

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

## Putting Up The Heating Stove

Today we have 'Talk Shows' on television. Years ago we had 'talk records' for the phonograph. A favorite series of records were 'Uncle Jesh' records. I remember one of my favorites was the one about putting up the stove. It was more truth than poetry, and I identified with the record because putting up the stove seemed to bring out the worst in all of us.

In the fall of the year, which often comes late in Southern Illinois, one of the distasteful but necessary chores was putting up the stove. Of course, there were some who left theirs up all summer. Not at our house! Even the Majesty of the 'Nubian Hotblast' with its ornate fretwork, chrome trim and finial top, were not enough to persuade Mom to leave our's up. Stove pipes had to be polished, as well as the stove, itself, and that usually fell my lot. Sometimes the pipes had to be secured with a wire to the wall or ceiling. Since this did absolutely nothing for the decor of the room, you can understand why we relied on the fireplace as long as possible.

Filling the coal buckets was a daily task. Each evening long lines of full buckets sat in readiness on the perch for use through the night. The next day a long line of empty ones waited for refills.

When Spring came we were always glad to be free of the huge black giant who spent his winters with us. Our relationship with him was most intimate while it lasted. After all we bathed in his presence in the wash tub, and depended on him for warmth and protection.