

Eight Dollar Shoes

By Hap Hansen

I recall many years ago, when I was about 12 years of age, I needed new shoes. In those days, we got new shoes when our big toes protruded through the leather! It was a Saturday night, when folks gathered on the town's sidewalks to chat. I came out of the store in my new shoes. We ran into my aunt, who saw the shoes and asked my father, "How much were the shoes?" My dad answered, "Eight dollars." Incredulous, my aunt said, "Eight dollars for shoes for that kid?" My dad said, "Sis, his feet are bigger than mine!" Conversation over.

However, my favorite shoes as a youngster were ones I never got to wear. In the Montgomery Ward catalogue, I saw a pair of lace-up boots with leather laces, thick soles and huge heels. I immediately asked Dad, "Can we order these?" Dad asked the price. When I said, "Fourteen dollars," he said we couldn't afford them. I kept looking at those shoes in the catalogue until my toes came through the shoes I was wearing. Another pair of eight dollar shoes, except the price had now gone up to nine dollars.

Probably the favorite shoes I got to wear were basketball shoes, which most people now call sneakers. All sneakers then were the same color and style. Today, sneakers come in a variety of styles and colors. I wore those same basketball shoes all four years of high school. And yes, during my Senior year, my toes were coming through the leather.

Today, I buy shoes, not for style, but for comfort. Also today, eight or nine dollars will not buy much more than the laces. My granddaughters, nine and eleven, many times fall in love with sneakers that can cost upwards and over, one-hundred dollars a pair. And my daughter says, "No, we can't afford them." But at my age, when I sit down to watch TV and put my feet up, my favorite pair of shoes are old, worn-out house slippers.