

## **Movin' to California**

With the recent discussions on the message board regarding California I thought it would be interesting to get mom's memories surrounding the move and living in California.

Dad bought a nice Ford Fairlane station wagon for the move out. On the way out to California the family made several stops to site see. These stops included Boot Hill, the Big Well in Missouri, Walnut Canyon and the Painted Desert. The family at the time of the trip was mom and dad and Rick, Dirk, Chris, Jeff, Tony, Theresa and Jerry (no Sam and Charley). Bob Arona went as well. The family left Ottumwa in the fall of 1963 (mom thinks).

An interesting side note about Bob Arona; he had a bad drinking problem. As soon as he got in the station wagon he quit drinking. He dried out on the way to California and never drank again.

Another interesting side story about the trip out there; dad had bought four brand new Firestone tires before the trip to California. The reason they bought Firestone was because it had a nationwide warranty and if they had a problem, it could be fixed anywhere. Around Albuquerque, NM they had a blow out. The car was taken to the local Firestone shop. The Firestone dealer refused to honor the warranty and replace the tire even though they had all the receipts and paperwork. Dad decided to buy a cheap tire to get the family back on the road and he had Firestone put it on. When it came time to pay, dad reached across the counter and punched the guy in the face. Dad said "Here's your pay you son of a bitch, that's all the pay you deserve". They had to leave Albuquerque quickly with the sounds of sirens in the distance.

Once in California, the family and Bob stayed with a family friend, Irene and her husband in Anaheim. The family didn't stay there long because Irene and her husband fought too often. The family then stayed a few days in a motel, then the family and Bob moved to an apartment on Center Street in Santa Ana.

While in Santa Ana, mom was a waitress working 3PM-11PM, dad worked on a machine at US Motors from 7AM-3PM and Bob worked 11:30PM to 7AM. Mom, dad and Bob shared the one car to get to and from work.

Mom and dad soon decided to move to 29 Palms California. Dean moved there first to get things setup. He got a job on the Marine base cutting hair. Six weeks later mom and the kids moved to 29 Palms. Bob did not join the move. He was in jail at the time. Mom did not remember why. Interesting note about Bob, he saved a kids life from drowning while in California.

I asked mom about more interesting stories or things that happened while in California. She shared these with me...

One morning they went out to go somewhere in the Ford Fairlane station wagon. It was gone from the garage. They called the police to report it as stolen. The police informed them that it had been repossessed. Dad replaced the nice Ford with an old 1950 Chevy station wagon for free from someone that wanted to get rid of it. Mom's description of this car was that it didn't have two same paint colors anywhere. The inside of the car looked like a Cougar had gone nuts and shredded the interior. It did have a decent engine though. Mom and Dad completely took the engine apart and cleaned all the parts with gas and painted them. Apparently the engine looked fantastic and ran pretty good.

Another time while in California, mom got a call from a teacher at school. They had asked the kids about what they ate for breakfast. Several of the kids responded that they ate sand for breakfast. The teacher couldn't figure out what this was and was concerned. She called mom and found out that Sand consisted of corn meal, sugar and cinnamon.

There was also a fun place the kids found to play. It was a cave. One day when the kids told mom they were going back to the cave, mom decided to go with them. Mom was shocked when she got there. It was an abandoned underground cave that had been partially caved in.

I asked if they visited the Ocean much while out there. She said they only visited three or four times. Santa Ana wasn't too far from the Ocean, but 29 Palms was in the high desert area not very close. One time when they went they thought Rick had drowned. They couldn't find him anywhere. It turned out he had run back to the car to put on his new baseball uniform he had gotten that day to show everyone.

In April, after a year and a half of being in California, mom and dad decided to move back to Ottumwa. The family headed back in the old Chevy station wagon. They stopped somewhere in Kansas to stay over night. They paid for a motel room. Everyone was too antsy to sleep and wanted to get back on the road. Everyone loaded back into the car and took off. Not too long down the road, the heater went out. It was very cold the night they were traveling. They had to stop at the next motel and stay due to the cold. So that night they paid for two motel rooms. The next morning, dad was able to get the heater working even though there was no way to get it to turn off. Around Kansas City dad said they had to stop so he could walk around. The rubber on his shoes was melting from the heater. In Kansas City they somehow left the breather off the car. Around Bloomfield they were praying to make it home to Ottumwa in this car. They finally made it to Dixie's mom's house.

Everyone was very happy to be back. A couple of days later Dean was driving the car (which was basically trashed by now) down Vine Street. Curtis Greene, who was drunk at the time, ran a stop sign and hit the car. The Insurance

adjuster came and looked at the car. At first he was thinking he was going to get off cheap. He opened the hood and saw this shiny painted engine and offered a \$600 settlement. Apparently this was a lot of money and they accepted right away. Dean used this money to go to Rock Island to open up his barber shop and that is a story for another day...

Charley