

DEPRESSION: Questions

1. Were you personally affected by the depression? What ways?
2. How old were you when the depression began?
3. Where did you live?
4. What did people do for intertainment during this period?
5. What jobs were available and what were the wages?
6. Do you feel you were better or worse off than most Canadians? Why?
7. What were the prices like? Examples.
8. Is the T.V. show "The Waltons" an accurate picture of the depression?
9. Do you feel the depression made you a better person ? (emotionally.)
10. What were the peoples attitudes towards the gov't? R. Bennett,
Mitch Hepburn.
11. Were people brought closer together durring the thirties? In what ways?
12. In what ways were the people of the thirties different from the
people of the seventies?
13. What caused the depression?
14. What brought about the end of the depression in your opinion?
15. What was the thing you remember most about the depression?
16. What was Christmas like in the Depression?

Interview #1

Mr. & Mrs. Charles O
Farmer

Age when depression started Mr. 26 -- Mrs. 16

Mr. - Certainly were, everyone was effected by the depression. Well, oh, you didn't have money to spend and everybody was in the same position. You couldn't make any money, couldn't get any wages.

Mrs. - Jobs were scare.

Mr. - Employment scarce. Farmers couldn't get any price for there livestock or produce. Potatoes were selling anywhere from 25 to 50 cents a bag. Wages were anywhere from a \$1 down to 50 cents a day and board, sometimes you didn't even get your board. Sure we hired men to cut wood for us and they cut it for 75 to 80 cents a cord. In fact soft wood we got cut for 50 cents a cord.

During the depression I lived on the farm in Marmora.

In regards to the wood that we paid 50 cents a cord for (which at that time we couldn't pay any more) we had to truck it to Trenton. We got \$4.50 a cord for it in Trenton. We paid \$2.50 to get it transported down there. We had to draw it out of the woods, pile it, handle it twice, before we got it on the truck to Trenton. So you couldn't pay anymore. Left us \$1.50 for handling it and our wood. So thats how times were in the depression. And in '32' we sold cattle and drove them from our home to Havelock, a distance of twenty miles. We drove them by foot, walked all the way. Eight head of cattle for \$80 .

Mrs. - Ten dollars a head.

Mr. - The drover felt so sorry for us he give us our dinner, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, when we got there with them. Thats a big difference than today.

Oh! Well jobs that were available where the odd days work in the woods, drawing it to people in town. Sometimes they had the money, sometimes they didn't.

Mrs. - You worked on farms for twenty dollars a month and your board. Teachers salaries were \$400 a year in the second school I taught in '33 and '34'. Four hundred a year, forty a month.

Mr. - She taught grade nine at that.

Mr. - No, I feel that it was just the average Canadian.

Mrs. - We were probably better off because we had our own home to go to. Our parents were established.

Mr. - We had work to keep our minds--where the should be--keep us from going nuts.

Mr. - Well food, you could buy a hundred sugar for \$3 to \$4 a hundred. Meat, beef by the quarter for 5 to 6 cents a lb. -- pork for about the same. Prices were down, but couldn't sell for lack of money. A lot of it was barter, you traded. I know, I sawed wood for a couple neighbours and they couldn't pay me. They had a lot of potatoes, so they took them to the grocery store and traded them in for sugar. I got sugar for sawing the wood. We had a good grocer man in Marmora at that time, Tim Burns, that you could do that (trade goods), but you can't do that today. Butter about 10 cents a lb.

Mrs. - People made butter in rolls even and sold it or traded it for something in the food line. People who had apples, traded apples for potatoes...so on, so forth.

Mr. - Well, yes, in a way. I wouldn't say it was an perfect picture though. They show more cars. There was a lot of people at that time who couldn't afford to run a car, couldn't do it, couldn't buy gas. I had work on the road, the spring of '34' and I know men, Jack Neal walked from Shanick over here to shovel gravel for 88 cents a day (distance of five miles) and boarded himself.

Mrs. (aside)- And had a family to keep.

Mr. - Mitchell Hepburn went in '34', 'June of 34'. The conservative government was in until that time, had been in for thirty years. The election was in June, you couldn't get work all winter, a government job if you were paid for. But in the spring just before the election come on the money started to come, wherever they got it, they couldn't get in the winter, but they got it in the spring. And they hired men and teams to draw gravel to do the swamp road, widen it. We got \$2.40 for ourselves and our teams. Board yourself and your team. And the men got 88 cents a day for shoveling the gravel. But then Hepburn got in in June and I don't know--but it started to lift a little. I don't know if he was the cause of it lifting or not, but it started to lift. The next bunch of cattle we sold we got around \$20 for them, after Hepburn got in. Two year olds, same cattle we sold the year before for \$10. In the third year we got \$30. If people hadn't of had horses, if it had been like it is today, tractors instead of

horses, I don't know where it would have ended. At that time we couldn't have afforded to buy gas.

Mr. - To a certain extent I would say yes-yes, because it taught the younger generation at that time that were coming up to more or less look after their money. You know what I mean, when they got wages to appreciate it. Well it effects you in this way, I wouldn't say it effects the younger generation for they don't know anything about it. They have never gone through it. But anyone who went through the Depression has saw the hardships that they had to go through. Why I think they would dread to see another one come, thats one thing certain. I think there was places in Western Canada where they were really worst off than we were in Ontario. Yes..

Mrs. - Because they weren't as thrifty in the first place. The people who were thrifty before the depression, it didn't hit quite so hard. They hadn't provided for a rainy day.

Mr. - Definitely, they were closer together than they are today. They were neighbours. You helped your neighbour, you were there if he needed help. You went and helped and you weren't looking for \$3or \$4 a hour for helping. You went and helped and that was all there was to it. If he then got a chance he helped you back. You were more neighbourly, more neighbourly alot more.

Mr. - Well that was one way--they were more neighbourly than they are today. They were a little more thrifty than they are today. Money is to plentiful today, not worth as much. I think they were thrifty and saving.

Mr. - Well thats hard to say, but the first inkling was when the stock market callapsed. What caused the stock market to callapse I don't know. I know one cattle drover that bought cattle and loaded them at Bonnerlaw (three car loads) and took them to Toronto. At the time the stock market was on and he couldn't break even in Toronto. He held them there and feed them, buying feed which run into some money at that time. Then he decided to reload them and take them to Buffalo. It was worse when he got to Buffalo than it was when he left Toronto. And the man lost his farm and the whole thing.

Mrs. - Different people lost everything they had even thrifty people who had watched there money and tried along the way lost out.

Mr. - Oh! There were several of them and several of them were so far in debt after they did lose them. Some of them had mortgages on their farms towards the end of the depression, the government, they went through a board (I don't know what they called it) they had their mortgages cut in half, that helped. But they were in debt for years after the depression

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started to lift, to straighten that up. Oh, yes diffinitely. Lots of businessess went broke. A grocer in town had \$400 to \$500 in individual on his books, carring them people. We had a grocerman in Marmora that we use to deal with all the time and he would carry you through the summer and in the winter ^{that's the way} we paid our bill with butter and eggs. That time you could. Today, if a depression came, you can't sell, you can't sell eggs, you can't sell butter, the farmers would be a darn sight worse off today than then. You can't sell your produce today in grocer stores. That man would take all your butter, eggs, potatoes and produce you could bring in and you could keep square.

Mr. - Well, I don't know it looked like the prospects of a war coming on. I don't know whether it was or not--couldn't tell you what brought the end of it. But I know it was darn survere while it lasted. Mrs. - (aside) When would you say..... Mr. - when it ended? I would say back around '35-36,' from '34' on it started to lift but come slowly - around '35-36' it come. Mr. - I built a barn, my barn blow down about '33' and rebuilt in '34'. I paid a first class carpenter \$2.40 a day to rebuilt it, ^{that is} to frame the timbers. I had to finish it myself, I couldn't get the money enough to Mrs. (aside) hire at that cheap labour. Mr. - I had to finish it myself. By the time I built the barn and finished and labour. And all I paid in labour was to him \$33 for his labour. I couldn't pay that in the fall--built it early spring finally scratched up enough to go and pay him.

Mr. - Oh! they went on the same as before the people were neighbourly in the settlement-dances-get togethers that way. But they didn't have no cars to jump into to go for 10-15 miles.

Mrs. - They went cutter riding in the winter time and horse and buggy riding in the summer time, Picnics and lawn socials, church socials in the year. Yes, the church played an important role during the depression, that was a place to go.

Mr. - You saw some sad cases of children who weren't getting proper nourishment, proper food. Oh, yes. Well I can't say I didn't get enough to eat. Lots of times I could have ate maybe a little different, but we got through it. No, I can't think of any thing personal that happened to me. Except the time the barn blow down and I had ~~no-thing~~ to rebuilt it with, had to leave it for a year down.

Mrs. - I had to borrow the money myself for techers college, whereas my sisters, who were teachers were sent through by there father. But at that time my father didn't have the money to send me and I had to borrow the

money from my uncle, and paid it back with interest while the depression was still on. Mr. - (aside) Had to pay it back on \$400 a year.

Mrs. - My mother sewed .

Mr. - People baked bread at that time. Bought flour, baked bread. There wasn't any bakery truck running around selling bread at that time. You didn't get the bread brought to your door.

Mr. - I honestly think it could happen and happen very fast. Lets hope it doesn't, but it could in my opinion. There would be a lot of people disappointed if it does. Well, I don't think they would come out as well as they did in the last one. No, I don't think they could. I think there would be more bloodshed in the world.

Mr. - About prices: my mother took turkeys to Peterborough and got 10 cents a lb. , dressed and was mighty happy to get it, thought she done alright. Chickens were about 8 cents a lb.

Mrs. - Christmas was a happy occasion same as it is today. I've read stories of children who just received a Christmas card ~~and cherished the card for years-~~ were very grateful. One mother made over a old Christmas card that she had kept for a long time and gave it to her little girl for Christmas. The little girl was very happy. She could tell stories and different things from what was on the card. Kept it and treasured it for the years. And theres the story of the Lost Partridge, the boy that ~~out~~ ^{went} and was lost.

Mr. - Anybody who went through that depression certainly anybody that was old enough will never forget.

Interview #2

Mr. & Mrs. Roy H

Farmer

Mr. - Well, I don't know how old I was when I started to farm.

Mrs. - Started farming in the thirties, so you was 35.

Mr. - And I bought three cows at \$15 a piece. And the one cow was hard to milk, so I tried to sell her to a drover. They wouldn't even give me \$5 for her in the fall, a good big cow. And I sold the cow for about \$4.25. And I cut cord wood and drawed it between five to six miles and loaded it on the box car \$3.25. And I had a man come from Colborne, back in that country looking for a job. So I hired him, and he said he was getting \$5 a month in the winter time and \$6 a month in the summer so he said he'd go home with me. Hired him for \$15 a month. When spring come he said he was going to stay, give me what ever you like. I'm not going to Colborne. So he worked all that summer. Next winter, I gave him a dollar a day. When the spring came he went back out. In '33' I guess. And we didn't have money enough to mail a letter, the better share of the time, we had a family to keep. You didn't just have a couple of cents to mail a letter.

Mr. - We were personally effected by the depression. Oh, certainly. Oh, yea. Another person, our neighbour there, was worse off than we were. Didn't even have a days work. They had nothing. And we use to buy a bag of flour, bake out of it once and the rest would go down the road to these other families. And I was all alone to work. You couldn't make a cent at nothing.

Mr. - Well, I worked for 60 cents a day and boarded myself, the first winter I bought the place. Worked in the woods. You just couldn't, had no money for nothing.

Mr. - Oh, I think I was better off cause I had a job to work at, some didn't have nothing to do.

Mrs. - Eleven cents a lb. for cream.

Mr. - Ten to eleven cents a lb. for our cream. Calves that weighted 300 - 400 lbs. , couldn't even get \$5 for them. At least I didn't. About \$4.25 was the best you could get. And you could go to Coe Hill and buy a big quarter of beef for under \$2.

Mrs. - Flour was a dollar a bag.

Mrs. - No, we don't watch the Waltons.

Mr. - Don't watch them.

Mr. - Well, no one wanted to see Bennett back in again cause he went out. And times got better. But he went out of business (aside)

Mrs. - They voted for him on our road. I'll never forget, the kids going to school, the school was just on the other side of the fence, the school was on our place. We's was the only liberals that was on the road. Well come the 19 of June, oh, they use to carry on something awfull, Kids going by swing their satchels. The next morning after the election I went over to the store, I said to him you might as well of voted for Mitch Hepburn, screw.

Mr. - We were offered 20 cents a piece for harverst ties and dr awn 6 miles, but on the millyard and the man said he didn't want them cause he had no sale for them, at 20 cents a piece.

Mrs. See things started to boom there around '34' when the election was coming up and everybody got jobs. Well they thought things were picking up. Just as soon as the election was over the road shut down. Just built a good piece of road and both ends you couldn't hardly get to it, could you, around the head of the lake (88 cents a day working).

Mr. - I don't know what the teams got.

Mrs. - (aside) You didn't work up there then. I know thats what they got. They thought everythin g was booming at 88 cents a day.

Mr. - Cut logs, drawed them clean to Coe Hill for \$9 a 1000.

Mrs. - Six miles.

Mr. - You know'd by that very, very bad.

Mr. - I don't know about that. One thing, try to put something away for a bad time that would happen to come.

Mrs. - Teach you to not waste what you got anyway.

Mr. - Aw! I don't know. They didn't visit to much, not two much.

Mrs. - If you did you had to walk. You had no way of travelling.

Mr. - We had a span of horses, but they had to work during the week, I didn't drive them on Sundays. Worked hard.

Mrs. - Few house dances. We never had a cutter in our lives.

Mr. - Back in Coe Hill wasn't even a street light, coal oil lights. We use to have sleigh ride. We had 25 to 30 kids who came to sleigh ride at our place. They had a lot of fun. We use to have an old running gear of a cutter the kids use to get that up on the big hill, pile on her and let her go.

Mrs. - Everybody worked for a living.

Mr. - Cause you didn't get no help , lest you didn't work. You had to

work at something. You had to plan on working, growing something to eat. You didn't get something for nothing, you had to work for everything you got.

Mrs. - We went on relief there one time, holy gads, we had a lot of stuff but you couldn't get along on it. They quit and came home and went in the woods.

Mr. - I stayed in the woods, cut cord wood day after day.

Mrs. - I don't know how people got on it who had to get along on it.

Mr. - We didn't nare suffer for a bit to eat, I could always pound a living out through hard work.

Mr. - Preacher came to our place one time I'd been out quite late in the fall of the year and it had been quite cold. I'd hired a man to help me saw a punch of wood. So I done my chores and I went out and piled the wood til noon, came in and got my dinner. Came in at night and the preacher he comes along. He rubs his hand over my head and over my shirt, which were frozen with sweat, "so the Lord never put you here," he said, "to make a slave out of yourself like that". I'd said 'twasn't for old whelps like you running around I wouldn't have to work so hard. Just out to make his living. And do nothing for it.

Mrs. - One time it started to pick up a little bit, why he (preacher) was staying in a boarding house and he was a drinking and smoken and carrying on in there, some of them said to him, Bruce your quite a preacher. Oh he said, "I wasn't a preacher to start with he says I'd just started preachen to get a easy living.

Mr..- Well, I don't know. Twas all over, all countries were the same.

Mrs. - Went over night. Everything was booming one day. A man could work and quit his job and he could go to another job if he could get there and start work right away. And one night they said the stock market fell or something. Dick Gunter came up the next morning and told us that everything was gone.

Mr. - He said that Gilroy had lost \$40,000 just over night. A day or two he lost another \$75,000. They had the lumber--that flattened him right there. He had nothing for anybody and had no way of getting it. He was right up against it. He didn't have nothin.

Mrs. - I don't like the conservative gov't as far as that goes--but I think when them depressions are gona come no matter what gov't is in there, cause things are heading that way again.

Mr. - Lots of good hard work. There was lots of it night and 'ay.

Mrs. - We worked long hours we always had enough to eat and wear.

Mr. - Take those horses out in the morning with the lads and go to the woods. Load, make my two trips, might be midnight before I got the chores done. Make two trips to Coe Hill, had to or strave. No other way around it only do it. Had to do it. She knows its right, she use to do quite a lot of chores. She's seen me many's a night bail water out of the well for cows, eleven o'clock at night, worked all day, go to the woods, with the lads. When spring come you just may be able to crawl out. You won't have no money for nothing. You'd be awful glad when you got your first little cream check. Didn't amount to much. That's the first dollar you get.

Mrs. - \$2.25 a can--a five gallon can of cream.

Mr. - Milk nine to ten cows for a week for to buy a pair of boots. That's right--\$2.25. You could get a pair of overhalls for about \$2.00.

Mrs. - Ha! A whole can of cream.

Mr. - To her I said, I'm getting a big heavy pair of boots, I won't buy so many boots. Got a lot of walking to do, horsing, ploughing, dragging, working in the woods. So I bought myself a pair of shoe maker boots and they just about killed me to lug them around. Had to much walking to do. Said I'd never buy another pair of them. On my feet all the time. Great big heavy soles you know. Boy oh boy, trailling them around 14 or 15 hours a day.

Mrs. - We were really better off than the others were in there because we had our cows.

Mr. - We had them, but we had to buy them and buy the place. I worked hard some of them down there didn't do much of anything they'd trap and fish a little bit and roast suckers--they^{had} nothing else to do they couldn't get nothing else to do anyway. Kill ground hogs and eat them, dig them out of stone fences.

Mrs. - They'd go to stone fences, dig out a wood chuck. You'd think they'd found a gold mine. They'd run right home with that wood chuck by the tail and kill it for meat.

Mr. - There was a sucker creek there and they'd go down there them bunch of kids and they'd get a bunch of suckers then build a fire to roast them. First thing we'd know²thered be, quite a lot of dry slash in there any way, you see the smoke raise (dry cedars and stuff in there) and we'd have a job putting the fire out. You couldn't blame the kids--no meat no nothin. Either a wood chuck or a sucker or something. Oh we've often seen them going with a wood chuck up to our place.

Mrs. - Generally about 10 or 12 kids.

Mr. - Half the bunch would run barefoot.

Mr. - Well we always had a very good Christmas. We always planned on having a good Christmas. We always had enough to eat--candies. And the people of Coe Hill--United Church people there used to come down around Christmas morning. Course we'd always have candy and stuff around but they always bring us a box--always did. They 'd never miss. Old Norman Gilroy used to bring them down to us. Some times I'd be at the store and he'd give me a bunch of stuff.

Mrs. - The preacher back there and his wife, she worked hard making clothes and things and coats for the kids. She got the clothes some where out front here and then she'd make it up. I don't know how she ever did so much. If it wasn't for her I don't know what some of them would of did.

Mr. - I don't think we ever got any though.

Mrs. - I don't think we did.

Mr. - My we were just lucky.

Mrs. - We didn't go to their church.

Mr. - When they come to our house and we know'd they were hungry why we'd never turn them around and send them back hungry. We always fed there kids, manys a times. Fed them to.

Mrs. - I've seen this table lengthen'ed right out on Sunday, when the kids would all come to Sunday School.

Mr. - They'd come to our place for dinner.

Mrs. - And I'd have all the leaves in and they'd come in for dinner and you could hardly sit all those kids down to the table.

Mr. - We wouldn't turn them away. She was young and I was young and we says here we's gonna feed them. Now alot of people wouldn't done that cause it was pretty hard to feed your own but we did. Many's a time.

Mrs. - Pretty near the whole Sunday School. If they went up the road to Bob Bachelars - Bob and Violet- he'd go away wouldn't leave a bite in the house and she'd come to our place for a meal--3 or 4 days at a time. Bring the kid up here. O, I laughed it was when Rita was a baby--all things were better then, but he'd work and bring the money home and she'd waste it.

Mr. - She didn't have nothing up here.

Mrs. - She'd go and buy toys and puzzles and everything and Bob would go back to work and youⁿ Larney would be up there without a darn bite to eat and he'd run up to our place and beg. He'd bring his money home on Saturday night and give it to her and she go on another hoot the next week. Holy Doodle, she was a brainless thing.

Mr. - She used to go into town with me--she'd buy alot of foolish stuff-- wouldn't buy nothing to eat.

Mr. - Oh, I think it was different management.

Mrs.-- It was in the States to. ^{Mr.} Roosevelt, he got in and McKenzie King got in and things just turned over day after day and got better. Thats just what happened. First thing you know we were getting something for our stuff.

Mr. - Well I wouldn't say so, no.

Mrs. - Oh, it is different today--welfare and all.

Mr. - There's different laws now. If the poor people's gonna go hungry some of the rich fellows are gonna lose quite a bit of money. Thats what happened before I think. I know what happened back north there. Mr. Rollins had lots of money he got ahold of every body's place, feeding them and the first thing you know there in deep trouble, he owned all they had. First thing we knew he was taking all they had. Sold them out. Mr. Rollins was the one who done the cleaning up in that part of the country. He cleaned a quite a few of them.

Mrs. - As far as Moore and Gilroy and them....

Mr. - As far as Norman Gilroy he never done those tricks. He never did. When's people be down they wouldn't get a bite to eat from Charlie Rollins they'd go to Normans(not Normans customers at all) they'd go down there and he'd give em stuff to eat. I know he did, I was right there in the store when it happened. But Rollins ^{Mr.}he didn't do that. When they were down and out he put them farther down. I'd tell Clark that right to his face, cause I have no damn use for him. I know'd his father and I know him. ^{Mrs.}He was the first Indian they had in Parliament. He's on the Indian list--a woman fighter--use to be and still is.