

Old Betsy

The very first car that we owned was purchased from my brother Eugene. He and his wife lived in Stadium Village with us while he was working on a degree in Pharmacy at the University of Utah, and I was working on my PhD in Chemistry. Eugene was a good machinist and mechanic and to earn extra money he would buy wrecked cars and fix them up and sell them.

Ida-Rose and I by this time had three children: Sherlene, five, Tracy Jr., three, and David, who was just a baby. David was born while we lived in Stadium Village.

The car was an old dark blue Plymouth that leaned to one side and apparently had been in a fire that burned out most of the upholstery. None of the doors worked very well. Also, the hydraulic brakes were bad and you had to pump them to slow down the automobile. Eugene sold it to us for \$80.

We thought this car was great and I took that car places we would never have taken a new car. I was especially adventuresome. I wanted to go on every side road I ran into. One day when the family was with us, I wanted to go up a narrow road, which led up a hill behind the University of Utah. Ida-Rose said if I went up there, I would have to back all the way down.

I went up anyway. I didn't mind backing down if I had to, but I had not counted on getting one of the wheels suspended on a big rock. Ida-Rose thought I would never be able to get off that rock, but I did. The kids thought I was great! The biggest problem we had was that we didn't have enough money for all the gas we wanted.

One time we were driving up Parley's Canyon and I ran out of gas. We managed to turn around and we coasted down the canyon until we came to a gas station. We must have had, fortunately, money to buy enough gas to get home.

I was to have graduated with my PhD that fall, on August 28, 1948. I considered accepting a position with the Bureau of Mines, which was located just east of the University campus. This way we could stay in Utah, which we very much wanted to do. Ida-Rose got on our old decrepit typewriter that I had purchased cheap at Hillfield Air Force Base, and sent out cards to quite a number of companies letting them know I was available for employment, and to please send applications for me to fill in. We had done this when I got my Master's degree.

What I didn't know then, and I wish the Chemistry Department of the U had told me, was that what I did was the wrong way to go about applying for a job when I had a PhD. I should have sent out resumes.

I doubt if I had ever heard of a "resume" at that time. Some of the companies almost didn't answer the inquiries. But they did, and I soon had many invitations to visit the companies at their expense for job interviews. I accepted a position with the General Electric Research Laboratory in Schenectady, New York.

Now we had to pack up our few belongings and move them and ourselves out to Schenectady, New York, clear across the USA. We debated whether we should sell or junk "Old Betsy," the name the car had become known by. Did we dare drive her across the continent with three small children? Would she get us there? We decided to chance it, but to stick close to the bus routes in case "Old Betsy" gave out on us.

I had to do all the driving, because Ida-Rose did not drive at that time. It was autumn, and it was getting cold. I tried to fix up a heater for the car, but it did not work very well.

Several times we slept in the car. We were almost forced to. We found that while motels were plentiful in the West, they were practically nonexistent in the East. We were able to stay one night at a place that had been turned into bed-and-breakfast accommodations.

But when we got to Schenectady the company had not even made arrangements for the first night. We ended up sleeping in a hotel. We were lucky they could accommodate us. It was just after the war. Housing was extremely tight, and private enterprise had not had time after the war to change this in any way. People were running ads in the papers, "\$100.00 for any information leading to rental of house or apartment."

A couple we had known in Stadium Village had purchased a small three-bedroom home in Schenectady. The husband had taken a job at G.E. and they had been there a couple of years. They took us in. They had three children and we had three children. This wonderful family put up with us for six weeks. We can never repay them.

I went to work, but when the papers came out, I would grab them and get to the advertised place as soon as possible. I would always park the car where it couldn't be seen from the place of the rental. I thought our run-down car and three kids would be too much. We didn't need to worry. The three kids were always too much. We finally did find a house to rent.

The car doors on that car almost had to be tied to keep them closed. We always really watched the children when we got in and out of the car, because we had to slam the doors to get them to close. One day when we were loading the car to go home after church, we thought we had cleared all little fingers, and just as we let the door fly, Tracy Jr. put all four of his fingers on the door frame. That door slammed on all four of the fingers of that hand. We took him to the Dr., and spent the whole day soaking those fingers in ice. You could see the imprint of the door on all four of his little fingers. Thanks to the ice and a blessing the visiting missionaries gave him that day, the next morning he was flexing those fingers back and forth as if nothing had happened.

Old Betsy saw us through until we could afford a new car. The radiator leaked something awful. We would stop at the small streams that were plentiful in the area, to fill it with water. After we got our first new car, we left Old Betsy out in the back yard for the kids to play in. Someone came along and bought her for \$25.00, probably for parts. She had certainly done her best for us.

When Elizabeth was born, we decided if we wanted her to have a name to remind us of coming to Schenectady, we could name her Elizabeth for "Old Betsy." That is how our fourth child and second daughter got her name. We call her "Liz."