

Blessed by an Angel

*By Marilyn Reeves*

There is an angel who spreads her wings over the Town of Salida. She was sculpted eons ago from the snow that remains within the cracks and crevices of a tall mountain that rises up just to the west of town. To me, she looks more like a maiden with her arms thrust wide, but someone decided those were not arms but angel's wings, and dubbed her the Angel of Shavano.

Back in the 40's and 50's on summer Sundays the family would pile in the jeep and head for the mountains. One of our favorite excursions was to take Highway 50 part way up Monarch Pass, then turn right onto a dirt road that would take us up Mt. Shavano.

After a half hour or so, we would come to a hidden turnoff on our left. It wasn't really a road, more like a rutted jeep trail that went down a rocky embankment. The bumps and jolts on the way down gave the term 'rock & roll' a whole new meaning! At the bottom of the incline we were met by a shallow stream, about twenty feet wide. Undaunted, Dad would ford across the stream till we got to the other side.

Then it was up another incline for a hundred feet or so till we came to a grassy meadow, surrounded by aspen groves and fir trees. This was our favorite spot to stop for lunch. We'd unfold the table and chairs and sit around stuffing ourselves with Mom's cold fried chicken, baked beans, potato salad, and homemade Tollhouse cookies.

After lunch, my sisters and I would often meander over to the little brook where a broken down old mill sat on the other side. Who knows what it was used for originally? It must have been over a hundred years old, even back then. Its splintered, silvered boards lay at its feet – some of them crossing over the brook, which we used as a makeshift bridge. When Rosie was a toddler, Jan and I would each grab a hand and swing her over to the other side. Once we were satisfied we'd seen enough, we'd head back to the jeep to continue our journey on up to the top of the mountain.

When we arrived at a place where the jeep could go no farther, we'd get out and hike up the trail. Beautiful wildflowers would greet us along the way – Indian paintbrush, pretty white daisies and clumps of purple columbine. Finally, we'd crest the top and look down on the other side. Spread out before us was a beautiful turquoise lake. Because of a small island rising up in the center, we called it Island Lake. We would sit on the embankment, relishing the beauty of the day while Dad cast flies with his expert hand, hoping to snag a rainbow trout to bring back home for supper.

Oh, how I miss those halcyon summer days of my youth, blessed by the Angel of Shavano.