

## Times of Joy in My Life

*by June Richer*

My parents were from Virginia and West Virginia, but they moved to Pennsylvania where jobs were more plentiful.

My father, a strong man, was good at wielding the ax. He found work in Reading, PA, about 30 miles from where we lived. He and several friends took turns to drive to Reading on Monday morning and came home on Friday after a week of cutting down trees ... they worked in the woods!

I remember the joy of having him come home on Friday evening. We could hardly wait to get his lunch box to see what he brought for us. It was with joy that he handed it to us. Sometimes we found raspberries, or strawberries, sometimes pretty leaves that were from a tree that was not known to us.

But, all too soon, the weekend was over and Monday meant that when he left with his lunch pail in his hands we would not see him for five days. We said goodbye knowing that when he returned he would always have a surprise for us.

My father would bring a chip of wood from a tree that we were not familiar with, and he had written on it the species. One day I took one to school when we were talking about different kinds of trees. My teacher told me to tell my dad she would like to have a variety of chips with their identification written on them. I was proud of my dad and joyfully took these treasures to class.

My dad had a stew that he learned to make as a kid, which was a special treat to us, and we ate it with joy!

My sisters and I would sing as we did dishes or other chores around the house. My dad was very good on the banjo, and in no time at all he was playing the new tunes. This made us proud, and we sang with joy.

Mom made our dresses when we were in school. She would frequently see a dress that she liked, then take an old newspaper and cut a pattern to use in making us one like it. I was filled with joy and proudly wore Mom's creations.

Mom was a wonderful cook and baker. It was mouthwatering joy to be in her house when she was baking!

We grew a lot of vegetables, then canned or froze them. It was work, but what a joyful time we had.

Living with this lady, my Mom, was good. She was a good person, strict but loving, a joy to live with!

