

BOOK REVIEW: *Little Heathens— Hard Times and High Spirits on an Iowa Farm During the Great Depression*

Author: Mildred Armstrong Kalish — Reviewed by Anita Finley

Mildred Armstrong Kalish, an 84-year-old retired English professor, has brought us back to a time when life was simpler, though more difficult in many ways. Her story is about “a time, a place, and a family” that chronicles a time when living was “back-to-basics.” She says, “In looking back...I discovered, somewhat to my surprise, that I have come to view that time as a gift. Austere and challenging as it was, it built character, fed the intellect, and stirred the imagination.”

Just recently published, *Little Heathens* has received many outstanding testimonials about its basic reality, told in “clear clean prose.” Jim Harrison, author of *Legend of the Fall*, says “...it is an enchanting but thoroughly unsentimental look at rural life in the Great Depression. It offers grit, struggle, and also the joy of hard work on a farm. Its naked honesty and quiet lyricism about a time which makes our current problems nearly childish... a fine book!”

Little Heathens will especially appeal to the Baby Boomers who have heard so much about the Depression from their older family members. But most of all, the Senior population will absolutely love it. Kalish’s book offers many home-made and home-grown things and home remedies. You will find recipes for carrot marmalade, morel mushrooms, and the world’s best head cheese (start by scrubbing the head of the pig until it is pink and clean!), the cure for a cold (eat onions baked in ashes), as well as instructions for wood chopping, window shining, raccoon catching, bumble bee nest-

robbing, and more ways of saving pennies than you ever dreamed possible. And if those hints are not applicable to your current life, that’s okay, because this book is a celebration of hard times, and the happiness that finds you when you aren’t looking.

Kalish writes, “For those who remember a time before computerized washing machines and automatic water temperature controls, people put on clean clothes on Monday morning and were expected to wear them for the entire week because laundering those clothes was a major undertaking, with every member of the family called upon to contribute.” And there was the

main form of entertainment: the Philco radio, placed in the corner of the living room, with listening time limited.

You will enjoy sharing the memories with your family as well as just reminiscing about the “good ole days.”

Mildred Armstrong Kalish is a retired professor of English who taught at several colleges, including the University of Iowa. Until she and her husband made their recent move to Cupertino, California, Kalish continued to enjoy sawing, chopping, and splitting their firewood.

(*Little Heathens* was published by Bantam books in hardcover. Cost: \$22. To order your copy, contact Bantam Dell Publishing Group Customer Service by calling 1-800-733-3000, 8:30AM-5:00PM EST. Fax orders: 1-800-659-2436 or order on Amazon.com or at your local bookstore.)

