

Living Through the Great Depression

By Marian Palazzo

Submitted by Karen Bobrow

My father went to work for a grocery store in town until he was inducted into the army on April 25, 1918. He served in the infantry in France, and after the war, he returned to his job at the store. He delivered groceries "way out" in Rockaway Valley, which seemed so far to us as we didn't have a car. Sometimes he would take a couple of us with him when he was making deliveries. I can remember him borrowing the truck and taking Mom and a few of us out on a summer evening drive through the valley.

After a few years, Dad went to work for Fred Gordon's Furniture and Linoleum. He learned how to lay linoleum and did some jobs after work. My twin brothers, Don and Bob were born in 1934 in the middle of the Depression, and when they were about eight months old, my father lost his job at Gordon's. That was the beginning of a long, long period without a job. He managed to get little jobs here and there laying linoleum. He had beautiful handwriting and lettering, so he made signs for various people and companies, but the jobs were few and far between. Those were very lean, hard years.

Congress passed legislation in 1932, "the Bonus Bill," providing cash payments on bonus bonds that World War I veterans had received but were intended to be redeemable after 1945. After several years of contentious battles involving Congress, President Roosevelt, and the veterans, who demanded immediate payment of the bonds, the bonuses were finally approved

With careful management by my mother, that money kept us going for a long time. Their only celebration after receiving the bonus money was to go to New York for dinner and a show.

Dad finally went to work for the Works Project Administration--a federal project for the unemployed--which put men to work doing various odd jobs. One that comes to mind that my father worked on was the wall along upper Main Street above the old canal.

Dad was getting fourteen dollars a week along with some food supplements from the government. Through all the hard times, the rent was always paid and food was always on the table. I don't know if I would be able to face what they did, but thank God, my family has been much more fortunate.