

Fond Memories

By Pete Clark

With the exception of the Windsor Gardens Writers Group, the things I would miss the most, are things long gone, speeding back in time. A mist, rapidly condensing into a dense fog with the passage of time, has begun to shield those events and vistas from the present. I am losing myself in the now, as I begin to doubt the veracity of my memories. My memories are both good and bad, but are they real? I suppose, for the sake of what sanity I still possess, I must presume that my memories, going back to the mid 1940's are valid.

One weekend in the summer of 1959, I spent a night partying with a group of Blackfeet kids in East Glacier Park, Montana. That night I rescued a couple of Canadians from being beaten by the Blackfeet guys I was with, a possibly stupid move on my part, but it had to be done. Later that night, after I had chugged down a half pint of Old Rocking Chair bourbon and a six-pack of Great Falls Select beer, my Blackfeet friends dropped me off at the hotel where I was staying. I entered the building and discovered I could not climb the stairs: I had to crawl up them to get to my room. The next day, I learned I had trouble negotiating the stairs because the building was rocking side to side during the most powerful earthquake I did not experience.

In the late fall of 1968, I was given the job of setting up and running that season's Christmas Shop at Woolco. This meant that the remnants of the Garden Center had to be removed and counters had to be built and stocked according to the merchandising outlines. The Assistant General Manager had recently transferred in from the Westminster Store. He told me he had left a super troop in charge of the Christmas Shop over there, who would bury me in sales. My reaction to his boast was *que será será*. The only real problem I had was a sixteen foot run of toilet paper in an area where I needed to build a counter. I asked the Division One Manager to move the stuff a couple of times. He didn't, so I built a wall of toilet paper around his elevated cubicle desk on the floor. I had a magnificent crew working for me and we created much more in sales than our rival in Westminster.

There are many things that I miss, but most of all, I miss that deep blue Wyoming sky, with its billowing cumulonimbus clouds, pure white from their bases through their anvils. I remember standing in the deep shade on the north sides of the school buildings in both Pavillion and Shoshoni and seeing twinkling stars at noon. The Wyoming sky is now a much paler shade of blue and the once bright white clouds now range in color from dull, dirty gray to off-white, up through their anvils. Decades of coal-fired power plants and developing petroleum and mineral extraction have destroyed things which may never return, but they will not be missed by those who have never experienced them.