

HOW TO SOLVE LACK OF TOILET PAPER PROBLEMS!

The post-depression was a time of shortages. First of all, people were short on money. As a result, they were short on many "staples" because there simply was no money to buy them. We learned a great deal about "waste not, want not" and we learned you could get along without some things you thought were very important. One of them was toilet paper.

Since I was a "depression baby", I grew up without ever knowing what toilet paper was. On the farm, we had the usual "outdoor biffy" which was a small shack about ten yards behind our house and hidden by some large evergreen trees. It was, indeed, a shack and, as such, it was old and drafty and smelly, but it did have coat of white paint on the outside. Inside it was a simple two-holer and it did have a door which could be closed for privacy. Every morning my sister was responsible for emptying the chamber pot into that toilet building. Every couple of weeks, my mom insisted that one of us needed to use the scrub brush plus hot water and soap on the bench and floor.

Also, in that outdoor toilet we needed to have a supply of toilet wipes. Since toilet paper was not available in our household, we needed to "make do" with something else. We used whatever was the most comfortable and whatever was available at the time. We did get a daily newspaper and part of it usually ended up in the biffy (it also provided a source of reading material). When the Sears or Montgomery Ward catalogs came to the house, they immediately made their way to the outhouse because we never ordered anything from them. Actually, some of those pages provided a more likely source of toilet-type paper.

But the most exciting time of all were the peach canning weeks. Mom always canned peaches and they needed to be purchased from the grocery store in town. Peaches were wrapped in a soft, thin peach-colored paper which had a second vital use as toilet paper in that little outhouse. This is one time we were cautioned to use those peach papers sparingly because they would not be around forever. We were in toilet heaven during that time of the year.

When we visited other family members who lived in town, we were exposed to what toilet paper was and what it looked like. Truthfully, I believe I was five years old before I had that opportunity. When we asked our mother to buy some for us, she told us it was one item we could live without – and so we did.

I have the memory from first grade of our principal addressing the students in a "school assembly" in regard to the use of toilet paper in the indoor toilets at school. Apparently, some of the boys had used the paper to drape about the inside of the toilets, thus wasting great quantities of that important commodity. Too bad they did not catch them red-handed.

We wish all of you well as you search the shelves in hopes of finding toilet paper for your homes. May you always have enough – maybe even enough to share with others.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura W. Berglund
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