

Memorable Road Trips

By Marilyn Reeves

The first long road trip I recall was when I was six years old. We drove to the State of Illinois, where both my parents grew up. My maternal grandparents lived in a rural village in tiny house with a tar-paper roof and an outhouse. They were very poor and accustomed to a simple lifestyle. My Grandmother Wilson wore her hair in a bun and wasn't used to having company. She and my grandfather were both hard-pressed for conversation.

What a contrast between them and my father's parents! My Grandmother Tuttle was about twice the size of my grandfather. She was affectionate and welcoming and talked non-stop. My grandfather was an undertaker and they lived on the second floor of their funeral home in the small town of Atlanta, Illinois. I remember sneaking down the long, winding staircase into the parlor at night and peering into the open casket of some body that had been laid to rest there. At that same moment the big grandfather clock in the hallway started to bong out the hour. I don't believe my feet even touch the steps as I flew back upstairs, wide-eyed and terrified. I decided to leave the parlor and the viewing of the bodies to the grown-ups from then on.

When I was thirteen, the family took a road trip to Florida. I remember the miles and miles of roadside stands in the State of Alabama – it had to have been the world's largest garage sale! We stopped in Georgia to visit my dad's brother Tom, then on through the endless dark forests of the Everglades until we arrived at Cyprus Gardens in Florida. It was like visiting the Garden of Eden! Pretty young girls sat about the lawns in old-time Southern gowns. And flowers. There were flowers everywhere! It was the most beautiful place any of us had ever seen.

Jim and I used to enjoy taking day-trips around Colorado. One of our favorite spots to camp out was Duck Creek, on the other side of Guanella Pass from Georgetown. We drove up to Meeker to visit his son Si, who was Chief of Police there and later became Sheriff of Rio Blanco County. Another time we drove over to Marble and hiked up the hill so we could look down into the massive quarry. What an amazing sight that was!

But the longest road trip we took together was in 2001 when we visited Jim's daughter Schele in Washington D.C. She and her Three-Star-General husband Dan lived in officer's housing at Fort Belvoir. On the second day of our visit, we were walking around George Washington's Mt. Vernon estate, when I slipped on the gravel and broke my elbow. Sadly, that put a quick end to our visit. The thing I remember most about our trip back, other than feeling miserable, were all the trees. Millions of trees that grew so closely together you couldn't make out the towns for the trees!

I've been to California, Illinois, Texas, the Dakotas, and Florida, and all the states in between. But the road trips I cherish the most were the ones we used to take rambling around the mountains of our home State of Colorado. Oh, how I wish I could do that again!