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## Meet Jocelyn Parker

This year Richland Electric Cooperative decided to hire an intern for the summer. You may have seen on our Facebook page that we have hired Jocelyn Parker. Jocelyn has been very involved in the cooperative world since high school. She was a two-time attendee at Youth Leadership Congress and was elected to the Youth Board her second year. She was then selected to represent Wisconsin as a National Youth Board member, allowing her to attend the NRECA national meeting in San Diego, California, this past February. Jocelyn recently finished her first year at UW-Madison where she plans to major in communication or international relations. We wanted to give Jocelyn the opportunity to write for our local pages. When reviewing her article we definitely got a chuckle as we can all relate to it in some way or another. Enjoy!

*Jocelyn is also pictured on the front cover of this magazine with Tessa Otto, subject of our feature story on page XX.*

## Kids say the DARNDDEST THINGS

By Jocelyn Parker

**W**hy is it that kids say things that adults would never think up (or expect) in a million years? Perhaps innocence truly is bliss when it comes to vocalizing thoughts and opinions that adults might not always have the imagination for. Think about it! How many times have you asked a son, daughter, grandchild, neighbor, student, etc. a question with an expected answer in your mind and been completely blown away with the response you got instead?

### Nostalgia

When I was young, probably around the age of 5 or 6, I was asked what I wanted to be when I grew up. Now, you might expect that I would have answered with “ballerina,” “doctor,” “vet,” “firefighter,” or any one of the other typical answers given by kids when asked this popular question. If you did anticipate one of those answers, you will be disappointed—and probably confused—by my actual answer. Imagine the surprise on my family members’ faces when I told them “When I grow up, I want to be an alligator.” An alligator? Of course, I didn’t think anything of it at the time. However, I couldn’t give you any answer as to why I said that now other than that maybe it was my favorite animal at the time.



MY CO-OP



You know the adage “You’ll never live that down?” I relate to that on so many levels. I can’t even guess at how many times my family members have regaled the story of the time their little girl claimed that she wanted to be an alligator. Thankfully, mine isn’t exactly an embarrassing story—just a little silly. However, to this day, when people ask me what I wanted to be when I was little, I tell them that I used to want to be an alligator. It usually ends in lots of questions but it also never fails to make people smile or laugh, so I guess that little bit of embarrassment is worth it.

**You can always be sure you’ll get a straight answer when you ask children questions...**

As I grow older, I encounter some of the things children say and have the opportunity to spend time with children of all ages, and I have started to see how nostalgia makes everything

kids say and do just a little bit sweeter, cuter, and more memorable. When I was 11, I was told that our family of five would be growing by one. Naturally, after having lived with two brothers for as long as I could remember, I hoped for and got a sister. She is 7 years old and 12 years younger than me, but everyone who knows us describes her as a mini me. Just to test this theory, I asked her what she wanted to be when she grew up. Her answer was that she wanted to be a teacher, so we must not be that much alike.

She is funny, sassy, and too smart for her own good half the time. She keeps us on our toes and we love her all the

more for it. It seems her vocabulary is growing every day and her imagination with words is never ending. Some of our favorite things she has said include:

- (When she got her first headache): “I feel a little hypnotized.”
- (When she knows you are hiding candy from her): “I’m going to find it you little stinker, and I am NOT going to share it with you.”
- (When our brother was licking his dinner plate clean): “Brother, I think you got it all. It’s time to give up.”
- (When we told her she couldn’t take another nap): “I am not just tired mom, I am EXHAUSTED!”

She is dramatic to say the least.

### **Honesty is the best policy**

Another thing to think about is how unrelentingly honest kids are! You can always be sure that you will get a straight answer when you ask children questions (unless you are asking them if they ate the whole bag of Fourth of July candy in one sitting.)

If you want to know how those pants really make you look, ask your 6-year-old (she will probably think they need more glitter). If you think your gray hair is starting to show, just ask your 8-year-old whether your hair is looking different (after all, he probably helped cause those sprouting gray hairs). If you want to know if those cookies were too sweet, probably don’t ask your grandchild, (because nothing is “too sweet” when you’re 10).

## Curiosity killed the cat and got the kid in trouble

One of my favorite examples of a child's candor is a story my grandmother tells: When my dad and his siblings were growing up, they rarely saw my grandmother's side of the family because they lived far away. However, on one of the rare occasions when one of my grandmother's sisters took an airplane to visit, things went awry. As the kids and adults were doing chores, my grandmother's sister was asking my dad's brother (my uncle) to help her a lot. My uncle (around 8 or 9 at the time) got impatient and bluntly asked, "When are you going home?" To say the least, my grandma's sister got on a plane and left that night, cutting her visit short.

Did my uncle mean to be rude? Probably not. Did my grandma's sister take him too seriously? Probably. Does this story make our whole family laugh every single time we hear it? Without fail.

## When I was your age...

People make jokes about how their grandparents tell "When I was your age..." stories. But let's be honest, we ALL tell those stories! I am only 19 years old and I just finished my first year of college, yet every day I find myself telling my little sister multiple times, "When I was your age..." Sometimes I use them as lessons to try and teach her something but most of the time I just want to tell her something so she laughs or remembers that I was her age once too.

Nostalgia makes us all feel a little younger, and I think that is the real reason why everything kids do is so endearing to people the older we get. Kids remind us of when we were young and innocent ourselves. They remind us with every misused word, outrageous phrase, and incomplete sentence that at one point we were as clueless as they are. I don't think there is anything wrong with that, but I also don't think there's anything wrong with wanting them to stay young for just a little bit longer.





# MEMORIES OF THE GREAT DEPRESSION

**The Great Depression, which began in 1929**

**and continued through 1941, caused untold misery and grief to those who lived in cities as well as on farms. Many people lost money when banks closed. My parents lost much of the money they had saved to make a down payment on the home farm and they were forced to continue paying rent for the place. The income they received from the sale of milk, hogs, and potatoes, a cash crop, plummeted.**

But different from many urban people who were without work and thus had no source of income and were often hungry, farmers always had something to eat because they grew most of their own food. Ma did purchase—or traded—eggs and other farm produce for such staples as coffee and sugar.

Along with the Great Depression, came years of severe drought, where the crops produced on our home farm were but a shadow of what was produced when the rains came. The hay crop, needed to feed the cattle through the long winter months, was slight. The summer pastures that the cattle depended on dried up by August, forcing Pa to feed the cattle some of the scarce hay crop that had been stored for winter. And to make matters even worse, a dry wind which blew from the southwest, day after agonizing day, filled the air with clouds of dirty, yellow dust. The wind tore up the soil on newly plowed fields, sending it swirling high into the air.

I remember one day, it was in the late 1930s, when a man stopped by the farm and knocked on the door. He wore torn and dirty clothes, an old felt hat, and walked kind of bent over. Ma answered the door and the man in a low, quiet voice said that he would work for something to eat. Ma invited him in, sat him down at the kitchen table and made

him a big thick cheese sandwich, which he hurriedly ate. She also poured him a glass of milk.

I had not heard about men like this, who had lost their jobs and were riding the freight trains from town to town, in search of work and something to eat. But Ma and Pa had. Ma told the man that he didn't need to do any work, and she even prepared another sandwich for him along with a couple cookies that he could take with him. With tears in his eyes, the man thanked Ma for what she had done. I last saw him trudging down the country road, hoping to find another handout, and perhaps some work.

I do not remember being hungry during the Depression, as we always had a huge garden that we depended on during good years and bad. But on the down side, there were no new clothes for my brothers and me. The meager income from our small herd of cattle, the few dollars' worth of eggs my mother sold and traded for groceries at the Mercantile, and the money from our 20-acre potato field went to keep us on the farm, ever hopeful that better days would come, which they eventually did.

*Excerpted from Old Farm Country Cookbook, Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2017.*



Go to [www.jerryapps.com](http://www.jerryapps.com) for more information about Jerry's writing and television work.

**Shannon Clark, Manager/CEO**

1027 N. Jefferson St., P.O. Box 439, Richland Center, WI 53581

608-647-3173

[www.rec.coop](http://www.rec.coop)

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