

## Hanging On, or How to Get Through a Depression and Enjoy Life (M.B., March 2009)

Though there are many short accounts and (e.g., Studs Terkel's *Hard Times*), novels (e.g., *Grapes of Wrath*), movies and historical analyses of how various populations (e.g., migrant workers, Okies, etc.), I've seen few interesting, in-depth accounts of how middle class and upper middle class Americans in particular experienced the 1930s depression.

So Edmond G. Love's 1972 autobiographical novel, [Hanging On, Or, How to Get Through a Depression and Enjoy Life](#) was particularly intriguing to me when I found it at a local used bookstore, and his story struck me as an especially timely one given current events. Though the book certainly includes much more than just the depression, relating, for instance, the author's college experience, it is in large part a discussion of how nation's economic circumstances impacted the author and his friends and family and how they responded to these challenges.

(Love published several other books including *Subways are for Sleeping* and *The Situation in Flushing*. Some of these titles are currently sold by the [Wayne State University Press](#). Others titles do not appear to be sold currently but are available used on Amazon. *Hanging On* was originally published by William Morrow & Company, NY, and was reprinted in 1988 by Great Lakes Books, the imprint of Wayne State University Press.)

Certainly there are many differences, in ways both good and bad, between the 1930s and today, a point made by numerous bloggers and many others in recent weeks and months. Still, even given these differences I believe there are good general lessons which can be learned from how others have dealt with severe economic challenges and dislocations, both in our own nation and elsewhere in the world (e.g., Iceland, pre-collapse Soviet Union, Argentina).

### Background

Love, a resident at the time of Flint, MI, a city then of 156,000 people, was young, college aged (he turned 17 in 1929) and upper middle class. At least in theory, the author's father, who owned a coal and lumberyard, was worth \$1 million though the author notes that he later realized "[m]ost of his fortune was on paper and mighty flimsy paper at that" (p. 13). (One million dollars in 1930 was equivalent to about 10 million in 2007 depending on how computes this value e.g., based on the consumer price index, gross domestic product or relative purchasing power. See [the historical value calculators](#).)

The author's family had a nice house, housekeeper and maid and several cars. Love notes that his family and most of his neighbors had moved to Flint from more rural areas of Michigan in the past decade to work in trades such as plumbing or in the city's auto industry. Housing boomed -- according to the author his father's lumberyard had 20 or 30 contractors as clients in the late 20s (96)—and with the housing industry so too did sales for many other goods, such as (what were then) new types of household appliances including electric refrigerators, toasters and radios. "Prosperity touched everyone. It was a poor man who couldn't make money in Flint," writes the author.

For instance, Love notes that some of his friends families had second homes and

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he himself received a new car for his 18th birthday.

## Denial

One of the undercurrents of this book, in my view, was how long it took the author and many others to realize just how drastically their circumstances had changed and that the depression was not going away anytime soon. Though Love notes that some historians later would divide the depression into different phases (depression, recovery), for him there was little to distinguish these years and when the depression finally did end, it did so fairly suddenly.

As the author explains, the depression, at least at its worst, did not happen overnight and the author was not greatly impacted in the early stages. For instance, in September 1929 between graduating high school and starting college the author attended a military school in Missouri for a year. He notes that between semesters some classmates could not afford to return. His father lost most of his money in the Oct 1929 crash, ended up in debt, had to mortgage the lumberyard and came close to bankruptcy (46). However, the author, away at military school was largely unaware of this. Several of the authors' friends fathers also had lost big in the stock market and many people were worried about slow 1930 model car sales.

His family and others families started to cut spending (47). Still, though people were careful, they were still largely optimistic at that time hoping "[t]hings would be better in the spring when people started building houses again. The situation was only temporary" (48).

By June 1930, with the depression 8 months old, "[t]he panic had subsided and the wreckage had been cleared away. Most people could look about them and see just about where they stood." Though the spring had passed "[t]here was an air of puzzlement but the optimism was there, too" with many still expressing the belief that " 'prosperity is just around the corner.' "

As the author explains (48-49) this idea: "would be repeated and repeated. When the fall had come and gone, people talked about the upturn that would come the next spring. The next spring people would say that the upturn would come in the summer, and so on. The thing is that people really believed this. They had a blind faith in it, and because they did, they set up a pattern of living called 'hanging on.'

If you were in a business, you kept the business going any way you could until the upturn came and things got better. If you had a job, you hung onto it any way you could. You took less money and worked longer hours. Sooner or later things would return to normal. If you were laid off from your job, you hung around close by, so that you'd be able to go back to work[...] This was where the optimism came in. No one that I knew ever thought things would stay bad forever. The silver lining was there somewhere, and it was bound to turn up."

From the author's perspective and observation, 1930 was bad only in comparison to 1929. People felt pessimistic because most certainly were worse off than they had been a year ago. The author's father, who employed 25 people, still had enough business in 1930 to keep 12 coal trucks going and was able to give the author a summer job without displacing anyone. However, the author does note that when people left (e.g., to join the military or get married) they were not replaced. In Flint and elsewhere people still were living off accumulated savings and the auto companies, preparing for the 1931 model year, still offered solid employment. The author's fathers' lumberyard still had coal and lumber stocks and could both sell and purchase on credit. For instance, many people purchased their winter coal supply that year on credit.

The author and his family were able to save enough to afford the author's first

semester at the University of Michigan in the Fall of 1930 where he enrolled as a sophomore (after the one year at the military academy). The college still was "closer in spirit to the twenties than it was to the thirties" since the "real pinch" of the depression had yet to be felt.

But by Labor day (Sept. 1930) the nation started to experience the "real depths" of the depression. The author's father started to get calls from his creditors and customers no longer were paying their accounts. By this time, "[t]he fat on which people had been living all summer was gone." It was at this point, as 1931 model car sales ground to a halt, that mass layoffs began in Flint's auto factories (76) Prices dropped (e.g., 8 gallons of gas selling for \$1, cigarettes for 10 cents a pack). Prices for the coal sold by his father's lumberyard also dropped but, unfortunately, their costs for purchasing this coal did not. Businesses in Flint not selling necessities- clothing stores, furniture stores - started to close down and were boarded up. His father had to start dismissing employees because he could not afford to pay his bills since his customers could no longer pay theirs. Coal deliveries to the lumberyard had to be paid upfront in cash or the suppliers would take the shipment back. "It was a grim and desperate time," the author writes.

By the summer of 1931, "Flint seemed deserted" (83) with closed factories and boarded up stores. Big orders (e.g., the Post Office buying 185 new mail trucks) were "almost a cause for a community celebration," helping to keep auto workers employed (82). (Each car purchase, according to a sign popular at the time, could support work for an employee for 71 days). Inventory at the lumberyard rapidly shrank because no one was building new homes and housing contractors had gone bankrupt (82). By winter 1932, auto workers were averaging four months of work for the year. Despite including new and often untested gadgets, "[t]he 1932 cars had been the most tremendous failures in the history of automaking." Complaints about gadgets like free wheeling (cruise control) hurt sales. But "[v]ery few people had money enough to buy new cars" anyway. Engineers and others were laid off.

Things picked up for a while in 1933 but then in March 1933 the depression hit its "very bottom." Michigan was the first state to close its banks following a run/panic, other states followed and Roosevelt after his inauguration on March 4th closed the banks in the rest of the nation (118-119). Still, according to the author, even then many believed things would soon get better. "Just as there had been in those early days after the crash, there was not a peculiar reaction, half optimism and half pessimism. The optimism arose from the fact that everyone was sure our banks were sound and this was only temporary. The pessimism was slow in getting hold of people and gradually built into a panic as succeeding extra editions of the papers and radio commentators speculated on the meaning of it" (119).

The author notes that following the bank holiday having cash on hand became critical; a truck driver with \$50 was better off than a wealthy executive with plenty of money saved in the bank but no cash on hand. Panic orders for coal started pouring in to the lumberyard because "[w]hen the news of the bank holiday hit, people began to worry about being cold and hungry." (120) So many coal orders came in, Love and his family had to stop accepting new orders and try to deliver to those most in need. Everything had to be paid for in cash and no one would accept credit; cigarette packs were broken up so the individual cigarettes could be sold (121). Creditors were willing to settle accounts for a few cents on the dollar. Unable to pay cash for their coal shipments, the lumberyard eventually went bankrupt.

Though hardships continued with Roosevelt in office the tone in 1933 started to change. "When one looks back from a distance of forty years, it is easy to see that the New Deal did not accomplish very much in good hard terms," Love writes. "The period is euphemistically called the era of Recovery, but the same

old disasters were overtaking us and the casualties continued. We were still as uncertain in 1936 as we were in 1932. The big difference was that we felt better" (133). Roosevelt's personality -- his "bearing," courage and "rapport with the people" -- "reached out and touched everything" (133).

Still even in 1934 many factories were closed and the author describes his tough experience job hunting after being laid off (148). People who were unemployed, including the author, would show up early at the Flint Journal office to get the first paper with want ads. In the beginning, most of the New Deal programs (Civil Works Administration, Public Works Administration) were only for married men and the Civilian Conservation Corps, which did accept single men, required a 6 month enlistment (149).

By June 1935, the Depression was still bad but "[p]erhaps the big difference, in Flint at least, was the fact that people had learned to live with hard times by now. They didn't stand around muttering about it as they used to. In most cases they had learned to pinch a penny like an expert."

During spring 1937, when the author worked as a teacher, schools still closed 6 weeks early, cutting his salary 10 percent. Indeed, schools had closed early since the depression started (240). In the summer of 1937, according to Love, there was little business in downtown Flint and few jobs. When he tried to get job as busboy in June to supplement his income, 20 people were already in line for the job by time he got to downtown Flint (245).

Even in the summer of 1939, the school in which he taught closed 5 weeks early (256). But as WWII began, circumstances finally started to change for the better. "The Depression ended on the day the war began, but it did not become apparent to most of us for some time," says the author. He remembers that in 1940 when he went on road trip when he saw on the way down to Texarkana that there was lot of traffic and most towns seemed busy. He recalls seeing a huge railroad yard with hundreds of tank cars. Even in Flint things were busy and the auto factories, after the 1940 model run, didn't close that year. At that point, the author realized the depression was over. Within a year, the author and many of his friends were drafted into the military as the United States entered World War II.

### **Impact on most vulnerable**

One aspect of the depression which comes through in this book is the impact on the most vulnerable- such as the elderly, large families and the poor. In noting that the depression in summer 1930 still had not touched many Americans, the author explains: "[i]t was people like the alcoholic, I think, who first felt the full bite of the Depression. Lacking stability even in good times, they were the ones, in the end, who ended up in breadlines or selling applies. There weren't so many of them as dealers in Depression nostalgia would have one believe."

Still, even in the summer of 1930, the author noted "disquieting undertones" such as stories of people committing suicide, going to jail (e.g., embezzlement), going bankrupt and having stress-related health problems (heart attack, stroke). "The Depression produced all kinds of casualties," the author states (50). One of the authors' neighbors was arrested for embezzlement and his family evicted. Another friend and neighbor's father drank himself to death. People laid off from Flint's auto factories lost houses, suffered breakdowns and strokes and even committed suicide (94).

Businesses depending on the auto industry (e.g., car hauling businesses) also suffered. His father had a heart attack at age 50 in part because of the stress over the lumberyard (142). A friend of the authors' father in his 60s ran a wholesale lumber business which went bankrupt; the man abandoned his family in the summer of 1932 and 3 years later died in a train wreck. He was riding the train as a hobo (95).

Even in the middle and late thirties this continued, according to the author. The Flint economy was tied to cars and things did get a little better because sales of the 1936, 1937 and 1938 model years improved. Factories started running for 6 months instead of 4 as in previous years. But there still was no unemployment insurance to help when factories closed and the author cites several examples of suffering in his circle. One of his friends, for instance, died of a stroke. Another family friend's husband who drove a cab to support his family worked himself to death (252)

Yet given the prevailing attitudes at the time, few would have accepted public assistance even had any been offered (at that time, there was little more than the county poorhouse for indigent older persons). There was no unemployment insurance, a difficulty at a time when people, including the author, were continually being laid off (149) even if they could find a job. "The thing most Americans forget about the Depression after all these years is that even as late as 1931 nearly everyone still thought in old fashioned terms," Love explains(87)." People were expected to overcome life's challenges on their own. Though forms of government relief had been discussed few supported the idea.

Embarrassment and shame added to the economic challenges. Reflecting on his father's anguish in telling him he could not return to school, which the author had expected, Love notes that "[w]e were living in a world where all the people were broke, where everyone was struggling for survival, where forces beyond our understanding and remedy were operating on us and still we were embarrassed to death at our predicament."

It helped that many business people like his father understood first-hand what their customers were going through and tried to help as best they could. The author notes that in the winter of 1930-1931, a cold winter in Michigan, many people needed to start buying coal on credit, while still owing money for coal they had previously received. "My father didn't turn many people down. For almost everyone in a business where necessities were being sold, this was the pattern" (76). His father viewed his customers as basically honest and assumed they were paying what they could under the circumstances.

### **Communities and families**

The author notes that the depression forced people to stay home. "I always think of the early 1930s as the jigsaw-puzzle years," the author comments. "The main means of recreation were listening to the radio and working jigsaws"(83). Gardening became a popular family activity. Families took short car rides for recreation. New board games like Monopoly were introduced and became popular (216). Activities such as dancing also caught on because they were inexpensive (\$1 to get in, 5 cents for a coke for the author and his dates). Dates were often "dutch" in the 30s (i.e., both men and women paying). The author notes that "the Depression was a period of great elegance" in fashion, perhaps in response to "the everyday drabness about us" (93).

The author's stepmother in particular was extremely stressed and discouraged the author and others from spending money. But the author admits he and his father and brothers "needed some restraint." The depression forced families to stick together. Though families argued about money and other things, "[t]he one important thing to remember about our family and most other families of the time was that the Depression welded us into tight-knit little groups. In spite of the bickering, it would never occurred to any of us to act outside of the interests of the family." (89). In the summer of 1931, for instance, and the winter (he did not return to college) the author worked for his father who now ran the office alone. He and his brother were "good cheap labor and that was all my father could afford."

Some bloggers (e.g., Sharon Astyk) have noted the value and importance of

intergenerational households. The author's grandfather, a colorful character who was in his late 70s and lived with the family. His grandfather devoted much of his time to watching court cases and serving on juries. He was able to make \$3 each day from jury duty (always managing to get himself picked!), and contributed significantly to the household's finances during the depression (15). The author recounts how his grandfather helped care for an elderly widow after she and her husband were injured in an auto accident and the husband died. The company responsible for the accident went bankrupt, leaving the widow destitute. The author's grandfather not only helped the widow close the couple's store but even moved in to help care for her and even helped her buy food and medicine because "[s]omebody had to take care of the old lady and he seemed to be the only one to do it." (88)

### Plans and Dreams

The book conveys the huge impact of the depression on young people of that time who were hit especially hard by the depression. Many had to temporarily defer or even entirely give up their goals and dreams. For instance, when a neighbor's father died from heavy drinking (cirrhosis of the liver), the author's friend left college, where he was studying electrical engineering and came home to try to run his father's plumbing business (83). A friend's father working as a supervisor in an auto factory fell off a roof he was retarring (auto factories tried to keep supervisors employed by giving them such odd jobs to do) forcing his friend to leave school and work in one of the factories.

The author did not return to college in the Fall of 1931 though he was eventually able to go back in 1932 in part after winning a big horse racing wager. By then enrollment at the university had dropped considerably. (For instance only 6 of 28 of the authors' fraternity pledge class members still were in school (106)). Between 1932 and 1934 "most of the frills of college life" disappeared, notes the author (155). Eventually, Love was forced to leave school yet again (124). He continued to work in the lumberyard and in 1934 got a job in an auto factory and then at a spark plug company(143) and then was able to go back to school again.

Many of his friends also had to change their plans. A friend with a degree in business administration ended up working as a bill collector (252). Another friend with a graduate degree in engineering worked as a meter repairman. A fraternity brother who had completed 3 years of college, was forced to leave and then returned to college at 25 (159). He wanted to be a physician and was taking premed courses but was eventually forced to work as clerk in company and give up this dream. A friend whose father went bankrupt when he was a college junior took on odd jobs like mowing lawns and worked 10 hours a day as a dishwasher at night while going to school. "He survived and got his degree, but I still don't know how he did it," the author writes. "It left a permanent mark on him" (95).

"It had begun to seem as though no one in my generation was ever going to get a start in life and I had reached the conclusion that none of us was ever going to be able to do the things we wanted to do," Love reflects, "In the world in which all of us had reached maturity, security and a job had become the important things in life. Most of us had taken whatever we could find and were hanging on to it..."

Still, some managed to succeed despite the odds. One of Love's friends with a degree in business administration got a job at a sparks plug company after graduating measuring sparkplug tips but was able to find a better way of doing this and was rewarded with a salaried job and large bonus (153).

When the authors' family lumberyard went bankrupt, his father, at age 52, needed to look for a new job and became a traveling lumber salesman. His father turned out to be good at this and had many contacts in the lumber

business who eventually became his customers.

As his college graduation approached, the author eventually decided to become a teacher realizing that "[a] degree by itself was no guarantee of security at all. I could still find myself walking the streets looking for jobs, but a degree with a teacher's certificate was like an insurance policy (204)." An assistant superintendent of schools who had been one of his teachers suggested he look into a University of Michigan program offering a concentrated course for those who wanted to earn their teaching certificate. People with college degrees or about to finish could take 19 credits in 1 semester and earn the certificate. "This course was undoubtedly Depression-born," Love comments. "In the six years since the stock market crash, a great many people had lost their jobs--a great many women had lost their husbands. A lot of these people had college degrees but no teaching credentials, and many of them wanted to turn to teaching to make a living" (204).

However, it was not possible for these students to complete the standard 1 year program which would have meant moving to Ann Arbor for one year during the depression. To assist these non-traditional students, the school not only shortened the class term but also allowed students in the concentrated program to complete the required 6 weeks of practice teaching close to home. So, reports Love, students would spend 6 weeks in Ann Arbor at the University of Michigan taking education courses, 6 weeks practice teaching at home then finish their last 4 weeks of classes. According to the author, the concentrated course was very intense, running 8AM to 6PM every day.

The 26 people in his course, according to Love, included 10 widows and five former businessmen who had lost their savings in the depression. The author completed the course, graduated with both his degree and teaching certificate in August 1936 and, at age 24, started teaching in Flint. Though sometimes frustrated, Love eventually earned his masters degree, reasoning that given the economy his best course of action was to do his best to improve himself in his current teaching career. With the arrival of World War II, the author and many friends were drafted in 1941 and he did not return home until age 34 after the war.

In responding to comments that his generation later was viewed as materialistic, the author comments that "very few of us had anything before we reached the age of thirty. With the start most of us had, I doubt we'd be normal if we didn't pay some attention to the material things."(284). The author notes that as he got older he always kept eye on his bank statement and was careful with stocks. Still, looking back after many years, the author thought it was an interesting time: "I think I was pretty lucky to have been young then, but then some people have all the luck"(285).

### **Ingenuity**

During the depression, the author and his acquaintances and others had sometimes creative ways of meeting the challenges of daily life. For instance, when gardening became popular author's father was able to make a significant amount of money by using unsold lumber to build cheap lawn ornaments and putting up a floodlighted rock garden to draw a crowd (the lumberyard was on a main road).

The authors' brother and truck drivers who had worked for his father's lumberyard but now were unemployed came up with the idea to help fix driveways where the coal delivery trucks had had problems. They focused on police, postal workers and teachers as customers because they "had worked steadily through most of the Depression and had a little money" (100).

The author also discusses the chain letter craze of 1935 in which people would

receive a letter and were supposed to pass on a dime or dollar to the name (then they became the top of the chain and others then were supposed to pass on the money to them (176). Though this sounds silly, and subsequently was made illegal, the author and his fraternity brothers managed to make quite a bit of money when they took these letters to a nearby town where no one had heard of the scheme. "The Depression saw a lot of crackpot schemes, but the 1935 chain-letter craze was the zaniest of them all," Love writes. "Before it was over, the President had to step in and put a stop to it before the post office broke down."

### **Unions and the workplace**

The author lived and worked in Flint during the famous sit down strike at the Fisher Body auto factory. Most Flint residents, the author included, were avidly anti-union in 1936. The attitude the author and other Flint residents had toward unions reflected their generally conservative perspectives. Recalling his view at the time, the author writes that: "I was a product of middle-class parents and I was brought up in a world that solidly embraced a middle-class philosophy. It was a relatively small world where everyone knew everyone else. There had never been a labor union in that world, because most people didn't believe one was needed. One of the basic tenets of my world was the belief that each man stood on his own legs and fought his own fight[....] It was a viewpoint that was incompatible with the theories of unionism." (219). Having worked in three factories himself during his college years, the author also believed at the time that for the most part employees were treated fairly by their managers.

The book includes an interesting discussion of the dynamics of the labor situation in Flint during the depression. Love observes that companies like GM had changed significantly in the 1920s. GM was founded by Billy Durant, a resident of Flint. Even after he lost control of the company it was managed by men from the town who understood the auto industry and the community and were close to their workers. Executives, according to the author, were referred to by first names and workers would stop by to talk and get advice during and after work hours. GM supported the Industrial Mutual Association (IMA), Flint's largest institution, which "reflected the paternal and fair view which the General Motor executives had of themselves." The IMA offered lakes and parks, bowling, dancing, parks and sports programs and night study for GM factory workers and their families. Though membership was not required, most workers joined.

According to the author there were three main groups of employees those working for Buick, employees of Chevrolet and Fisher Body employees. The author describes Buick factory workers as being the "aristocrats of Flint labor." These tended to be the more senior GM workers because Buick was one of the older brands. Many employees owned their homes and cars as well as company stock. They had savings. While these employees suffered layoffs and tough times in Depression "as a group they had more resources with which to weather the storm" than other Flint employees.

Chevrolet workers formed the second group. Chevy was a younger company than Buick and had expanded rapidly from 1918 to 1926. These employees were younger than their Buick counterparts as well and tended to have less wealth. "To them the Depression became a struggle to hold on to what little they had. Not all of them succeeded," Love writes.

The third group, Fisher Body workers, were most relevant to unions. The Fisher Body plant was built in 1926 (221) and workers came from throughout the country to work there. Many thought of their homes as being elsewhere. They lived in slums because there had not been time to build good housing. The depression hit in 1929 before they had made much money and they had the toughest time during the depression of the three groups.

Some men from the Fisher plant had received charter from the United Auto Workers, then part of American Federation of Labor, but there had been little union activity during the depression. Then in 1936 National Labor Relations Act passed. IMA, dominated by Buick workers, was designated as the bargaining agent for workers. But John Lewis, director of the Council of Industrial Organizations (CIO) decided to focus his efforts on the auto industry and used the United Auto Workers chapter in the Fisher Plant as a starting point. The author points out that United Auto Workers membership was a very small part of total Flint GM workforce in 1936.

The sit down strike started December, 30, 1936. Because the workers were a distinct minority and few workers would have been likely to support a picket line, particularly at a time when the auto factories were starting to recover, they decided to seize the plant itself (225). "The sit-down [strike] was simply a stratagem aimed at bringing about one result—the achievement of union recognition," the author asserts (225).

With the New Year and holiday, few wanted to upset their plans in response to the sit down. Both the company and union went to court but since a strike like this had never happened before there were few precedents so several days went by with little response. The union supplied the workers in the factory with food but most in the community assumed the sit down strikers would get tired and leave.

As the strike continued, rumors started that carloads of outsiders would show up in support of the strikers. The union threatened a general strike throughout the city, though in retrospect the author is doubtful this would have succeeded. Union lawyers used delaying tactics and the strike continued. The author and his friends and the city's main newspapers (Flint Journal and Detroit Free Press) were solidly against the strikers.

Two weeks after the strike started, the Buick and Chevy plants closed because these factories could not make cars without the bodies from Fisher. Workers from these companies, angered, also took sides against strikers. A Buick worker and former Flint mayor formed the Flint Alliance to oppose the strike. The alliance held rallies and send a petition against the strike with 30000 signatures to Washington. The alliance, reports the author, helped "bring the tension to the breaking point" (229) and there were ugly clashes.

Barricades were put up around the plant so strikers could no longer get food and water and the power was turned off. Though some blamed GM for increasing the tension, Love disagrees. "In spite of all that had happened to them in the previous ten years," he argues, "the average citizen was still a conservative, grass-roots-oriented individual who accepted traditional views of what was right and wrong." (230) Many viewed the seizure of the plant in fairly simple terms simply as a violation of the owners' property rights.

Though urged to intervene, both the Roosevelt White House and Frank Murphy, the new Governor who had been inaugurated on Jan. 1, 1937, remained neutral though sympathetic to the strikers. In the fourth week of the strike, a court finally issued an order for the strikers to leave the plant, which they ignored. Flint's mayor asked Governor Murphy to send the National Guard to evict the workers but Murphy refused declaring that human rights transcended property rights. The county sheriff and city police chief tried unsuccessfully to evict the workers but failed, though there was considerable violence. Before the sheriff could send in a larger force, the Governor sent in the National Guard to restore order, threatened martial law if the unrest continued and ordered GM and the union to negotiate, effectively representing a victory for the strikers and forcing GM's recognition of the union.

"The significance of what had happened was a long time dawning on me," the

author recalls, noting that the company was unionized in 6 months with most workers quickly joining the union. "I was seeing a lot more than a union victory in a strike. I was seeing a way of life disappear. [...]The rural viewpoints that people had carried with them into the cities in the first three decades of the twentieth century were gone. The General Motors Corporation was no longer a local concern managed by local men with a kindly regard for the workers. The men at Fisher body knew this. They'd seen it long before the rest of us did and their strike was against an impersonal entity, cold and hard.

Something else had become apparent, too. The idea that each family and each community could take care of its own and exist like a small island in a great sea was no longer valid. The crisis of the Depression with its poverty and its hopelessness had long since proved too much for cities like Flint, for counties like Genesee County, for states like Michigan.[...]. The whole essence of the New Deal was the abandonment of this small, individualistic outlook in favor of the bigger, stronger, national government and the immense power it could bring to bear on the solutions of the pressing problems which faced us."

## Conclusion

Love led an interesting life, reaching adulthood in one of the nation's most difficult eras. Though there are many differences between the 1930s and our era some of what people experienced and how they responded is perhaps not entirely without parallel in modern times.

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