

We Were Not Poor! by Robert Hempel

It's true that some of my grade school pictures were a bit of an embarrassment to me as they revealed the patches on my overalls. Of course that was before it became popular to wear jeans that had that worn, torn, patched look. Like some of the automobiles of those days, I believe my clothes would



have drawn a price well beyond their cost, today.

Ours was an age of hand-me-downs and fresh ones from the neighbors or friends were looked upon with delight! The first new suit of clothes, not hand-me-downs, purchased for me was on the occasion of my graduation from College! I don't recall bemoaning that fact for one minute, but wouldn't it be a tale of woe by many in today's world?

Friends of the family began giving my brother and me a bumper lamb (twin) in the spring of the year. We would take them out every day and tie them along the ditches where clover and other grasses abounded plentifully. Then in the fall of the year, the same family would take our lambs to market with their own and we generally were able to trade our lamb for a new winter jacket, which was usually needed by growing boys.

We ate well. Undoubtedly we ate better because of the meals that had to be provided for the schoolteachers al-luded to. Chicken was a staple. A huge garden kept the table abounding with

vegetables of all sorts. Mother learned well from her German neighbors and she was an outstanding baker and thus the aroma of fresh bread, rolls, cinnamon rolls—even kucken often drifted temptingly from the kitchen as we returned from school.

Mom had nothing with which to help her family when college appeared on the horizon, but her very life exuded confidence in God to help her family achieve what she could not do for them. All but one of the eight siblings graduated from college. Three achieved graduate degrees and two became medical doctors.

Poor? We weren't poor! We were never told or made to believe we were poor.

Our home was rich in love that was freely expressed in hugs and kisses as well as in words. True, our dad was taken from our lives at his young age of only 48. He had been involved in banking and real estate and was in his third term as a state representative at the time of his death. But we weren't poor! We were without some of the amenities of life that would have been appreciated. Yes, but not poor!

My oldest brother has told me, that a rather well heeled (and well-intentioned) gentleman and his wife offered to adopt my Dean and me, when dad died, so as to lift some of the load on our mother. Mom is said to have turned down the offer without a lot of thought, determined God would help her with her seeming insurmountable task! "Thank you, Mom! Glad you didn't consider us dispensable!"

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