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Untitled

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— Kathy Bruning

"Wow," I exclaimed, "I'll bet you ate a lot of those."

"No way," Uncle Stanley replied, "twenty-five cents was a lot of money then. When I took a girl on a date and bought her a banana split, I had to save for a long time for that treat, and the girl had to be something special before I spent that kind of money on her." I laughed, thinking of the \$20.00 I had advanced my son when he went on a date last Saturday.

"Sweet rolls were two cents and eclairs, big and chocolate, were five cents each," related Uncle Stanley, as he smacked his lips and rolled his sparkling green eyes in delight, "and it took two guys to eat one, they were so big." I laughed and secretly wished I could bit into one of them for eclairs are my favorite.

"Sometimes, not very often," Uncle Stanley recalled, "we went to a movie. The movie cost ten cents at that time, and we got to see a double feature. Tim McCoy and Buck Jones were the big stars of the silent movie era. There were others, but Tim and Buck were my favorites," he whispered.

"I remember," said Uncle Stanley, a dancing smile on his lips, "when the funeral director drove his Cadillac, all the people in the neighborhood would run out to look at it. That was really a sight to see."

"Why was it such a wonder?" I asked. "What is so special about a Cadillac?"

"Well," Uncle Stanley replied, "a new Ford cost about \$800.00 and the average person couldn't even afford that but a Cadillac cost around \$2,000 to \$3,000 and the only one in the neighborhood who could afford one was the funeral director. So when he drove around in it, the people would stand and gape with their mouths open at the shiny, sleek black car that sparkled as it smoothly whisked by." Uncle Stanley became more serious as he continued his story. "Families stuck together," he said, as he sat down in his favorite brown, stuffed chair. "There weren't the divorces we have now. A wife knew that her husband was doing the best he could and rarely complained. Everybody pitched in. In our household, whoever was lucky enough to have a job, contributed most of their check to keep food on the table. There was no quibbling about his or mine or yours, it was all ours. Children realized what was happening and how difficult it was for the parents, and together families fought to survive during this bad time."

Uncle Stanley looked exhausted as our conversation brought back memories of the hard times past, and feelings long since hidden were now awakened. I could see he was affected by the depression more than he cared to admit. The frown on his furrowed brow made me realize that fear of a recurrence still lingered somewhere within that aging, thin body. I wanted to hold him and reassure him that everything is all right, but instead, I sat in my chair in silence and watched him gaze out of the window. A few moments passed and Uncle Stanley reaffirmed, "But we made it, we stuck together and made it." I agreed. He did make it. He was a survivor.

*Divorce is likened unto death — only far worse
Because the corpse refuses to die.*

— Mary Ryder-Swanson '83

SEVERANCE

*One fibrous strand after another
clips
a scrappedbook of memory
into unfocused images.*

*Those moments I'd like to fix
like some kodaprint in my heart
slide further from lips and eyes,
more unfair each fair day.*

*Most unfairless,
no fair lads and lassies
ever see the exposed tendril of smoke
or smell the underdeveloped ashes of time.*

— Lee Kesselman