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REMEMBERING A QUILTER
by Carol Hanby, daughter

Fellow quilters would always wonder how my mother could get so many quilts made each month because she always had things for show and tell. Maybe if I tell you some things about her upbringing, you can see what made her so tough.

The father of her two children abandoned mother and she lived with her parents on a large rural farm in the middle of West Virginia. They were pretty much self sufficient and knew how to do without electricity, running water and most of the things that make life easier for us now days. We did not know we were practicing sustainable agriculture; we were just trying to survive. Everyone worked hard for there were many chores.

Vegetables were grown in a large garden, fruit came from the large orchards and meat came from the chickens and the hogs. When you wanted chicken for dinner, you caught the chicken, cut off its head, plucked its feathers and cut it up and cooked it. The pork was stored in the smoke house where it cured after being killed, butchered and covered with Morton's Salt Cure and stored in the smoke house. Extra vegetables and fruit were canned and stored in the root cellar, located just outside the kitchen door connected by a small porch. This was located under the smoke house, so it was underground and nice and cool. This also acted as the refrigerator, where we stored the eggs and milk and anything we wanted to keep cool. There were large bins on the floor full of apples and potatoes to last through the winter. We may have been poor, but we ate organic meat and produce!



The cook stove and the heating stove in the living room ran on wood and coal which were both taken from the farm. Usually someone else mined the coal and wood for us. Chores for the day included making the fires, getting water from the well and bringing it in and heating it, milk the cows, feed the pigs, horse, chickens and people. We grew a lot of the animal feed, but bought some grain because we got feed sacks that were used to make clothing and the scraps were used to make quilts. The "cans" had to be emptied and washed in the creek for we had no indoor plumbing.

If you wanted a drink of water, you got it out of the bucket with a dipper, but no drinking out of the dipper! Homemade bread made the house smell delicious. We had a sink in the kitchen, without running water but that is where all washing up took place. At least you did not have to take the water outside and hurl it over the fence when you finished. Baths took place in a large wash tub on the kitchen floor by the stove which

was handy for heating the water. We did not worry about privacy, for we had none. Clothes were washed in a gas powered washing machine in a separate wash house. There was no heat in there so I do not know how we washed in the winter time. Maybe we just waited or more likely used the wash board in the kitchen sink.

Light was supplied by the oil lamps which had to have their chimneys washed and their wicks trimmed. We listened to the radio at night while we cracked hickory nuts and black walnuts and ate apples. We played cards. One time we found a dump full of magazines and we had good reading for a very long time.

Mother was the only one with a paying job. She walked to the one room elementary school which had grades one to four and one teacher. She was the cook. Her kitchen was just a narrow hallway with a wood stove and some shelves along the wall. There was no refrigeration or running water. The state provided lots of canned goods and she fed 40 people lunch with what they provided. At the general store we would trade our extra eggs and butter for necessities like salt, sugar, flour, etc and maybe even a 1 cent piece of candy. We would also stop by the post office to get the mail, all on foot.

We had some funds to buy things out of the Sears catalog and since we did not have toilet paper, the catalogs got recycled. You had to tear out a piece, crumple and soften it up a bit because it could have rough edges. We were upscale, we never used corn cobs! We never saw a dentist or doctor and did not seem to need them except for maybe heart attacks and broken bones.

Everything was hand made. The apple butter was made outside over a large fire with a big tub set on a spider and a large paddle with holes in the end was used to stir it. The handle was long so you could stay away from the fire while stirring. The cottage cheese we made from unpasteurized milk and topped with our own fresh cream was unbelievably delicious. Other gourmet treats were the wild strawberries and morrel mushrooms which always appeared at the same place each year.

Mother longed for an apartment in the city just like her brothers and sisters, which she got when our house burned down, causing the death of my grandmother. Is there any wonder dealing with all this for the first third of her life made quilting for fourteen hours a day seem like a piece of cake?

Mother would be truly amazed to know this quilt show was dedicated to her memory. She loved quilting and the wonderful people who made up her quilting community. Thank you for remembering her. As Ruth Childs always said, mother was a "national treasure."