

California Dreaming

By Marilyn Reeves

When I was married to my first husband Tom, we would play cards on Saturday evenings with my former roommate Gail and her husband Jerry. It was fun and inexpensive, and our son Tommy enjoyed playing with their two kids, saving us the cost of a babysitter.

But eventually, Tom and I came to the conclusion that, as hard as we had tried, our marriage just wasn't working. So in July of 1969 he moved out, leaving me with a new title: Single Mom. And it wasn't long after that, that Gail and Jerry decided to move to California. So now I was not only single again but alone, except for my young son.

But Gail would write to me, extolling the virtues of California. She encouraged me to come out and stay with them in Huntington Beach for a while, to see if I liked it. So, on a cold January day in 1972, I loaded as many of our belongings as I could cram into my Chevy Nova, and Tommy and I headed out to California.

It was a whole new world out there! I loved seeing the ocean and going to Disney Land, and even enjoyed the early morning fog. Gail and Jerry were very gracious hosts, feeding and sheltering us as I searched for a job and an apartment.

I found a job fairly quickly in neighboring Anaheim, but it took me months to find an affordable apartment. It wasn't until the Saturday before Easter that they helped me move. After I thanked them for all they'd done, Gail and Jerry headed back home, leaving me all alone again, except for my young son.

As I tucked my little boy in bed that first night, he asked me, "Mommy, is the Easter Bunny going to come?"

Oh, shoot! I had forgotten all about the Easter Bunny. "We'll see, honey. I hope he can find us here at this new address."

Luckily I had some eggs, but where were my pots and pans? Most of my kitchen stuff was still packed away in boxes. Already exhausted and not thinking straight, I grabbed the first container I could find. An oven-safe Corningware casserole. I filled it with water, placed a half dozen eggs inside and turned on the burner ...

After cleaning up the mess of broken eggs and shards of glass, I decided I'd had enough, and crawled into bed. Only to be awakened an hour later by the bright lights and loud tut-tut-tut of a police helicopter flying overhead, probably looking for some runaway criminal. I was afraid he might try to break into our apartment!

That was when I decided this whole thing had been a huge mistake, and a couple of months later Tommy and I were headed back home to good old Colorado. For us, the dream of California simply wasn't meant to be. And considering all the fires, floods, mudslides and earthquakes out there, all I can say is, "There's no place like home!"

