

This is Not the Great Depression!

by Jamey Genna

Going to the candy store at night in the section of town called Kalliope. Riding bike, trying to get there before it closed at ten. Getting candy at that little store with the glass containers and the rows and rows of candy. Getting milk there occasionally, on Sundays. They used to go there after church, not to the grocery store downtown. Sometimes. This was before they moved to town. Dad drove the gravel roads out by the pits and dad pushed the red dial past seventy, eighty for them screaming him onward, bouncing in the back seat with no safety belts on. He went over a large hillock of sand once and his car bottomed out hard, like hitting a boulder underneath, the sound unyielding. The sound like the gunshot used—the dog taken to the pits to be dropped off, Dad said. Out where the dog could make it if he could. Like the woodchuck could chuck. His name was Ringo—like the Beatles. Like Roger, the dog she owned when she grew up, he was good dog, full of love.

But when they moved to town, Ringo went underneath their parent's bed on the Fourth of July and wouldn't come out. She can never get the image of this good dog meeting the bus to match with the image of their father taking him to the pits, dropping him there alone, no ten kids surrounding him, dog-wandering the desert of sand-gravel-land-water, looking for scrub and grass and mice to eat. It's possible he lived. Perhaps Dad shot Ringo. What labor for a dog that would spend his time waiting for a bus full of children. Their father horrible when it came to dogs.

Trying to understand, she sees his hourly wage and morning hours to rise.

In second grade is when they moved to town and by third, her parents out enjoying the bar. No longer farm people—town people. Corrupted by the big city? Or else, finally cutting loose after years

of working days and nights on a farm to keep up. Her mother gone to work at a factory then, too. Both of them. In the sixties. Still young...working to pay for babysitters, embarrassed for government cheese and milk and the phone being shut off more than once.

This is not the Great Depression! This then, the seventies, when there was a real recession. Turn down the heat in a winter-white blaze to sixty-eight degrees in a house without insulation. Put garbage bags on the outside of the windows to keep the cold from the slipping through the cracks, nail them on the frames. Put blankets over the windows from the inside.

