

Then and Now

By Marilyn Reeves

One of my most cherished memories of childhood is of the trips the family used to take to the mountains near Salida. When we found a good spot shaded by aspen and evergreen trees, Daddy would unfold the portable picnic table and chairs and we'd all sit down to eat our lunch, enjoying the sound of crystal clear water singing its way along in a nearby stream. Then we gals would go exploring while he set out to go fishing – often returning in an hour or two with a creel filled with 'brookies' that Mom would fry up for breakfast the next day.

Nowadays, most people think of 'going to the mountains' as taking a drive up I-70 to some destination like Breckenridge or Vail, or even Aspen. They might see the trees as a blur off in the distance as they join the parade of thousands of other cars and big trucks in a stop-start climb up and down the steep grades. When I was a kid, Breckenridge and Aspen were just a couple of time-worn small towns of no particular distinction, and the Town of Vail was yet to exist.

Another fond memory from my youth was joining the Select Choir when I was in high school. We put on two or three performances each year. On the evening of the annual Christmas Pageant we would walk down the aisle of the auditorium carrying lighted candles, singing 'Oh, Come All Ye Faithful' as we approached the stage. Then, mounting the steps of the bleachers, we'd present an hour-long concert of Christmas songs and traditional caroles to an audience of a couple hundred parents and friends. Nowadays, sitting alone in my condo, I try to catch a televised production of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir presenting some of those same old caroles I used to sing, way back when.

Up until the folks passed away in 2012, the family used to gather at my place or Rosie's for a big family celebration on Christmas Day. Everyone would bring a special dish to share, and we'd all help ourselves to the gourmet buffet before sitting around the Christmas tree to exchange presents: Mom and Dad, my two sisters and me, our kids, and all our kids' kids, too. It made for quite a crowd and a rather lavish occasion, requiring a great deal of preparation. It's hard to believe I no longer even bother to decorate my tree nowadays, as the children are all grown, the family has broken off into fragments, and celebrating Christmas together has now become just another memory of days gone by.

Some things are better today than yesterday, however. How did I ever get along without my microwave oven or my PC? I used to hate having to do research papers. It meant going to the library and having to wade through a whole stack of books, trying to find the subject I wanted to write about. Nowadays, it's all there at the click of a button – as are recipes, lyrics to songs, and the name of some actor I've been trying to recall.

Things continue to change as the world moves forward. Some things are better now and some of the things we used to love will remain forever in the past. We need to continue to treasure the memories, but do our best to keep up with the times, so the world doesn't leave us behind.