



The pandemic of 2020 has placed a larger burden than anyone ever imagined on this generation. Our older generations lived through the Great Depression and their own pandemics during their life. No other generation has been affected by this as much as this one. When I grew up in the mountains of Southwest Virginia, daily trips to the store for desired goods were nonexistent. The grocery shopping was reserved for payday, when men like my Dad were paid by the mines. Mom would get dressed up, hair done, make up on and lipstick and this let us know we were in for a treat that evening. Hamburgers or hot dogs, potato chips and most importantly a can of pop and Butter Pecan ice cream. We ate out of the freezers and canned goodies we had put up in the fall, or if it was gardening season, like it is now, fresh food from the garden. The quarantine of the recent months would have been a normal lifestyle back then, with the exception of us kids being out of school. But even at that time, however, schools, businesses, and life went on without any interruptions, and if you were sick, you stayed home.

We grew up playing outside, working the gardens, helping with the canning, the animals and just regular household chores... and whatever you did, you never told Mom or Dad you were bored. They could always find something for you to do. As I start the garden here in Indiana today, it seems easy, the ground is level and not the slope of the gardens I grew up working. Mom and Dad had five kids and always planted a huge garden to share with family, neighbors or whoever wanted or needed it. Every-

one there in the holler was kin to us in one way or another. We always dreaded garden season as kids, oh the work involved and those first blisters from the hoes and mattocks, but we survived. There was no roto tiller, Dad used and still uses at the age of 88, a turn plow. The same one he used when I was growing up 50 years ago, they sure don't make them like they used to.

Growing up, we didn't go a lot of places, Granny Anna's every other Sunday over the mountain and on crooked roads. I always got to ride up front because I would get carsick. We would go to the monthly flea market in a nearby town. Dad collected knives, bottles and jars and it was a highlight for us because we got to ride the back of the truck. Back then there was no seat belt law. We rode on Mom's lap or in the back. Unheard of today, but we survived. Dad went to work, came home to supper and we all ate breakfast and supper at the table with our parents, with no TV in the background. Mom didn't drive at the time, so she was home with us, and probably enjoyed her break from us when we were in school. We walked in and out of the holler to the school at the mouth of the holler. We came in and changed out of our school clothes and put on our play clothes and when Dad got home, we ate supper and worked in the garden till it started getting dark. Planting corn was not my favorite task, it seemed the corn was never going to be gone. Until it was all planted, Dad found a spot to put a hill till it was used up. I started hiding corn seed in the rock piles, for some odd reason, and corn would grow in there later in the summer. Dad knew what I did, but never said a word. It makes me laugh now thinking about it.

Dad always had a green thumb, and the gardens seemed to thrive under his and Mom's care. He was a firm believer in planting by the signs. He still calls to tell when it is a good day to plant



A typical coal and wood pile used to heat homes in Southwest Virginia.





My Mom and Dad's canned food from 2019.

certain vegetables and plant flowers. Whatever jars were left over from the year before were checked for seals and spoilage. If spoiled, they were dumped out and the jars washed and reused, which was the worst job ever! All the empty jars were gathered up and Dad would start a fire under a big tub and we would wash and sanitize all the empty jars to be reused for the garden coming in that year. We used every jar we could, chipped jars were used for kraut, pints and quarts were separated so when needed were readily found. A huge undertaking given the volume of canning they did and still do.

Dad would graft trees and learned that skill at an early age. He could take a root stock and change it to whatever he wanted, apple, plum, etc. He considered himself a guardian to the woods surrounding us. Dead fall trees were worked up to provide kindling for the wood stoves and the coal furnace that heated our home. In the winter he would use the pot bellied stove in his workshop when drying green beans or apples and the smoke-house. He purchased coal from whatever mine he was working at that time, and would bring it home to unload into the coal chute into the coal chute in the basement.

Mom used to go through the Sears and Roebuck and Montgomery Ward catalogs, the clothes we wore to school that Mom or my Aunt Faye didn't sew from those paper patterns came from these magazines. We waited impatiently for them to come in so Mom could pick them up for us to try on. There was no going to malls,

Walmart, or other stores for clothes shopping. We were so excited when the catalogs came and would dog ear the pages of the outfits, toys and other things that we wanted. Mom would order what we needed, not what we wanted, and the wait for the call that they had come in would begin. Things have changed now with next day delivery, online shopping, and in store pick up. We now peruse the internet or the stores to meet our needs. Instant access has become the norm, not the oddity. Even food can be ordered this way. Meats, produce, and your entire grocery list can be fulfilled with a few clicks of a button. Shopping on payday used to be a social occasion, the town was full of people dressed in their Sunday best, cars filled the streets, people visited and socialized. Now its impersonal in our hurried lifestyles.

Flea markets were a huge social gathering, just like the jar shows of now. Specialized markets of like minded people enjoying the hobby, and with the groups and social platforms, people are able to connect online. Meeting these people at the jar shows, you seem like you know them because digitally you have become friends. With the quarantine effect of the pandemic, many shows were cancelled and no in person social gatherings were permitted.

Now, in some states, those restrictions have lifted and great jar friends are ready to share their favorite hobbies, shopping for that elusive wish list jar and greeting their jar comrades. Personally, I cannot wait for the first jar show of the season in Cambridge City in June.



It is said that history repeats itself, but this generation is more ill prepared for major shortages. The Great Depression was survived by a resilient, self-reliant people who are more prepared than we are today. They heated their homes with wood and coal, gardened, hunted and lived in abject poverty. The shortages of food stuffs will greatly affect families of today who depend on super markets and online shopping to fulfill their basic needs.

For example, take the hoarding of toilet paper at the beginning of this pandemic, the hoarding of frozen meals, and canned goods, if people had just shopped the way they normally would, there would have been no shortages. The panic buying of the last couple months, shows how much this generation depends on the supply chain staying intact. The fear or greed of these individuals made it hard on the elderly to get their basic necessities. The same can be said of price gouging by merchants who were able to obtain those goods first. When stores announced there would be meat shortages, alternate sources of protein were hard to find, beans and legumes.

The farmers are still putting their crops out, dairy farmer's cows are still producing milk, meat farms are still producing healthy poultry, pork and beef, but processing companies are the broken link, meanwhile the prices in stores have risen and products are still being limited. The government is in the process of investigating these issues and serious side effects of the pandemic. Protests are becoming more prevalent and looting and crime are on the rise, people are more wary and paranoid about what is happening in this new normalcy. Time lines for quarantine have changed numerous times and we have no idea when the end is in sight. As more of the states begin to reopen, and new precautions are put into place, people are uncertain, as I am, if things will ever be back to the "old" normal.



The grand kids onion garden.

As we all wait to see what the future holds for us and our children and grandchildren, we need to keep in mind the periods of unrest, pandemics and shortages that the generations before us went through and apply those lessons to our own lives. We can only keep in mind that we can be self-reliant when needed and use the past generations as our examples.

Until next time, stay safe and keep Preserving the Past..



Two images of the garden this year.

