

Somebody Stop Me!

By Marilyn Reeves

When I was eight we moved from the back of Dad's store to the big house at the corner of 6th and F Street. The street itself inclined slightly downhill toward the center of town, and so did the sidewalk, providing a perfect venue for kids to ride and slide down, so long as you minded the cracks along the way.

I would clamp my skates onto my Buster Browns and down the hill I'd go. I'd be flying along, free as the wind, until I got to the end of the block. Then it was figure out a way to stop or keep on flying ... right into 5th Street! Somehow I managed to slow down just enough to turn the corner, run onto the grassy berm, and grab hold of a friendly tree.

I did a little better on ice skates. The winters must have been colder back then, because Salida had a nice outdoor skating pond. It was down by a tributary of the Arkansas called the 'Little River' on the other side of Highway 50, across from our big indoor hot springs swimming pool. After I got to where I was spending more time on my feet than on my fanny, and finally learned how to glide on the ice, I developed a way of stopping. I would do a sort of pirouette, where I turned around backwards, pull up onto the serrated toes of my skates, and skid to a stop. So I learned how to stop on ice skates, but that didn't help much when I was roller skating.

When I was in high school, someone would occasionally drive a group of us the thirty miles to Buena Vista where they had an indoor roller rink. I remember the cheesy ersatz organ music that accompanied the skaters as we rolled around the circle. It was a good place to meet other people, and one time I met a soldier by the name of Jay, who was stationed at the nearby Camp Hale, and he asked me for a date. He was very handsome – looked a little like Brad Pitt (although I don't think Brad Pitt had even been born yet) – and my heart was all aflutter.

He was nineteen and I was only sixteen, but my parents said I could go, as long as my big sister Janet went along as a chaperone. Somehow, he arranged a double-date for her, and we went back to the skating rink for our evening out. But I think he decided it was a mistake. When he tried skating with me, he learned I wasn't able to stop without grabbing onto something, and I took him down with me when I fell.

When it came to roller skates, I never did learn how to stop. And I never heard from Jay again. But that was okay. When he kissed me goodnight, he was a terrible kisser. Even though I hadn't had much experience with kissing at that age, I knew it could be better than that!

But I had a fun time skating all the same.