

Prices from the Past

They Struggled, Met Their Obligations

I WAS 3 in the spring of 1932 when my parents, Louis and Ethel Powell, were happily expecting their second child.

A visit to the doctor changed that when Mom was diagnosed with an abdominal tumor that had to be removed quickly.

This was during the Great Depression, when banks were closing. My parents were a young farm couple, and crops and livestock were worth next to nothing.

Mom and Dad didn't know where to turn and begged the doctor and Decorah (Iowa) Hospital to proceed with the surgery and trust them to pay the bill.

Thankfully, the doctors and hospital had faith in them, and the tumor was removed that May.

Mom and Dad were so grateful and struggled to pay the bill as soon as they could.

In addition to making monetary payments, my parents took half the meat to the hospital when they butchered a cow. The hospital allowed them 9¢ a pound toward their bill. Whenever a hog was butchered, Mom cooked the pork fat and pressed it into lard, which the hospital then also bought and credited against their bill. Mom also baked bread every week and sold it in a neighboring town to help reduce the bill. I have a copy of the bill that shows that Mom's 13-day stay plus the doctor's charge came to a total of \$79.80.

The bill notes it was paid in full in July 1934.

It gave me such a feeling of pride that the medical people had that

much trust in my parents. I have always been so proud of my hard-working, loving mom and dad. My three brothers and I will never forget the lessons they taught us by setting good examples.

—Mildred M., Dorchester, Iowa

Times and Prices Have Changed

WHEN I WAS a child, in the 1950s, I would go to the country store across the road from my home.

A small bag of potato chips was 5¢, and a Coke was a dime. Most ice creams, including Fudgsicles, push-ups and ice cream on a stick, were 5¢. Drumsticks and ice cream sandwiches were 10¢.

Candy bars were mainly the five-cent ones. Almond Joy and Mounds candy bars, my favorites, were 10¢.

In town, Mom would shop for our clothes. We wore dresses to school every day. She'd pay \$1.99 to \$2.99 for a dress. Above \$3.99 was considered too expensive for us.

Shoes were about the same, \$1.99 to \$3.99 and up. We chose the less expensive ones and got along fine.

—Donna T., Greenfield, Indiana

Wedding Bells Rang Up Costs

WHEN MY GRANDSON was married, my daughter and I discussed the cost of a wedding and how it has gone up since the time she got married.

I dug out my wedding album, from May 29, 1948, and found a receipt (left) for my wedding bouquet and three boutonnieres for \$16.53 and one for one night's stay at the Winthrop Hotel, the finest hotel in Tacoma, Washington, for \$5.

—Ethel T., Yakima, Washington