

Coffee, Saucered and Blowed

07-08-2013 by Harry Zirkelbach

**At the outset of the third decade of the 20th Century the family household daily chores were set. Then rudely shattered.
Dad lost his job as Life Insurance salesman.**

**Unemployed for the first time in 25 years, dad left every morning to find work. Almost immediately, he and mom learned
this was a giant mountain.**

Former employers who should have welcomed his machinist skill were already dismissing employees hired years ago.

**The NOT HIRING TODAY sign in every employment office seemed the only thing being sold in western Pennsylvania machine shops where he had begun to work age 12, in 1905. In every recessions of those 25 years,
he had never been close to being laid off.**

Now 37, he learned the world he had known had been decimated.

**A nightwatchman job he found, lasted only until the owner, the only other employee, realized he could find no buyers for his wares. Both were laid off. Without security day and night, valuables in the empty building and lot, were stolen, sold for scrap by men and women in need of pennies
to feed their children.**

At home, the children continued to grow, attend the nine month school year. Mother's schedule was not altered; washing, ironing, baking bread, house cleaning, the preparation of meals, all within her 100 hour work week.

Relatives, friends, and especially the family agreed, Mom was a great cook; even better baker. Slices of the dozen loaves of bread she baked on Thursday were available every meal. Then, where something was fried for the meal, that residue became a water or flower gravy. A special treat after supper. Gravy covering a piece of bread to the delight to tongue, throat, tummy. Dad could consume half a loaf of mom's brown crusted white bread.

Coffee was another of dad's treats.

Coffee was made in a eight cup, aluminum peculator pot. Now battered, no innards, black from the stove's open fire, coffee grounds were added to water, the concoction given a good scalding. When heated to a temperature dangerous to the skin, the residue was poured into a strainer held over dad's cup. With the cup was filled, the grounds were dumped back into the pot. For the next pot of coffee, a few fresh grounds were added. Eventually this mix became something that Machine Shops' offered their employees, to dad's satisfaction.

Small particles of Coffee grounds slipping through the strainer, allowing the coffee to be chewed then swallowed.

To top Dad's supper, the final cup from the pot, always sizzling when poured, the full cup too hot for his lips, dad would slip some content onto the saucer, skillfully raised that to his lips without spilling, blow across this small sea he created until the liquid cooled, inhale that mix from the saucer edge.

He continued "saucered and blowed" until that cup was empty.

Watching this ritual the children knew, they would never witness the drinking a more welcomed cup of coffee.

These and other family ritual continued those two years, dad always looking for a job in the only working home he had known, the once industrial, now dying, Beaver River valley.

Dad
taught
them
survival.



