edna E. Veale

Our rent for a semi-modern cottage on the outskirts of town, the summer of 1934 was \$8.00 per month. It had gas and electricity, but no water. We obtained this from the landlord's outdoor faucet nextdoor. This was quite a chore on washday. My husband helped cart the water in by the pailful. He also helped do the wash, as it was done by hand.

The small home was stove-heated and also had an immaculate "privy" with a wallpapered interior in the back yard, set quite a distance from the house. One moonlit night I found it necessary to make a back yard trip. The bar on the door slipped down and there I was marooned!!!

No one heard me call out and I had to push out the small screen of the window, reach down and unbar the door.

THE CRASH ON WALL STREET

by

Alvin Morgan

On Tuesday, October 29th, 1929 the stock market began to zoom downwards. It rallied a bit on Wednesday and Thursday, but on Black Friday it crashed! The news came over the radio yet I did not immediately realize it would affect me or my family. Panic engulfed Wall Street and the nation as the value of the stocks continued to decline. I had purchased a few shares of Nash stock and it soon dropped from a \$90.00 to \$6.00 a share. I thought of my small bank account and realized that, too was in danger as the "runs" had begun on banks.

The banks, however, did not have the money as it was mostly invested in home mortgages. The bank began to fail. Before the crash, people were investing in almost anything on margin. There seemed to be no limit on how high they would go. On paper almost everybody was making money.

I soon realized my situation was nothing compared to most people that had lost everything. I had a steady job. There were riots in the farm belt. Sheriffs were driving farmers from their homes. People were actually hungry and soup kitchens were set up in cities with people in ragged clothing lined up for the handouts.

Later on the banks were closed for a time which restored a measure of order. W.P.A. provided work for married men on relief. The young unmarried men could go to C.C.C. camps where they would be fed, clothed and receive a small wage in exchange for their work in forests and highways. Many parks, such as Petrifying Springs were beautifully improved by these men.

The soldiers of World War I had been given a bonus, but they could not collect till a later date. This caused the veterans to march on Washington to demand it be paid immediately. They camped in shacks near the Potomac River until the army was called out to disperse them.

The Crash On Wall Street - Continued

My salary as a postman was cut \$300.00 a year. At that, I found myself better off than most. Two nephews and a brother-in-law had to go for relief for food and clothing. They considered that a disgrace, no one asked for help till they hit rock-bottom. There was very little I could do for them as I had five to support on my small salary.

As the depression went on and on prices of food came down. I remember going to a chain store and purchasing \$5.00 worth of groceries which we could hardly carry between the two of us, to the car. Chocolate Stars, a candy favorite of ours sold for 9¢ a pound.

It was not until World War II that conditions got better. What a pity - that our country had to engage in another terrible war to bring us out of our slump.

THE DEPRESSION AND THE KOLB FAMILY

by

Harold Kolb

When the Depression really hit us early in 1934, in Minneapolis, I had no job, printers were a dime a dozen, and there was no work of any kind. My wife and I, with our small son, went to live with my mother-in-law in Owatonna, Minnesota.

A few weeks work in Marshall, Minnesota, didn't help much. The wages were barely enough to pay my expenses while away from home, and I had no regrets when the job ended.

Late in summer an application to the Daily Cardinal, published by the University School of Journalism, got me a job in Madison. The weekly wages of \$42.00 a week was a princely sum in those days. The Cardinal ceased publication when school ended in June, and I was out of a job again.

Another letter got me a job on the Star-Courier in Kewanee, Illinois. Neither the job nor the town was anything to brag about. After a year and a half we moved to Toledo, Ohio, where I worked on The Blade. It was my first experience subbing on a metropolitan newspaper.

Prospects for work on The Blade after New Year's were dim. I managed to get work in Chicago on what was called the State Job, printing the automobile registration list for Illinois. I worked it for several years. Setting names and numbers was monotonous but it lasted for six or eight months each year.

When the State Job ended, a friend who knew Chicago well took me under his wing, showing me shops that got special jobs at regular intervals. Between times I'd start early in the morning, visiting several shops. If I got nothing, I'd try again in the afternoon, catching a night shift--even a lobster shift starting at midnight. It wasn't easy, but I worked most of the time.

One morning I met a friend who suggested we have a beer in a nearby tavern. When I refused, saying I wanted to hit a few more shops, he was aghast.

The Depression And The Kolb Family - Continued

"My God!" he exclaimed. "Do you mean to say you go looking for work when you're sober?"

Shortly after World War II started work increased and many men went into the armed services. One day the foreman of the shop ordered me brusquely to get a job out in a hurry. Then he paused, remembering things were different and added, pleadingly: "Will you, please?" I laughed. The Depression was over.

THE DEPRESSION DAYS

By

Gertrude Moltman

The Depression days are difficult for me to write about. It was the most mixed up, frustrating time of my life. There was worry, anger, joy, and love all jumbled together and I have a deep feeling of unhappiness when I try to recall the things I want to forget.

We were an average happy family of four. My husband managed the meat department in a prosperous food store. His wages were considered top scale in those days. We had been able to purchase a nice little home with four extra lots that we felt were a wise investment.

At the beginning of the Depression, the government passed some kind of a wage scale that was supposed to help people, but the firm my husband worked for took unfair advantage of it. They changed his title from manager to clerk and were able to cut him exactly one third of his regular salary.

They were very wealthy people and I was angry. However, there were no jobs to be had so we had to take it. My husband refused to let it get him down and was a brick of patience with me. He would point out that many of our friends had no jobs at all and were on welfare. I still was bitter, as I knew they were being dishonest and unfair.

My husband had our extra lots plowed and we planted them with every kind of food we could think of. We wanted enough for ourselves, our minister, and my mother and dad. We were lucky that my husband was in a meat market, and he saw to it that we got meat. In those days people didn't use the heart and tongue and meats of that kind, so my husband brought them home and we learned how to fix very good meals from them.

We made it a point to can any surplus of anything we had. My mother and I and the pastors wife worked hard and had our basements full of things from the garden and fruit we went out and picked on shares at the surrounding farms.

The Depression Days - Continued

When fall came I had worked so hard in the garden and at the canning that I was all run down. One day I started hemorrhaging and I became so ill they called the doctor. After a thorough examination he informed me I was pregnant. For four years we had talked and planned for another child but to have it happen under such conditions seemed to me like the last straw. The doctor said, "I am afraid the only way she can carry the child is to stay right in bed". I was sobbing my heart out but my husband very calmly said, "If that is what it takes that is exactly what we will do. We want that child".

The next morning a hired girl arrived. How my husband expected to pay her I couldn't imagine but she was there and I was too ill to care.

All through those long months my husband and the children never came into my room without a cheerful happy smile as if they didn't have a care in the world.

The waiting was finally over and I was rushed to the hospital. I had a very difficult time, I was so weak from no exercise. After several hours of labor, I heard our little daughter yell out at the top of her tiny lungs and the doctor exclaimed, "She is a little beauty and perfect in every way". For the first time in months I relaxed. If she was all right that was all I could ask. She did grow up to be a very gifted child and the delight of our hearts.

One day a salesman came into the store and told my husband about a new store that was looking for a man to manage the meat department. My husband went to see them and decided to take the job as it was a much better salary than he had before he had been cut so drastically. We had to sell our home and move to another town, but it was worth it.

How my husband ever paid all the doctor and hospital bills I never knew.

The Depression Days - Continued

Somehow he managed, but I am sure it wasn't easy.

I did finally get the bitterness toward his former employer out of my heart. I realized that in spite of everything the Lord had been very good to us.

DEPRESSION DRESS

By

Dorothy V. Walters

When it hung in the shop window, a discreet price card below it read, "\$25".

It was such a smart, black woollen dress with tiny satin collar and cuffs. A belt of steel-colored metal mesh and an attractive buckle completed the trimming.

Twenty-five dollars! I simply couldn't afford that dress.

A month later, on the mark-down rack, a tag read, "\$12". True, the handsome belt was broken, but a black suede belt would do.

I tried it on. Shortened, it would be perfect. Out came my checkbook, and the dress was mine.

With pride and pleasure I wore it to school next Monday morning.

As I stepped before my first class, I saw "Red" lean across the aisle to Phyllis.

"She's got a new dress. Depression must be over," I heard him whisper.

INCIDENTS OF DEPRESSION YEARS

by

Lue Mattern

Depression years were really something -- banks failed -- things went from bad to worse. Even professional people needed to go to the Relief for food and shelter for their loved ones. Those years it was no disgrace to go to the Relief Department for help.

At times certain food and articles were difficult to get. Meat and potatoes were on the most wanted list. Sometimes if you had a good friend in a store that felt that your need was greater than their need, they would let you have the pound of potatoes that had been put under the counter.

Meat was especially on the hard-to-come-by list. One Saturday we went to three different towns, hoping to get meat, needed to help build up the strength of a member of our family; sick with a terminal illness. At the town of Silver Lake we got two porkchops, at Bristol a baloney for fifteen cents, the same we now pay over a dollar for. At the town of Antioch we got one half pound of hamburger. All the while using up precious gasoline that was being rationed.

Seeing people standing in line by the drugstore, hoping to get a few cigarettes -- some to mail to their sons or sweethearts in the service of our country, maybe a few for their own use.

After a while the government started the "W.P.A." to give work to as many folks as possible. Giving courage to the folks in need of moral support.

Some years have passed and the times have gotten better -- wages have increased and we no longer need to stand in line for hard-to-come-by merchandise.

Social Security was brought into the lives of older folks. People are living longer lives, but are required to retire at the age of sixty-five. With the help of Social Security people have a better chance of living in their own homes years longer before needing special assistance, if their health should fail.

OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF BABES

by

Edna E. Veale

Many Kenosha families doubled-up and pooled their meager resources during the Depression. Three months after we were married in November, 1929, my husband lost his job. My wages at a local grocery store were sixteen dollars a week, some of which was taken out in groceries. We moved in with my father, four brothers and one sister. Father worked one or two days a week, my older brother had the same work schedule.

As the Depression went on and on, the living room furniture became more and more threadbare and worn, with springs bouncing out of the upholstery here and there.

The summer of 1932 my husband found temporary work, and we felt it was time to move as we were expecting our first baby. We found an inexpensive furnished apartment nearby. I was discussing this move with a visitor and her four year old son. Meanwhile, he had been inspecting the room critically. Much to his mother's embarrassment he said to me "If you move, your furniture will fall apart".

NO TRUER WORDS WERE EVER SPOKEN!

SERVE THE LORD WITH GLADNESS

by

Henrietta Ryall

During the Depression, we were living on the Lakeshore Road, about three miles north of Kenosha, on the shore of Lake Michigan. Food was no great problem. Many surplus foods were available on relief, and everyone had gardens, but there was little money for gasoline or entertainment. Shows in town were too far to reach on foot; the bus and the interurban car gave full value for the carfare (15¢) but that was still too much for the pinched budgets on our street.

Reverend Carl Franz, pastor of a Presbyterian Church in West Allis, and a field worker for the National Mission for the Presbyterian Church, saw the need of the community. With the help of Miss Mary Bowman, he organized a Sunday School for the Lakeshore children.

They recruited workers in the community, obtained a gift of three dozen folding chairs from the Simmons Company (which was then a Kenosha based industry). A coal burning stove was donated. A benevolent gentleman offered us a small house for \$10.00 a month. A young student pastor at McCormick Seminary in Chicago agreed to conduct a service each Sunday for our small parish. The National Mission for the Presbyterian Church furnished Sunday School material free; we bought an organ for \$5.00, and we were ready to start.

We even had an organist. I bought a book of short classical pieces, and practiced the piano as I hadn't for years. Those youngsters had a taste of Beethoven, Schuman, Bach and Chopin, thanks to my nice book.

When Mary Bowman called on me I was glad to join the small corps of helpers. Mary was to go on to the mission field in Africa after she left us. A warm, outgoing young woman, she was a splendid assistant to Reverend Franz, and instrumental in recruiting the help of many families on the Lakeshore.

Serve The Lord With Gladness - Continued

Every Sunday in cold weather, we took turns building a fire in the coal stove to warm our small meeting place. We held Sunday School regularly; the minister preached a thoughtful sermon; our sweet-voiced Effie Anderson sang; her husband, a happy-go-lucky Scotsman whom she called Wullie, played his fiddle. "We came into His presence with singing."

About twenty-five children and seven adults responded to the first call; later there were over forty.

Daily Vacation Bible School was another activity, with a varied program of Bible study, small Biblical dramas written and produced by the children, crafts, and a story hour. For recreation, who needed swings or slides, with Lake Michigan a few rods away?

Not to be outdone, the women formed a Women's Guild to meet in homes, and the parents of our young people found ways to make the money needed for rent, coal, minister's transportation and fee, and Christmas festivities.

Mr. Nelson, one of our ministers, organized a young people's society. They named it Mathetes, a Greek word for friends. I am sure there are many fond memories of Mathetes among the now widely scattered youth of the Lake-shore Road of that day.

Besides the Sunday evening meetings of Mathetes, which were held at homes under Mr. Nelson's leadership, there were two home talent plays, many parties in homes, picnics, beach parties and other outings.

The Depression dragged on endlessly. We needed a spark to furnish excitement for young and old. We'd have a Wild West night, with money sky-high, no pikers allowed!

Making money was simple - we used typed scrip in heart warming figures. Our games cost \$10.00 a throw - up to \$1,000. Fifty cents bought \$10,000 in scrip, and scrip bought anything in the house.. Everyone found prizes in attics, and begged of neighbors. Penny candy bars (in case you'd forgotten,

Serve The Lord With Gladness - Continued

a good mouthful of Baby Ruth or Butterfingers) were our Bonanza. We found an amazing number of homemade games. Refreshments were donated, the school basement was opened to us, and we had ourselves a real party. Money making was not our purpose, but we did clear about five dollars.

We were known as the Mission, and for several years we witnessed for the Lord on the Lakeshore Road. With the Depression past, people returned to their church homes in the city, or formed new affiliations with the Presbyterian Church in town. Our beloved Reverend Franz had died, and Mary Bowman was in Africa. When Mr. Kennedy, the last of our succession of young ministers, graduated from the Seminary and accepted a pastorate, we sold our organ, and the Mission was closed.

What lay before these dear young people in the years not far ahead? "Some went down to the sea in ships -- they mounted up to heaven, they went down to the depths." God used us to give them a few years of Christian fellowship, an oasis of peace and friendship before they were engulfed in the holocaust of war.

THINGS WEREN'T SO BAD

by

Lillian Lundin

In Depression times, we also had hamburger helpers (not packaged-prepared) and with the help of a large vegetable garden, I created my own. I filled a large skillet with raw, sliced potatoes, one onion, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. hamburger, add water, salt, pepper and simmer. This was enough for four of us and it tasted mighty good. Hamburger sold for 10¢ a pound or 3 lbs. for a quarter, if you had the money.

We saved pennies and it seemed we bought everything with pennies. We called it "Pennies from Heaven". Once, when the pennies were exhausted, we sold Dad's gold inlays from teeth that were extracted, and bought cherries to can and eat. We had company for dinner one evening, Lois (age three) said "Daddy, are those cherries from your gold teeth?"

Bus fares were 3¢ for children and 7¢ for adults. Bobby (age 4) was going to the eye doctor three times a week. I would put him on the bus and walk the 38 blocks downtown, and do the same thing coming home.

However, we had lots of good times to remember. We would take the little red wagon, our lunch and two small children and walk to Forest Park, which was then a delightful, woodsy place to picnic. There we would build a campfire and roast potatoes and corn. I would pick berries or gather nuts as the children played and roamed the woods nearby. At dusk we sat around the campfire and sang Swedish songs.

Wealth, we did not have, but there was good health and lots of love in our home.

1935, 'T WAS A GOOD YEAR

by

Olive K. Sorensen

We had been very fortunate. My husband had been steadily employed the first two years of our married life. The company suddenly went bankrupt, we received a weeks pay and our bubble had burst. It seemed like a good time to make a change -- something drastic. So, we did.

The first thing the next day, we went down and spent \$75.00 on a 1926 Buick coupe. We drove it around the block once, found it didn't have a standard shift, but otherwise thought it might make the trip we had in mind. We really didn't know very much about cars and hoped the salesman was really telling us the truth.

We packed all our possessions in my old, school steamer trunk and headed for Denver. I made enough peanut butter sandwiches to last for 3 or 4 days to take along. Motels weren't common then; so we stayed in tourists rooms. Prices were very reasonable, as low as fifty cents a night. Some people gave us breakfast, even though they probably didn't have food to spare.

Did I mention this was July? I'll never forget how hot Iowa, Kansas and Nebraska can be that time of year. The car would heat up. We were so hot ourselves that there were times we wondered why we had left the shores of Lake Michigan. However, the first sight of the Rockies seemed to make the trip worth the effort.

On reaching Denver, our resources were so low, that we had to sell the car. Fortunately, we got back the \$75.00 we had paid for it.

We found a bedroom, where we could use a hot plate to get our meals, in which to live. It was in a very nice apartment building. The manager said I could get 25 cents for each apartment that I cared to clean each week. They were small apartments, but I earned my quarters.

My husband found a job in an office about a mile away at \$12.00 a week. Each day I went downtown and went into every office and asked for work.

1935, 'Twas A Good Year - Continued

I was a dental assistant and finally I talked two poor dentists into hiring me. They paid me in silver dollars--three of them every week. I had to furnish my own uniforms.

One day one of the patients came in with a couple of big Colorado jack rabbits--dead but not skinned--which he said he had just killed. My boss took one home and said I could have the other. The men said they were good to eat. So, home I walked down the main street of Denver carrying a jack rabbit by the ears. People gave me some odd looks, but nothing could compare to the look on my husband's face when I came in the door with that animal. Actually, I was scared holding it, even though it was dead. The manager of the building told me they weren't safe to eat if not taken care of right away. Out it went. I don't even care to eat rabbit today when I think of that experience.

A couple I had met were looking for a caretaker for their very lovely home for a few months, while they were going on a trip. Guess we looked honest, so we got the job. We lived in this beautiful home and, of course, kept our jobs. It was such a pleasure taking care of this big house and yard! I don't suppose we will ever live in anything as scrumptious again. Fortunately, some of our family came to visit us while there and to this day we never told them all the circumstances. They could see why we liked living in Denver.

When the owners returned, we found a one room apartment near our work. The weather was beautiful that winter. We did have a snow storm in October but it didn't last long, and on Christmas day we had a picnic in one of the parks.

I had a sudden illness and the doctors felt the altitude was too much for me. It was back to Wisconsin and job hunting again.

WEEKENDS TO REMEMBER

by

Eleanor Morgan

Times were hard in the "thirties", but there were also some good times to remember. Now, this time is called the "Great Depression". During this era many mortgaged homes were taken away from the owners because they could not make the monthly payments.

One of these places was on Lake Wandawega, north of Elkhorn, Wisconsin. A friend, who was a real estate broker, worked for the company that had taken back a lovely summer home. He invited our family to spend a carefree weekend with his family on several occasions during those depressed days.

We would start out early Saturday afternoon with our three children. Each family took along a cooked beef rump roast (we scrimped on meat all week to purchase the roast which cost around 20¢ a pound) some vegetables from our garden, milk, eggs, coffee and bacon. I baked my own bread and I slipped a large, fragrant loaf with the supplies.

In a little over an hour, we pulled in the driveway of this lovely summer home. The children enjoyed wading in the lake. Swimming and bathing were forbidden because the stumps and weeds made it too dangerous. The men fished catching only small panfish, which were cleaned, fried and eaten. We hiked in the woods surrounding the lake observing the variety of plants and trees growing in that vicinity, also a species of birds we had never seen in Kenosha.

The former tenants had left a player piano at the home and we had great times playing it with both families joining in the sing-a-longs. Recently I noticed on television that Player Pianos were enjoying a comeback.

Supper over on Sunday evening we returned to our homes, knowing we had left our cares and worries behind for another delightful weekend during the dark, depression days.

WHAT THE YOUNGER GENERATION ARE SAYING

by

Evelyn Wolfe

Slang words and phrases have been with us for generations. The older generation usually has a hard time relating to the younger generation's new type of slang.

Many of the young generation of today prefer using four-letter words that we considered "back-alley" and vulgar. The same four-letter words that were washed out of mouths with soap if we dared to use them. This is part of their honest, down-to-earth, realistic theories.

Some of the slang words used in the past have become an acceptable part of the American vocabulary and have been designated as such in the abridged Dictionary. "Darn" a substitute for "damn", is one of them. How about "goof" meaning "stupid"? Or "goosey" meaning "sticky".

Quoting an article written back in 1922, the era of the "flapper" generation, when short bobbed hair, short skirts and unhooked galoshes that "flapped" as we walked, were in vogue. A conversation between mother and daughter could be this:

Mother: "Well dear, did you have a good time last night?"

Daughter: "Oh Mom, it was perfectly blah--nobody there but a lot of cake-eaters and grease balls. There was one wally I was goofy about, but while I was necking with him, Harry caught a tomato, so he says "lets blouse," and we left and crashed in at the Plaza. A friend of Harry's we met there was the darbs, and after that we drifted to a couple of the clubs, and both of the boys got beautifully 'shellacked."

Mother: "Shellacked! I don't understand."

Daughter: "Jammed, both of them, and at one place we were in I got my glimmers on Tommie Smith. He had a dumb-otie with him that looked like a scandal-walker, but somebody said he was a Pittsburger

What The Younger Generation Are Saying - Continued

out on parole. Any how he was making the boffos fairly fly."

Following are a list of some of the slang words and their meanings:

- Cake-eaters - A small salaried male person who frequents teas and other entertainments and never makes any effort to repay his social obligations.
- Grease Ball - A foreign cake-eater.
- Blouse - To leave, to beat it.
- Darba - A person with money who can be relied on to pay the check.
- Otis - A young man from the country.
- Boffos - Dollars.

TAKE A BOW

By

Leone Remington

The Depression days
seem long gone now
and those who
lived them
Take a bow.

Bewildered by it all
no work, no pay.
How could it be
In our land
of opportunity?

It took courage
To live those days,
They lasted so long
Were they here to stay?

They are long gone now.
Those of us
Who lived them
Take a bow.