

WESTWARD, HO, HO, HO!

Being young and of the adventuresome spirit back in 1958, my husband and I packed up our eight children in a nine passenger station wagon, hooked up a twenty-three foot trailer, and took off for California. If I told you we planned on taking seven weeks for the trip, but it only lasted five, would that surprise you? It was togetherness to the nth degree! Five weeks in a station wagon with 9 people you're supposed to love?

Seven of the eight children were boys, and there was a good bit of wrestling in the back seats. At one point, I turned around and saw one of the boys, who has very poor eyesight, without his glasses. I asked him where they were and he replied, "I think they went out the window." As luck would have it, we were on a four-lane highway and had to go a distance before we could turn around. We had no idea how far back to retrace our miles. I don't know how many times we stopped to check out broken sunglasses or how many beer cans we looked at, but with all of us hanging out the windows (except the driver, of course!) traveling at a snail's pace, we DID find the glasses!

Frequently, we would stop at a restaurant and the waitress would ask where we were going. When we told her "to California," she asked if we were going there to pick fruit!

The worst thing that happened, but (in retrospect) the best story that came out of this trip, was the stop we made near Oklahoma City. We had stopped at an old reconstructed ghost town (Who cared if it was a tourist trap?) to break the monotony of the miles. After browsing for a half an hour or so, we piled back into the wagon. After a while, somebody asked, "Where's Pat (the almost 3 year old)?" Panic stricken, I replied, "Isn't he back there with you?" He wasn't! Again the four-lane highway prevented us from turning around immediately and this time, the situation was further complicated by the fact that the station wagon was dangerously low on gas. When we finally arrived at a gas station, I was able to call back to the ghost town and was assured someone had rescued Pat and would stay with him until we returned. Nevertheless, it was a quiet ride back to Oklahoma City. Believe me, that story was all over Peoria by the time we returned home.

by Patricia Nailon

