

up once to rub my aching back, 'cause you worked in a crouch almost at a running pace, and the straw boss yelling: "See those men standing by the road? They're just waiting to get you fired. If I catch you straightening up once more, one of them will be working and you won't."

We'd gather at a certain site at four in the morning. And stand there waiting for the truck to come by, and they'd yell the terms off: fifteen cents an hour. If you wanted work, you'd come to these intersections in Waterloo. Men would be standing there, smoking and talking, bragging, joking as men talk when they get together and don't know each other. They'd decide: I'm not gonna work for fifteen cents an hour. After all, I got \$2 cash money at home. The rest of us would pile on the truck, and a man would say: That's enough.

They were bringing people out of town to work in the country. The people in the country were getting up in arms, refusing to work at these wages. At that time, I didn't realize the exploitation, and the competitiveness of workers.

Was there talk of organizing?

Not in Iowa, not in that east central part. The people were too conservative. I was past forty years of age before I joined a union. I was conditioned—to join a labor union would take away your ability to stand on your own two feet. It would mean surrendering yourself. I probably picked up a great deal more of my father's arrogance than I realize. I was too arrogant to join a union. Hell, I'd work for less money just to be my own self.

To be a union man had some sort of shameful label to it. There was a man in our neighborhood, whose wife was a part-time prostitute. This was known. He smoked tailor-made cigarettes, as opposed to Bull Durham roll-our-owns. The man had very little respect. In the same way, being a union man wasn't quite respectable.

POSTSCRIPT: "Back then, a woman by the time she was forty or fifty, was an old woman. When I was back in Iowa last September, some of these forty-five and fifty-year-old chicks are better lookin' than their twenty-year-old daughters. Labor-saving devices, cosmetics . . . and they're health conscious: vitamins. I have noticed a peculiar number of people my age wear dentures. We didn't get the right vitamins. We didn't get the minerals."

Dorothe Bernstein

A waitress.

I WENT INTO an orphan home in 1933. I was about ten. I had clean clothes all the time, and we had plenty to eat. We'd go through the park when we walked to school. Railroad tracks came somewhere. The picture's like it was yesterday.

The men there waited for us to go through and hand them our lunches. If we had something the dietitian at the home would prepare that we didn't like. We'd give them the little brown paper bags.

Today I tell my daughters: be careful of people, especially a certain type that look a certain way. Then we didn't have any fear. You'd never think that if you walked by people, even strangers: gee, that person I got to be careful of. Nobody was really your enemy. These were guys who didn't have work. Who'd probably work if there was work. I don't know how they got where they were going or where they ended up. They were nice men. You would never think they would do you bodily harm. They weren't bums. These were hard luck guys.

On Fridays, we used to give 'em our lunch, all of us. They might be 125 of us going to school, carrying the same brown paper bag, with mashed sardine sandwiches and mayonnaise on it. This was thirty some years ago. I still don't eat a sardine. (Laughs.) Today when I serve a sardine in the restaurant, I hold my nose. Not with my fingers. Did you ever hold your breath through your nose, so you can't smell it? 'Cause I still see these sardine sandwiches with mayonnaise on them.

You hi'd them, and they hi'd you. That was it. If you asked me where they slept at night, I couldn't tell you. They knew we were friends, and we knew for some reason they were friends.

People talk about the good old times. These can't be the good old times when men wanted to work and couldn't work. When your kids wanted milk and you had to go scratch for it. I remember one girl friend I went to store with. She was real ashamed because they had food stamps. I remember how apologetic she was to me. It kind of embarrassed her. She said, "You want to wait outside?"

Louise was a Bohemian girl. Her mother had a grocery store that they lived behind. Louise used to do the books, and there was always owing. You never said to the people: "Do you have the money to pay me?" They would say, "Write it in the book." And you wrote it in the book, because this was their family food, and they had to have it. It wasn't that you were giving it away. Eventually, you'd be paid.

HARD TIMES

But there wasn't this impersonal—like the supermarkets. They'd say, "Hello, Dorothe, how's your sister?" And so forth. There's no such thing as books in the supermarket. You go in, you pay, you check out, and you don't even know what you're checking out. The faith people had in each other was different.

There are people out in the world today are ashamed to admit from whence they came. I met one at a PTA meeting. I went up nice and friendly and I said, "Aren't you La-da-da?" She looked at me. I said, "I'm Dorothe. Remember me?" Her eyebrow raised. I mean she was all dressed up to the hilt. She said, "You are completely mistaken. I don't know who you are." I bumped into this person five or six times since. She *is* who I thought she was. I let the subject drop. A lot of kids felt the stigma. While it wasn't your fault, they feel: I'd rather it's a closed door, those times.

I never knew any real millionaires who were diving out of windows. I would read it like it was fiction. Who had that kind of fantastic money? They would kill themselves because of loss of it? To me, it's easier and nicer to scratch a little bit and get up.

You know, when you get down so low that you can't get any lower, there's no place else to go but up. You do either one of two things: you either lay down and die, or you pull yourself up by your bootstraps and you start over.

Dawn, Kitty McCulloch's Daughter

THESE WERE the years I remember my dad, who was a white collar worker, being derisive of the strikers. And yet this man put in seventy-two hours, he worked so hard, and he couldn't see that it was necessary for people to strike. When the forty-hour week came through, boy, he really supported Roosevelt.

I can remember all the excitement. Politics was important. I remember that my folks used to get together with dear friends and listen on Sundays to Father Coughlin. It was a must that the kids keep quiet while this man was screaming over the radio. I don't really remember all the things he was saying, but I remember I hated him. I really don't know why, because I didn't know then. I know now. But isn't it funny, a child's reaction. . . . My father used to listen to him and think he was right: Coughlin's right. They would sit there and say he had the right idea. How important a part radio played in all our lives, all during the Depression.

Everything was important. If one man died, it was like a headline. Life was more important, it seemed to me. I remember a headline story of a

young golfer—he had on metal shoes and was hit by lightning. Everybody in the neighborhood talked about it. It was very important that this *one* man died in such a freak accident. Now we hear traffic tolls, we hear Vietnam . . . life is just so, it's not precious now.

Phyllis Lorimer

"I was unaware of what was happening. I knew what happened to me. I did hear of people jumping out of windows. It didn't mean anything personally to me.

"I grew up in Greenwich, Connecticut, a lovely house. My family was extremely well off, but I always thought I was poor. All my cousins, everybody's father was a millionaire. My best friends had their own island. They each had their boat, and all had their jumping horses.

"My mother and father were divorced. My father was a successful motion picture producer in California. My mother took me out there. Came the Crash, and we all stayed."

WHEN IT HAPPENED, I was in a boarding school which I loved. At Glendora. It was the best boarding school in California at that time. A beautiful school in the middle of orange trees. I was about to be president of the student body and very proud of myself. Suddenly I couldn't get any pencils and went to the principal to find out why. She was embarrassed because we were old friends. She said, "I'm sorry, the bills just haven't been paid." She complimented me, saying, "Were there scholarships, you could have it." And, "I couldn't be sorrier."

I was mortified past belief. It was hard for the principal. I called my mother and said, "Come and pick me up." Which she did. I went back home which wasn't much of a home because we were living with a stepfather whom I detested.

It was rough on me, the Thirties. I wasn't aware of it being with everybody else. I thought it was just personal. I was in no way aware that it was a national thing. Having grown up in some affluence, I was suddenly in a small court in Hollywood with a stepfather who was drunk and ghastly.

My brother was still at Dartmouth, where he was fortunate enough not to know what was going on at home. Whatever money there was went to keep brother at Dartmouth. We were living on a form of relief. We had cans of tinned bully beef. And we had the gas turned off. My mother was an engaging lady who made everything a picnic. We cooked everything on an electric corn popper, so it was gay in certain aspects. (Laughs.) My