

... wild west boyhood

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class had its own room. I attended 5th grade.

There was a Chinatown near us; I loved "real" Chinese candy.

One day my father came home with the news that grandma was married to the police judge and was living on the other side of town. The next Saturday we went to locate her. She

said that our earlier grandpa had been kicked in the head by a horse and killed.

We now had a new grandpa, named Rhodes.

When school was over,

he took my family on a camping trip. We rented horses and a large wagon and headed up the La Panze Range toward Black Mt. The road went along the side of the mountain and to our left was a sheer drop of about 2,000 feet. Up ahead the road seemed to end in space.

Grandpa said we were to get out. He unhitched the

horses and led them around the turn in the road. The road was so narrow that the off wheels hung over the side. He had grandma, Thelma, George and me go around and hold the horses. My mother held the "tongue" up and he got in back of the wagon and my father got in front and they inched the wagon around the turn. We then proceeded to the top. We camped there for a few days while grandpa and my father hunted and fished. It was nice, but we were all thinking about the return trip, down the mountain.

In grandpa's office, along one side, he had Abaloni shells, from the size of a hand to almost knee high. Abaloni is a shell fish that clings to rocks on the bottom of the ocean. You need a metal bar to pry them loose. The shells are like the half of an oyster shell and are used for soup dishes and very pretty pieces of jewelry. We took a large knife to cut the meat out of these shellfish. Then we put the meat on the table, took an old broomstick and began to hit the meat. It is light grey in color when it is alive, and we hit it until it turned chalk white, and died. We ate it like steak strips and thought it very tasty. Ah Luis, one of the Chinese boys in my class, took us to see and eat loguats, a fruit of the plum and apricot family, brought to this country by Au Lu's grandfather. There are only about 6 or 8 trees left in California.

When school was almost over, my father decided to go to San Francisco by train on business. On his return we planned to start back home, to York, Pennsylvania. There was a train wreck on the San Francisco line and many persons were killed. The bodies were so badly mutilated that it was impossible to identify them. We never heard anything or saw my father again. My mother finally was convinced that my father was a victim of the train accident and we headed back east.

It took us eight days to get to York, by railroad. We had been nearly five years in reaching the west coast, by horse and wagon. I started my 7th year of schooling in York. I thought of our earlier travels and wondered if I would get to see those places again. I thought

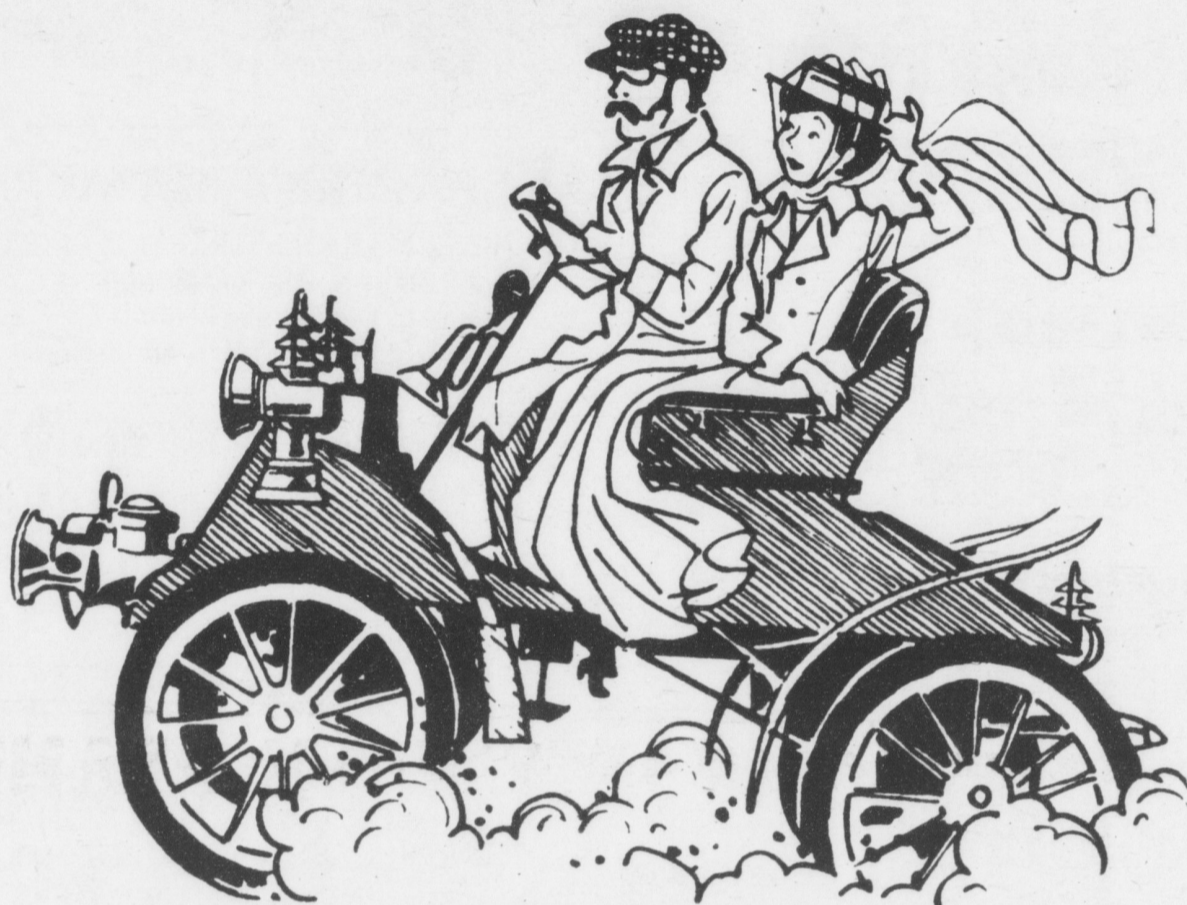
June 22, 1977
about the winters we traveled over the plains and mountains and how we used to hang our game from a high limb, to keep it frozen and to keep other animals from getting it. How we used to warm rocks and wrap them in a blanket and take them to bed, to keep us warm. How I crawled up a crack, in a mountain, by putting my hands on one side and my feet on the other side, and inching up. I got up pretty far and then discovered that I couldn't get down. My father had to crawl up the mountain, above me, and lower a rope so I could get down. How, in San Luis Obispo, grandpa brought home two men who were appearing on the stage as sharpshooters and George and I put clay pipes in our mouths, and from 50 feet away, they shot the bowls off the pipes, and my mother really "bawled" them out.

I remembered how grandpa Gray had taken us to the place where Kit Carson had shot and killed his son, to keep him from suffering, as he was being burned at the stake, by the Indians. The Indians followed Kit Carson, on a one foot path, in a crack in the mountain, and as they came to a turn in the path, Kit Carson would push them off the path. You can drop a rock from this path and not hear it hit bottom. After several Indians were lost this way, they gave up and Kit Carson inched his way through the mountain to safety.

How I had seen Buffalo Bill at a rodeo in Arizona and he had many Indians with him, who had years before, been fighting him and all other white men. How we used to travel over hills, deserts, mountains, and plains, and although it was not always a "picnic", we all survived and had years of traveling, and saw places we would never forget. I vowed that I would somehow, someday, return to the places of my boyhood.

(Much later in his life, Mr. Tracy did, indeed, return to many of these scenes of his childhood memories. He found, to his consternation, that many of them had been turned into tourist attractions, safe and commercialized. The exciting Wild West of his boyhood is gone forever, except in his memories.)

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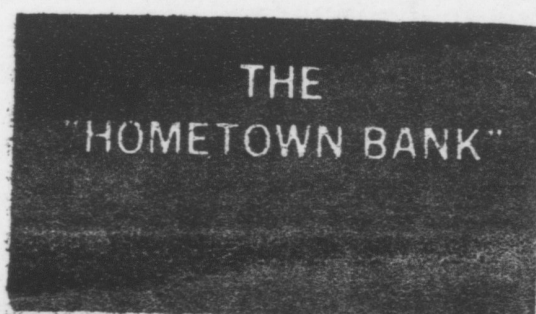
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MYO meeting

[The following is a message from the MYO. -ed.]
"The monthly meeting of the "MYO" will be held on Monday, June 27th., at the Maytown Legion. The time for this meeting will be

8:30 p.m.

All parents of children playing baseball are urged to attend. It might interest you to know the few people who make it possible for your children to have a baseball program."