

Alley Game

By Marilyn Reeves

In 1945, when I was three, the family moved from Denver to Salida. Dad leased a space in the center of downtown that had been a former grocery store. The screen door that led from the kitchen to the alley still had the words 'Rainbow Bread' painted on the upper panel.

While he was fixing the place up for business, Dad partitioned off a living space in back for the family and lined all the walls of the store with knotty pine. He also built a number of counters out of knotty pine, including several three-tiered square pyramids called 'mounds' that stood in the center of the room. The mounds were roughly five feet high by five feet wide. But they were split down the middle, like taking out a slice across the center of a three-layer cake, to access merchandise that sat on the hidden shelves underneath. That open space under the mounds made for a wonderful place for little girls to hide.

The parents of my best friend, Marilyn Finn, owned a Golden Rule franchise a couple of doors up the block from Tuttle's Trading Post. But rather than living behind their store, their family lived in an apartment above it. It had a separate outside door that accessed a long staircase that led to a wide open hallway. The Finns lived in an apartment on the front end, and Marilyn's Aunt Teresa lived in the one in back. We would go through her apartment, out the back door, and clang our way down the iron steps to the alley.

The section of the alley that spanned the distance between the two stores was sheltered by a brick archway, where pigeons liked to roost. One time I felt something splatter against the back of my neck. I didn't know what it was, so I ran through our backdoor screaming! My mother about died laughing, but she managed to clean off the mess.

I think the Golden Rule store must have sold appliances, because we would find these huge cardboard boxes out in the alley that made perfect playhouses. Some of them were open at both ends, so we could scooch two or three of them together to create more rooms. Then we had ourselves a nice cardboard castle to play in!

So, with two stores, three apartments, an open hallway and an alley out back as our domain, Marilyn Finn, Marilyn Tuttle, and the rest of our friends had a grand old time. Back in the days when I used to play. Back when the world was young.