

A Small Town Brings Up A Woodcutter's Six Kids

BY KEN McCORMICK
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THOMPSON — There are six little children playing in the five-below-zero cold here who will testify that that this community's heart is as big as its population is small.

They are the children of Glen Lake, 38, a woodcutter, whose wife died two years ago.

Lake fought hard to raise the youngsters himself the past two years, but a woodcutter doesn't have much time to tend children.

A few weeks ago he realized the job was too much for him.

So, for the good of his children, Lake agreed they should be adopted out—but on his terms.

Lake insisted that they all remain in Thompson, a community of 200, six miles west of Manistique in the Upper Peninsula.

The children, ranging in age from three to 13, were taken by three of the families who had watched Lake's hopeless fight to keep his family together.

LOOKING AT THE children now, playing together beside a modest white cottage, two dogs tagging after them, it's hard to believe that these are the Lake children. They look so healthy and happy.

Just a few weeks ago they were struggling to live in their father's rundown farmhouse. They had improper diets and inadequate clothing.

Mrs. Ellen Grimm, 40, and her husband, George, 42, who run a market in Thompson, live in the white cottage. They adopted Lester, 12, Allen, 10, and Arthur, 7.

MRS. INGRID ANDERSON, 50, and her husband, 55, a stone driller, took Lois Ann, 3, and Johnny, 6, into their home and hearts.

Mr. and Mrs. Harry Hastings adopted Frank, 13.

The Probate Court, obeying the woodcutter's wish, refused to let Carolyn, 15, move in with relatives in Lansing, and so Mr. and Mrs. George Chvala, were accepted as her guardians.

At the Grimm home, you find that although it has only been a few weeks, Lester, Allen and Arthur have already taken the names of their foster parents—as well as possession of an Irish setter and cocker spaniel.

MRS. GRIMM laughs as the boys bound into the three easy chairs.

"You let me sit there," she orders Allen, adding gently: "You may sit on my lap."

The boys grin broadly at her order, and scramble to obey.

"They are wonderful boys," said Mrs. Grimm, seated, Allen on her lap. "They are willing helpers and so much fun to have around."

"In fact, they do too much. They help me cook and they keep the snow shoveled. Sometimes they want to work in the store."

SHE PAUSED in her praise of the children and explains how near a thing it was that she and her husband might never have had children.

"It's wonderful to have them," she said with force. "We've always wanted children."

"Once, when we wanted to adopt some through agencies, Mr. Grimm found himself back in service. He served in World War II and in Korea."

Just then the Anderson's arrived. Anderson, a big, cheerful man, was carrying a beautiful little girl, his foster daughter, Lois. His new son, Johnny, tagged along behind him.

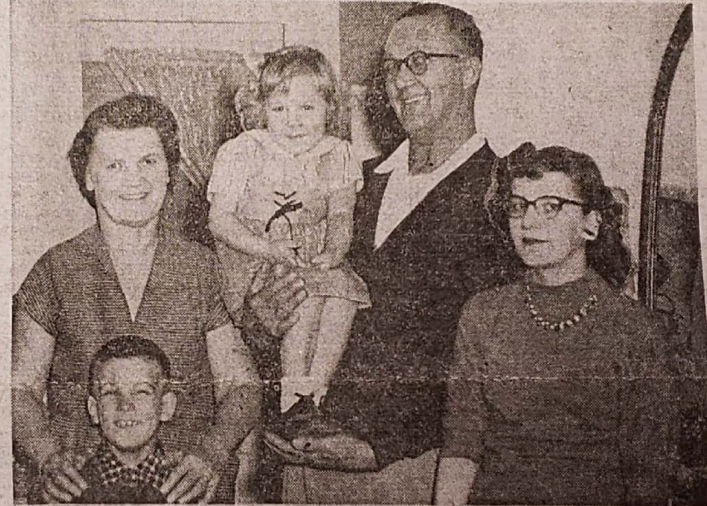
Pointing to Johnny's fur hat, Anderson said:

"He had to have one just like mine."

The Anderson children were decked out in brand new winter clothes.

"We weren't fortunate enough to have a family," Mrs. Anderson said. "But this is the second pair of children we've taken to raise."

THE DOOR opened. In



Shown above, from left to right, are Frank Lake, 13, his step-mother, Mrs. Henry Hastings; Mrs. and Mr. George Grimm. In front of them are their new stepchildren, Allen 10, Arthur, 9 and Lester, 12. At left are Mrs. Walte Anderson with her new stepson, John, 7, in front of her, Anderson holding Lois, 3, and Carolyn Lake, 15, whose new guardians and Mr. Hastings were not present for picture.

at any time. He's been in the woods working. But he'll be welcome," said Mrs. Grimm. The others nodded assent.

"ONE OF Johnny's baby teeth is loose," said Mrs. Anderson, preoccupied with the children who were playing noisily in another room.

"I promised to give him a quarter if he pulls it out," said Anderson.

"Then you'll get another reward from the food bank," said Mrs. Grimm, now looking at Carolyn, who's hearing name had returned.

Johnny was adamant. He announced he would keep his tooth until it fell out.

Suddenly the other youngsters cascaded back into the room. And sweeping Johnny with them, they spilled out of the house into the snow—all except Lois. She was being a little lady.

The house now felt empty without them. It gave you an idea of the happiness that came to these people through their unselfishness.

It gave you an idea of the heartache of a childless home, when people want children.

It also gave you an idea of why the woodcutter had fought so hard against impossible hardships to keep the children—and of how he must feel out in the woods now, even though his decision was best for everyone.

walked Frank. His brothers and sister grinned. There was a little rough-house play. It looked like any normal, happy family scene, and it was.

"We had a wonderful Christmas," said young Lester, breathlessly. "We got air rifles, games, all kinds of toys and clothes."

"We don't allow them much candy," explained Mrs. Grimm, sternly. "They must go to the dentist and candy isn't good for their teeth. All the children are having trouble with their teeth."

Then she added: "Lester must be given some medical treatment. He has had polio, but he's getting along fine."

JOHNNY rough-housed with his new father. That reminded Anderson, who mentioned that he had to keep his promise to make Johnny a toboggan.

Little Lois climbed on Mrs.

Anderson's lap and rolled her big, blue eyes.

His new, tan sport suit was immaculate. She was the picture of health. She smiled aloofly as her brothers vied for her attention. She said nothing.

MRS. GRIMM and Mrs. Anderson agreed it was nice that the children could be together most of the time.

They attend the same school. And after school, they either play together outdoors, or in one another's homes.

"It's like living as a family, except that they eat and sleep in different houses," said Mrs. Grimm.

"We are glad about that, but we feel that we have received more than they have."

"Next spring, if it works out, Mr. Grimm and I plan to finish the upstairs so there will be more room. It's crowded now, but wonderfully crowded."

GLEN LAKE moved to Thompson last May. He was respected as a hard worker and for fighting to rear his large family.

But before long, it became apparent that the children were in need.

So Mrs. Grimm, Mrs. Anderson and others sought welfare aid for his family.

That's how the case came to the attention of the Schoolcraft County Probate Court.

"FINALLY, we met on Dec. 10 to arrive at a solution," said Mrs. Grimm. "All of us, including Glen Lake, tried to find some way to keep the children together."

"There was no other way, it seems, except the solution we agreed upon. It was hard for Lake but he agreed. It was the best thing to do."

The children were legally adopted by the three couples that very night.

"Glen's welcome to see them