

OUR 1927 TRIP

by a six year old, and remembered by a 70 yr old – Marjorie Elaine Morrow Crider

I shall never forget the thrill when we realized we were going to really leave Diagonal on a “long trip”. I packed all my earthly possessions, which included toys, clothes, and anything else I found that I could not bear to leave behind. You would have thought that we were taking a moving van. I told the kids at school that we were leaving and would never see them again.

Soon the two cars showed up that we were going in. Of course Mom had to repack everything. Dad was busy building cupboards on the back of each car. In one cupboard was the kitchen supplies and the other held clothes and bedding. (Can you imagine having nerve enough to start out with eight kids, on a trip like that?) Juanita and I were busy rounding up the cats that we didn't want to part with. I think one of the cars was a Model T, and one was a Model A, the first cars I can remember having. They sure looked big to us, but we soon found out they weren't big enough.

School was out and we were ready to go. Then it was, I realized we would never come back, and there were all our friends we were leaving. Dad drove one car and Lela, Pete, and Ken took turns driving the other. You have heard of sardines packed in a can, well--, but we didn't know we were crowded, we were going to be travelers.

Our first night out we stopped in a little park somewhere in north Missouri. Mom opened the cupboard that held the kitchen things. The door was one big cover that let down to form a table. The older ones helped get supper and Juanita and I investigated the park. It was fun. Bedtime was something else. We had a tent that Dad and the boys pitched every night. I can't imagine we all slept in it, but we girls did. The next morning when we got up, Mom discovered something had been in the lard. She said she figured it was a bear. Now as I look back on it, I'm sure she said that to keep us nearer camp. At least, it worked. It was a thrill to eat out, and not have to worry about the dishes. Lela and Alma took care of that. I'm sure we made several stops the next few days, but I don't remember much until we got to Neosho (in Southwest Missouri) That was where the “big” strawberry patches were. We stayed there about two weeks. Those fields were so big that we couldn't see the other end of the patch. All but Mom, Juanita, and I picked berries. Mom worked in the culling shed, and we got to eat all the culls we could hold. It rained nearly every day, and it was hard to keep clean. We were always clean to start the day, but can't say that for the rest of the day. The berries were rotting so much that it made picking a chore. There were several campers at the place where we stayed. I think the owners name was Johnston. They had two girls, Eunice and Henrietta. They had a nice haybarn where we girls could play in the mow. We had a table there and would eat our meals up there. Sometimes the boys would throw rotten tomatoes up and get our floor dirty. Henrietta could “Charleston dance” and we tried it but it was no go.

We finally packed up and went to Arkansas. I don't know how we got there, but we went through Blue Eye, MO, southwest of Springfield. There was a beautiful area where the road ran along the side of the river for some distance. Soon we came to the “hairpin curve”. The river ran under the mountain, and we turned a curve and went straight up. We had to get out and walk up because the cars weren't powerful enough to pull everything. We kids all pushed so we could get up the hill. Dad took one car up, then came back down and got the other. When we got to the top of the hill it was a beautiful flat place. There was a patch of tobacco growing. The first we had ever seen. Do any of the rest of you remember that hill? I was talking to Dad about it one time, and he agreed with me, but said he had never heard any one else mention it.

At Springdale, Ark. Dad had some friends who let us pitch the tent in their back yard. It rained so hard

and the creek along the edge of the yard overflowed and washed the tent away. The people had us come in the house for the rest of the night. I lost my blue garters in that flood and was heartbroken. The next morning Dad and the boys went down the creek and found the tent. After getting all packed up, we started on. Probably Gentry was the next stop.

Right away, Dad bought a place and we pitched the tent again. At least, Mom could cook inside again. The men all pitched in and built a building which would later be a chicken house. Again we had a roof over our heads, but a dirt floor. The place had a big barn, but the house had burned down. There was a pond just outside the barn. Juanita and I took a five gallon pail out to the pond and got a jillion tadpoles. We thought Mom would cook them for us for supper. Ugh!

I don't know how the ground was worked up, but Dad and the boys set out a big patch of strawberries. This place was to be our home. It was a pretty location, and we had good neighbors. We played with J.B. and Bonny Wood. He was four and she was probably five. We went wading in the creek that ran through their pasture. Mom told us not to get our heads wet. Well, that was useless, because we did and when we got back home, she asked us if we got our heads wet, and of course we said "no" even though you could tell by looking at us that we had. Finally J.B. said "We aren't supposed to lie, so we did get our heads wet".

Grandpa Woods cooked pancakes for the four Morrow boys one morning. "They ate a passel of them", the old man said.

We lived about two miles from town, so we walked to Sunday School and sometimes just to shop. We went about one quarter mile down the road to get our milk. I remember the old lady tamped the tobacco in her pipe, then used that finger to get the cream off the edge of the crock to put in our milk. I wouldn't drink any more milk, because I didn't want to taste the tobacco.

Those were enjoyable days for us, until Dad said he had sold the place and we would move on. We weren't there more than three weeks.

We started out again, heading for Coweta, Okla. where Dad's brother George and Maggie lived. We stayed there awhile. We pitched the tent in their backyard, next to a beautiful pine forest.

They had a lot of steps up to their front porch. We had more fun on those steps. I had my seventh birthday while we were there, and Aunt Maggie had a party for me, even had ANGEL FOOD cake, the first I had ever tasted. She invited five little girls over and we had a lovely party. There were two cousins, Floyd and Elsie, but they were Lela and Alma's age, so we were left out there.

I do not remember much of the rest of the trip, but that we were going home to Diagonal. We did stop in Wichita, Kansas and Mom gave us two nickels to get ice cream from the vendor as he came along. What a thrill that was.

When we got back to Diagonal, we stayed with Leonard and Mae while Dad finished the upstairs. Juanita and I were playing "Pin the tail on the donkey", and naturally, we had to play over the hole left for the chimney. Juanita fell through into the basement, falling on the camp stove where Mom was heating water. Fortunately, she wasn't hurt too bad.

What a happy day when we moved into the big house.

Going Back in 1989

Carroll (my husband) and I decided to go to Gentry and see if we could find the old place, and the hairpin curve.

We stopped at a filling station in Blue Eye, and I went in and there were three old men. I asked about it, and finally, one of them remembered it from my description. It is now under water from one of the new lakes. The top of the hill is visible from the highway but we did not go back to see it.

At Gentry, we found the old abandoned Feemster filling station. I thought our place was east of Gentry, but could find nothing recognizable. I did see a building south of town that could have been it, I suppose. We enjoyed looking around. It is changed, as so many places are.

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Joe's wife visited while Joe did his work at Toney's and then they went for his VA Doctor's appointment. While visiting we talked about some childhood memories catching it on cassette tape so it could be transcribed onto the computer to keep.

On another visit, she told me about Joe being invited by an Oral History Class in Alton to share with them how he collected information for the two volumes he had published of "Life in Oregon County". He shared the tape with them that we had made and they loved it. Then the students wrote Joe – thanking him and telling him what they got out of his talk.

Then they gave me a copy of the memories they had printed off the tape and said, "Don't forget, we put some soup and pork chops in the refrigerator for your supper". "So I'm going to put it in the crockpot right now."