

I had to wash my feet before I left, and we stopped at the edge of town for gum (my idea). Mom almost had a nervous breakdown. She thought I was having the baby there. We checked into a little 3-story Sacred Heart Hospital at 7:30 p.m. Robert Wendell was born at 10:30 p.m. My hospital stay was four days. In the meantime, you were home taking care of the men. I will be truly grateful to you always. I could have had the baby right there on the ranch. You rescued me. Thank you!

Remember: The fleas. Fleas love you. They can't stand not to feed on you. The orchard was full of them. Dad put sheep in, but it was DDT that finally discouraged the little critters. I felt sorry for you, darlin'.

Remember: The morning of December 7, 1941, when I came running out of the cabin yelling "the Japanese have bombed Pearl Harbor!" I had turned the radio on and I think all of the stations were full of it. No one believed me at first. I finally persuaded everyone to come and listen. We were all in shock for awhile. One of our neighbors, Herb Seales died in the Pacific rescuing American soldiers and was caught in the crossfire.

THE RIDE

by Gene Conrad

My dad liked motorcycles. I was given my first one when I was about 6 years old. It was a Honda Trail 50 and it was blue. Mostly. And the seat was in pretty good shape for the shape it was in. And most of the time, the gas tank stayed on unless you hit a really big bump. And the handle bars could fold so that the whole bike could be slipped into the trunk of a car. And the key that held the flywheel in place was all stripped out so that every now and then Dad had to take it apart and glue the flywheel in place. And if the seat was adjusted all the way down and if I hung off one side and really stretched, and if I stretched right over a tall ant-hill, I could touch the ground without falling over. What a great bike! And since our field had an incredible infestation of ants, there were plenty of places where I could stop, and they also made great jumps.



The Gene Conrad family

This bike was a favorite of mine for many years, mainly because it was the only one that was small enough for me to ride. That and the fact that it was one of the few that actually ran. Dad had a penchant for old motorcycles that didn't run. He would scan the papers and run off to town to buy some "basket case" and drag it home in the bumper racks mounted on our 1967 Dodge Polara. He was saving them to fix up during his retirement years.

There is an old-wives tale that if you leave two coat hangers together in a dark closet they will multiply and turn into a tangled mass of hangers. Did you know that old motorcycles do the same thing? Dad would put a couple of them in on old shed or lean them up against each other and before you knew it, there were more. Lots more. At one time I tried to count them and lost track at over 50. Our house became known as the "place with all the motorcycles." When I got older, I managed to tear open the door of a building that hadn't been opened in years only to find... more motorcycles.

Some of my friends also had motorcycles, and sometimes we would get together and go riding. Corky White and I did this often. He had a Yamaha 50. I always thought his bike was much cooler than mine, because: 1) it was faster. 2) it was red. 3) it was faster. 4) That gas tank was a cooler shape. 5) it was faster. 6) the seat didn't have any duct tape on it. 7) it was definitely faster.

One day, Corky invited me to his house for a day of riding. He lived down Fire Road in a cool place that his dad built next to a pond that his dad also built. We could ride up the trails behind his place through the woods up to Carpenter Bypass and then down the other side of the little valley to their house. The loop was probably 5 or 6 miles and it took us about 2 or 3 hours. We could do 2 or 3 laps in a day of riding. It was great fun.

I think we were in about the 5th grade. The plan was for me to go to Corky's house, then we would ride up to Brian Gillespie's house and he would join us and ride the loop with us. I don't remember Brian's bike too well, but I think his dad bought it from us. Maybe that was why he had so much trouble with it. Anyway, Corky and I rode over to Brian's place and Brian was having some trouble finding enough gas to fill up his bike.

"No problem," I said. "We'll just siphon some out of my tank and get some more when we get back to Corky's"

They didn't know about siphoning or how to do it, but I did. At least I knew how it was supposed to be done. I didn't want them to know I had never actually done it. We hunted around and found an old piece of hose that looked like it had never had an old dead mouse in it. So I put it to my lips and blew out the fir needles and spiders. We then marched over to my bike with an