

Memories of Denver Past

By Marilyn Reeves

When I was a kid growing up in the small town of Salida I always looked forward to coming to Denver. Once or twice a year, the family would pile into stuffy old black Kaiser and take the long drive to the Big City. My sister Janet and I would walk up and down 16th Street looking in all the fancy store windows while Mom and Dad shopped at the various wholesale mercantile outlets for stock for his store. But once they were done, it was time for family fun!

Some days we'd go to the Denver Zoo and visit all the lions and tigers and bears. My favorite was the old blind polar bear who stood out on a ledge, swaying his big head back and forth, hoping someone would toss him a treat. But if we visited City Park during the winter months, we'd go to the Museum instead. I was always enthralled by the towering skeleton of the brontosaurus that greeted us at the front entrance. My favorite attraction were the dioramas of the stuffed animals and Native Americans, eternally posed in the same dramatic stance.

But the best place in the entire world was Elitch Gardens! The beautiful flower beds surrounding the pathways all around the park. The open Trocadero Ballroom where people would come to dance to the tunes of Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey, and the like. Fluffy pink cotton candy on a stick. But, most exciting of all were the rides! Oh, how I loved going round and round, up and down on the tall Ferris wheel, or swooping up into the sky in one of those little sail planes I could guide myself. No matter how long we stayed, I was always reluctant to leave. I wanted to stay at Elitch Gardens forever! But by the time I grew up, I had moved on to other things. I've never visited their new location off I-25. I prefer leave my fond childhood memories of the original location intact.

In recent years, my sister Jan and I would meet at the Denver Art Museum or at the Botanic Gardens. We'd arrive first thing in the morning to beat both the crowds and the heat. Depending on which one we'd go to, we'd mill around for a few hours, studying the paintings at the D.A.M., or enjoying the beautiful flowers at the Gardens. Then we'd stop somewhere for lunch before calling it a day.

But sadly, time has taken its toll on both my sister and me. Jan is six years my senior, and her knees have gone bad. So the last time we met at the Denver Art Museum, I had to push her around in a wheelchair. The same was true when we visited the Botanic Gardens last summer. But with my own legs becoming weaker, pushing that wheelchair around for several hours nearly wore me out. I fear our days of touring the Art Museum or the Botanic Gardens may have gone the way of all the other things we used to do together. Stored away in a place called "Memories of Denver Past."