

HARD WORK & MAKING DO WERE RITZ FAMILY VIRTUES

9/5/95

Frank and Jessie Ritz were early Adirondackers worthy of mention.

Frank was born in Barnes Corners, and his wife, in Crogahan. Shortly after they were married they came to Old Forge, and as near as their son, Red, can recall, his father first came to work in the woods. He thought he may have followed one of C. J. Strife's logging jobs to the area.

Ten children were born to the couple and at least six of them that I know lived here also and raised their families. There were six girls and four boys and as one can imagine, raising that many children in the 20s and 30s was a monumental task.

I personally knew Kathleen, May, Helen, John, Frank and Alvin (better known to most people as Red).

Kathleen, before she passed on, was married to Jack Foster Sr. and their son, Jack Jr., was the oldest grandchild of Frank and Jessie. There were three other children, Gail Ruliffson, Kathy Gaffney, and Dick Foster, who works for Niagara Mohawk.

Jack Jr. and I are hunting and fishing buddies and the subject of his grandfather comes up often.

Jack's Gramp was a caretaker at the Adirondack League Club for many years at the Porter and Hamill camps. Jack would jump at the chance to go to camp with Gramp on the off chance he would get to fish. It usually ended up he would be piling wood or other camp chores.

The Ritz family was all raised in a little home just south of the Nutty Putty in times that were a whole lot tougher than they are now.

Frank did the usual things to get by. They had a big garden and canned everything, including venison.

I remember John saying his mother was always afraid one of them would be born with horns because she ate so much venison.

Mondays and Tuesdays were wash days – colored clothes one day and whites the next.

Bread was baked two days a week and the heat, of course, for both baking and wash water came from wood. No doubt all of the kids had plenty of chores to do, as they became old enough.

Red recalled one particularly trying time when they were home for weeks with Scarlet Fever. The house was quarantined with a big official sign on the door. They all came down with it one after another, so that the time seemed interminable.

Frank's main pursuits were hunting, fishing and trapping and they were utilized to augment his income and provide for his large family.

Jay Barker was Frank's favorite trapping partner and they would stay back in the woods for weeks tending traps. Frank became very ill at one time and Jay nursed him along for a week on nothing but burnt toast and tea.

Frank worked very hard to provide for his family, so it was only natural that he liked to get out once in awhile and have a little fun.

He had a great sense of humor and displayed it on occasion with his outdoor contemporaries, of whom there were many. I will give a sample in my next column.