

## Going to Denver

*by Natalie Lawson*

Going to Denver in 1939 with my father and mother and little sister in a Model A automobile seems unreal; especially when the two-way road seemed endless. I was five. All I saw was prairie brush for miles and miles. I pictured the little black car all alone following a line like you see on a map. All I saw was the sky and the road ahead.

I was excited because I was going to see my seven-year-old brother, Nick, who I hadn't seen for a year. He was in a hospital bed at Denver General Hospital. Nick had polio. I was told that he couldn't walk. I really didn't understand.

On one of the trips, my father caught my brother giving his food to the cats outside his window. He was so thin it's no wonder he couldn't walk, I thought. My father decided to check him out of the hospital. He brought him home and he and my mother did all the therapy on him. Eventually he could bend his knees and little by little he was able to walk and go to school.

When he graduated high school, he joined the army and then became an accountant and retired with a GS 16.

My other trip to Denver was when I was an 8<sup>th</sup> grader in 1949. Our class had a spelling contest and I won to represent my country school. The next step was a spelling bee on radio to represent the rural school in Otero County. I only remember the word 'perpendicular' of that contest. I thought to myself one more word, and then I was pulled out of line and declared the winner.

Then there were three of us going to Denver: the contestant for the town of La Junta, and one for Rocky Ford, and me. This trip was a little better because the highway was paved all the way to Denver.

We stayed at the Brown Palace Hotel. I felt like a movie star. The first night we were there, we window shopped and I remember thinking how big everything appeared.

The day of the hundred-and-fifty word written competition, we went up on the walkway around the golden rotunda on top of the State Capital building and saw the whole city of Denver.

As you can imagine for a country girl it was amazing, especially meeting Starr Yelland, a popular radio personality who for many years was the caller for the state spelling bee.