

Family pulls together as they struggle for survival

By BILL CASPER

Without Michigan's deposit bottles and cans, Wallace and Janey Boyd may not have been able to feed their four sons in recent weeks.

That's how tough it's been for this family, who have scrounged for deposit containers along the highway to return for the deposit money. Temporarily living in Redford with a cousin, the Boyds are jobless and homeless and searching desperately for relief.

The family represents just one of hundreds of Detroit-area families who have come on hard times as a result of a slumping auto industry. But, according to Mrs. Boyd, times have never been rougher for the family than they are now.

"My husband and I have not been able to find a steady job because no one is hiring," said a frustrated 28-year-old Mrs. Boyd, who, along with her husband, was raised in Farmington.

"We had to move out of the home in Southfield we were renting at the end of June because we could no longer afford the payments. We've been mostly living in our car, in camp grounds when we can afford it and occasionally with relatives."

WHAT MAKES matters worse, says Mrs. Boyd, is that her husband has not been able to receive unemployment money because of the red tape involved.

"I just went to see about getting some help through the Social Services department," she said. "I'm trying to get some general assistance like food stamps and Medicaid, but I've also run into a red tape problem. I have to provide the Social Services department

with birth certificates of my children, but they are locked in storage in Wixom and we can't get to our belongings until we come up with the storage rental money we owe."

"I have another appointment with Social Services next week and between now and then I'll have to find a way to get those birth certificates," she said.

In the meantime, the Boyd family is staying with Wallace's cousin, Debbie Kromer who lives with her husband, John, and their one child. However, Mrs. Boyd said the presence of her family there is becoming a burden.

"It's a small house for nine of us and only Debbie works (as a waitress) since her husband was laid off from Ford Motor Company," Mrs. Boyd said.

Mrs. Kromer said she hadn't seen Wallace for nine years when she heard of her cousin's plight and offered to house his family. But she admits she can't afford to house the Boyd family much longer, and is hoping that publicity about the Boyd's situation will help the family to find work and a place to live.

But the Boyds are proud people who are not looking for a handout, but steady employment to provide for their children and to begin planning a future.

"WE'VE BEEN through a lot, but this is the worst," said Mrs. Boyd. "I met Wally at a bowling alley when I was 12 years old."

"At age 13, I had my first child, and at age 14, I had my second. It's a coal miner's daughter story without the money," she mused, managing to crack a smile despite her worries. "I wanted to marry Wally during my first pregnancy, but my mother wouldn't give her consent until I became pregnant

with my second child. Wally and I were married in 1972, one month after the birth of my second child."

Mrs. Boyd gave birth twice more at ages 15 and 17.

"It was tough for us during our early years together and I always expected Wally to leave me, but he never did. Things were going good for us until Wally got laid off from American Sun-roof Corp. more than a year ago."

"He got lucky by getting a job last August with a friend who owns a heating and cooling company. He worked in North Dakota for some company until June and got laid off again when the owner moved his base of operations to Illinois in search of more work. He said he'd call Wally if he had a job for him, but we haven't heard from him since and he's hard to contact because he moves around so much."

"That's when our problems really be-

gan," she said. "We had to leave our Southfield residence where we had lived for about a year and moved to live with my brother in Florida. Wally applied for unemployment benefits there and he was told he had a good claim, but that it would take about six weeks before he would start to receive his unemployment checks."

"We waited there for six weeks, but the checks never came, so my sister loaned us some money so we could come back to Michigan Aug. 1. Since then, we have been living in camp grounds when we had the money to afford it, and when we didn't, we lived in our car, sometimes in rest areas off the freeway and always on the move when asked to leave by police," she said.

"WALLY AND I have gotten some work through a temporary jobs service and we have both put in several appli-

cations for jobs with the companies we have done temporary work for," Mrs. Boyd said.

"Wally pursued his unemployment benefit claim in Michigan June 30, when he was told by the people at the Michigan Employment Security Commission that they are in the process of trying to locate his last employer to fill out the necessary paper work."

"At least in Michigan, unlike Florida, we were able to collect returnable bottles and cans when we had no money so our kids could eat. The temporary jobs only pay about 20 bucks a day, and there isn't always work every day."

For the present, Mrs. Boyd said she is living "day-to-day," having given up on plotting a future some time ago.

"Our situation has had a bad effect on our children and it has strained my relationship with Wally," she said. "But the kids have handled it pretty well and

Wally just wants to go back to work steady, working any job he can get whenever he can now."

Although the future for the Boyd family remains uncertain, Mrs. Boyd said she and her husband know what they would like to do in better days ahead.

"I dropped out of high school, but I'd like to go back to school some day and work in the computer field," she said. "Wally would like to get training to go into the refrigeration field, because he really liked his job with the heating and cooling company. He likes to work and he never misses a day when he is working. We're just hopeful he can find a steady job so we can leave all these troubles behind us and begin building a good future."

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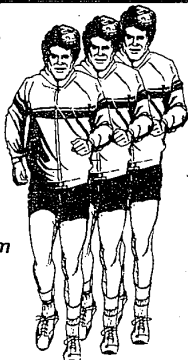
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