

Fire on a Little Dirt Road

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The four-year-old little girl woke her exhausted parents the day after they had moved into their first home. "Is today the day we go get my new baby?" she squealed. Her parents had always answered her request for a baby with, "Not until we live in a house instead of an apartment." WELL! They were now living in a house, so it had to be time in her mind. Several months later, as dad hammered and sawed the boards to build the bathroom and a big "back room" on the house, a pregnant mom brought water, snacks and carried as many supplies as she was able.

Hanging laundry on lines over the cinder drive was too high and impossible for the little girl, because the black cinders were not forgiving if wet clothes got dropped; however, she was very proficient at handing out clothes pins. The baby boy finally arrived, which she guessed was OK since he was a baby. She would often climb into the playpen with him after he was a bit older to keep him company while mom did the wash on the wringer washer in the "back room."

Four years later another baby boy arrived. The girl was now 12 and learning to be left "in charge" along with her grandmother when mom and dad went square dancing. The road out front was dirt and during the spring rains it would become very muddy and sometimes washed out and become virtually impassable.

One of those babysitting nights, when the road was not in good shape and it was raining, thundering and lightening, the neighbor called asking to speak to dad. The girl said her parents weren't home. The neighbor said, "I don't want you to get scared...but your garage is on fire and you should call the fire department!" Calling the volunteer fire department (no easy 911 back then), she was told the firemen were busy on another call and would come as soon as they could. REALLY! The good news was the firemen were busy next door where lightening had struck the house and fried many wires within the walls. Running outside, the girl got a fireman to come check out the metal garage. It hadn't "been on fire" but rather was a big red glow from the burning electrical box that burned itself out.

Gram had called the phone number mom and dad had left to tell them what was happening and they soon arrived home. The twelve-year-old "big" girl who had stepped up when she had to, fell sobbing into her mother's arms when she ran in the door with dad.

When summer came and the road dried out, it was time for the annual ritual of the Caterpillar grader to level the road and bank the hill on the right side. The next spring, the rains came, the road became nearly impassable, but that metal garage stood strong with a new electrical box.