

I'd Rather Take a Shower

By Marilyn Reeves

My first memory of bathing was in a galvanized wash tub. In 1945 when I was three, our family moved from Denver to Salida, and Dad partitioned off the rear section of his souvenir and sporting goods store as a small apartment for the family.

In order to get to the bathroom you had to cross a dark, creepy old wooden elevator platform that went kerthunk-kerthunk as you stepped on and off, causing it to sway against its moorings. The elevator was manually operated by rope pulleys to take it down to the even darker, creepier basement. The bathroom itself contained a sink, a toilet and a small cabinet – but no bathtub.

The kitchen did have regular appliances, however. Not sure whether they were left over from the days when our space had been used as a grocery store or if Dad had them installed before moving the family in. But since there was no bathtub in the bathroom, the galvanized tub was set out in the kitchen and filled with hot water from the teakettle for us to bathe in.

The big turn-of-the-century house we moved to a few years later had some dark and creepy aspects of its own, but it did come complete with an old claw-foot tub in the bathroom. We didn't have a shower, however, so our hair was washed at the kitchen sink. I remember bending down and awkwardly forcing my head under the faucet to wet it, blindly reaching for the shampoo, sudsing up my hair, and then going back under the faucet to rinse. And I had long hair as a kid – really long hair – so it was quite an ordeal. There were no blow dryers in those days, so my hair was parted down the middle and braided into two long pigtails and left to dry in the elements.

But when I lived in the dorm in Boulder and later shared a variety of apartments with roommates in Denver, I reveled in the luxury of being able to shampoo my hair in the shower. My hair had been cut short by then and I also had my own hairdryer. So much easier than leaning over the kitchen sink! So much quicker than waiting for my hair to dry on its own.

Now I have the option of taking a shower when I want to shampoo my hair – and as short as it is, it takes only a minute to blow it dry – or I can sit and relax in a nice hot tub when I need to shave my legs. But the shower is quicker, simpler, easier, so I usually opt for that.

My sister Jan still washes her hair at the kitchen sink, sets her hair on rollers, and sits under an obsolete bonnet-type hair dryer. I've tried to explain to her how much easier it would be if she would shampoo her hair in the shower, but she prefers to cling to the old ways. To each her own, I guess ... I'm just so happy to have my shower!